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(Hansard)**

**Wednesday 9 April 2014**

**Mercredi 9 avril 2014**

Speaker  
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk  
Deborah Deller

Président  
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière  
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 9 April 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 9 avril 2014

*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PUBLIC SECTOR AND MPP  
ACCOUNTABILITY  
AND TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2014  
LOI DE 2014 SUR  
LA RESPONSABILISATION  
ET LA TRANSPARENCE DU SECTEUR  
PUBLIC ET DES DÉPUTÉS

Mr. Milloy moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 179, An Act to promote public sector and MPP accountability and transparency by enacting the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act, 2014 and amending various Acts / *Projet de loi 179, Loi visant à promouvoir la responsabilisation et la transparence du secteur public et des députés par l'édiction de la Loi de 2014 sur la rémunération des cadres du secteur parapublic et la modification de diverses lois.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Mr. Milloy.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Mr. Speaker, it's indeed a pleasure to be participating in the leadoff on this very important piece of legislation. I want to talk about how the bill fits into the overall context of a number of initiatives of our government. But for those members who have been here for many years—certainly I've spoken to those in the public service. When they take a look at the bill, this is one of the most comprehensive, far-reaching pieces of legislation that I think has been seen in this Legislature in quite a long time. It touches on so many aspects of government operations and initiatives, but it all comes back to the same theme of openness, accountability and transparency.

At the outset, acknowledging the breadth of this bill, I do want to thank a number of people who worked tirelessly on bringing this together. First, I am the sponsor of the bill, as Minister of Government Services, but those who have gone through the bill will note that it touches on a vast number of ministries. So I want to thank the team at the Ministry of Government Services who worked so hard on pulling the bill together, but also in terms of working with other ministries, with senior officials, with lawyers and with a whole group of people to make this

bill a reality. I want to thank, of course, my staff in my office and the Premier's office—everyone who worked to pull together this very, very comprehensive piece of legislation.

I also want to extend a special thank you to one of our colleagues here in the Legislature: the member from Ottawa South. The member has been a huge, huge advocate for transparency in government. We're aware, I think, of a private member's bill that he brought forward to this Legislature some time ago on greater transparency when it came to MPP expenses. This has been one of his themes since his election in the recent by-election, and I want to congratulate him and thank him for the work he has undertaken, and in fact, Mr. Speaker, to give you notice that I'll be sharing my time on this leadoff with the member from Ottawa South, Mr. Fraser.

I also want to give credit to my parliamentary assistant, Mr. Qaadri, the MPP from Etobicoke North, who is tied up with an announcement this morning but will be speaking to the bill later on. He, too, has had a hand in pulling it together.

As I said at the outset, I want to provide members with a bit of context of how this fits into the entire Open Government Initiative that was announced by the Premier last fall. It's funny—those who heard about Open Government thought that it was somehow an invention by this government. Well, the fact is that the idea of Open Government is an international movement. You can go to western Europe, to the United States, states within the United States, virtually throughout the world and find this whole idea of Open Government. What Open Government means—there's really a number of different parts to it.

The first part that I always like to talk about is, how do we make decisions? What is the decision-making process vis-à-vis the public? For too long, I think there's been this view that government has all the answers and the role of the public is to sit back and call on government to solve all their problems. As you and I both know, Mr. Speaker, and members of the Legislature may know, one of the great secrets we have here at Queen's Park is that we certainly don't have all the answers. We live in a very complex society. Government does not have all the solutions to a problem. In fact, in many ways government doesn't have the wherewithal to solve all the problems that are happening. Often times, it has to be done in partnership with ordinary citizens, with NGOs, with the business community, with other levels of government. So we need a capacity to reach out and engage the public, to make sure that they understand that government, as I

always say, is not an us-and-them proposition, that we're all part of government, that everyone has a role and a responsibility. When it comes to so many of the challenges that are facing government, how can we work together in partnership to find those solutions and to execute those solutions? That's really the framework for Open Government.

Within that, though, there are a number of propositions. The first proposition is, if you want to engage the citizenry so that they can help be part of the solution, that they can have a role, you have to make sure that they have an understanding of the problems and challenges that are being faced. That leads to the second part of the Open Government pillar, and that is open information: to allow the public to have more information on the problems and solutions and proposals etc. that are held within government. How can we have a whole different mindset where the public has access to that information and understands the sort of challenges that we're facing, and, as I say, what are the proposed solutions, what are the facts of the matter?

The third part of that, one that's related, is the whole idea of open data. As well as general information that government has, we have this whole issue of data. The government collects literally thousands and thousands and thousands of data sets. Those are everything ranging from geospatial information to, on the other end, the other extreme, the most common boys' and girls' names for new babies here in the province of Ontario. We collect thousands and thousands of data sets, and those data sets are of great value. They're of great value to researchers, to public policy advocates, to anyone who is interested in being a part of the public policy process. They're also, as an important aside, very, very important to entrepreneurs, because much of that information can be taken and it can be meshed and melded with other types of information. You can come up with products and services which experts tell us—I'm not making this up—could lead to billions and billions of dollars of economic growth. So part of having open data is not just making the data available, but making it available in a format that is machine-readable, that is user-friendly and, as I say, can be combined with other material and put together.

So there are the three principal pillars of Open Government. One of the initiatives that the Premier highlighted and began last year was appointing an Open Government panel. Under the leadership of a noted expert particularly in the area of citizen engagement, Dr. Don Lenahan, who's with the Public Policy Forum. The panel itself was composed of a number of leading experts, including our former colleague Norm Sterling, a former member of this Legislature, to look at this whole issue of Open Government. Their report was released about a week and a half ago, and certainly we're taking their recommendations very seriously.

The reason why I began with that is, I think you can't understand the bill before us today without understanding Open Government. The bill, I wouldn't say, flows directly from the work that was done from the panel; instead, it

complements the work that was done from the panel. As I said, the panel is looking at how to engage citizens more, how to make sure that they have access to the type of information and data that they need.

#### 0910

But the other thing is, if we're going to engage citizens—if we're going to make them more a part of the process, if we're going to make them true partners with government—I would argue that, as well as having the information about government, they also need to be able to trust their government. They need to be able to know that there's a level of transparency about our activities, and that there's a level of accountability over what we do. It's crucial, because that relationship can only be joined through a mutual trust between citizens and the government. As I said right at the outset, the government knows that we don't have all the answers and we need to rely on citizens.

The genesis of Bill 179, as I say, complements very much what happened with Open Government. That is, we have the panel who are doing their work and we have a number of initiatives that are going on with the government, but at the same time, how can we make sure that we complement this work by ensuring that there's a level of trust and a level of accountability between citizens and their government? Hence Bill 179, which, as I said at the outset, I think is one of the most comprehensive bills, which touches on so many areas of—I'll put it in broad terms—accountability, transparency and openness. What I wanted to do today, Mr. Speaker, is touch a little bit upon some of those areas and fill members in on what's in this very comprehensive bill.

I'll begin with ourselves: elected representatives. I think everyone realizes that the old adage is very true: You have to lead by example. The fact of the matter is that people look to their elected representatives to be accountable to them, particularly when it comes to the spending of taxpayers' dollars, so one of the provisions of Bill 179 is a legislative provision that would mandate that we have expense reporting for elected representatives.

The proposed bill, if passed, would make it mandatory for cabinet ministers, parliamentary assistants, opposition leaders and their staff to post their expense information online. Currently, this expense reporting is done on a voluntary basis. I know, having been both a minister and a parliamentary assistant, that over the years my expenses have been online. Although most people think it's legislated, it is in fact only done on a voluntary basis. The opposition leaders have been a bit more spotty as to their posting, but at the end of the day it still is voluntary. What this bill would do is it would make it mandatory that not only these expenses go to the Integrity Commissioner, who takes a look at them and makes sure that they are all aboveboard, but that in fact they are posted online so the public can see the way in which their tax dollars are being spent on the expenses of parliamentary assistants, cabinet ministers, obviously the Premier, and the leaders of the opposition and their staff.

Now, it doesn't just stop there, with those members—we'd call it the executive on this side and the leadership across there. We are also proposing to extend this idea of reporting to all MPPs in the Legislature. The way it works right now is, every year, the Speaker of the Legislature actually publishes a broad expense reporting of all the members here in the Legislature: both their expenses tied to their duties here at Queen's Park—perhaps they have a residence here at Queen's Park, if they live more than 50 kilometres away—and, at the same time, the expenses that are incurred in their riding at a global level. This document is published; it is made public. I understand it's circulated to reporters in the press gallery. Certainly as an MPP I receive one. But I think members in this Legislature may be a little shocked to know that it's never put online anywhere. Presumably, someone could call the Speaker or another legislative office and get a copy, but we don't put it online. So the first step we want to do in terms of transparency is to put it online. In fact, I've reached out to the opposition parties—I've had some positive feedback; we're still working on it—to put this document online. I should add, before I go on, that we on the government side have taken the initiative of posting this information online already, as a sign of our wish to be more open and transparent.

The second point would be to broaden—and that's what this legislation does. It broadens the information that is posted and made available. So the bill, if passed, would require the Speaker to move further than what he does right now, which is just more of a general overview of the expenses both at Queen's Park and in the riding, and post online information on MPP expenses concerning out-of-riding travel, related hotel expenses, meals and hospitality expenses. Mr. Speaker, I should explain that the reason these categories were chosen is that they mirror very much the types of reporting you've seen from cabinet ministers and parliamentary assistants and now, of course, from the leaders of the opposition.

Many of the other expenses—I think members would agree; they, of course, are very familiar with them—are what you might want to call static expenses: the rent for your constituency office. As I say, there's a global figure that you can look up. But in terms of expense item by expense item, these are key areas where there's some genuine public interest on the ways in which members are spending taxpayers' money. As I say, we've taken the first steps on this side by posting some of these general figures. We're looking forward to the passage of this bill to have more specific iteration on a going-forward basis of some of these very specific expenses.

The third thing I'd like to talk about in this bill is the whole issue of compensation for senior executives in the broader public sector. We understand the concern on this side of the House. I think we all understand the concern. These have been tight times. The middle class has just gone through a very, very serious recession. People are struggling to make ends meet, and at the same time they are often outraged, in some cases, when they pick up the

paper and learn the salaries of senior members of the broader public service.

It's been a topic that's been debated in this House, and there have been numerous bills that have come forward—private members' bills and proposals that have come forward on this. As I say, I certainly have great sympathy for those who want to see something done about this. But the problem is that there's an old saying that for every complex problem, there's always one really, really attractive-sounding, simple solution that doesn't work. Unfortunately, some of the solutions that have been brought forward in this Legislature really do fit that bill. They're great for a bumper sticker, but they don't work in reality.

The fact of the matter is that if we simply go forward and say that all salaries in the broader public service are capped at X or Y, it doesn't work. The reason is that throughout the broader public sector we have a variety of positions and roles to which very, very specific expertise is needed. And I think we all recognize that when you want to go out and get the best people—I don't think there's anyone in the Legislature who doesn't want to see the best people running various aspects of the public service. If you want to get them, you have to often pay what is—call it a good market rate in order to get someone with that technical expertise and experience going forward. I'm not saying there aren't many, many cases when I think we could level off what's happening in the broader public sector, but to just go forward with a ham-fisted, "We're going cut it off at X or Y," is simply not going to work.

At the same time, we don't have all the information as to how people are paid in the broader public sector, not just simply their salary—obviously we have the sunshine list where we see it, or other public documents—but are there issues around severance, are there issues around housing allowance, are there issues around certain expenses that they've received? What this bill does—it's very comprehensive—is it gives us the authority to go out and collect all this information.

More importantly, it also gives us the authority to take a look at other jurisdictions and at different comparators, and come up with hard caps of what would be reasonable to pay different senior executives in different parts of the broader public sector. Then, again, this bill would give us the authority to impose them. It would also give us the authority to make sure they are enforced through certain mechanisms that hold the board accountable.

I think this is very, very important, because what I've just said does not fit nicely on a bumper sticker, but what it's going to do is come up with something that's reasonable and that's going to allow us to hire people with the technical knowledge, expertise and experience in order to undertake a role. At the same time, it's going to stop what, quite frankly, in some instances have been the outrageous packages that all of us read about in the paper every day.

**0920**

Another area that I'd like to talk about today is the proposed reforms on record-keeping, obviously a very

topical issue here in the Legislature. I'm certainly not going to run away from it. We have had a lot of very disturbing happenings over the last year or so. Last June, I believe it was, we saw the Information and Privacy Commissioner come out with a series of reports. As Minister of Government Services, I was very much involved in discussions with her and talks between our staffs about how we can improve the record-keeping regime here in the government.

I want to give full, full credit to the Premier, who took this situation very, very seriously, who worked with the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

As Minister of Government Services, I was asked by the Premier to also work very closely with her to do two things.

The first was to adopt all the non-legislative recommendations that she had suggested, which include staff training and a whole framework to make sure that records are properly maintained here in government.

The second was to take a look at a number of legislative changes that the Information and Privacy Commissioner had put forward. Of these legislative changes, three of the principal ones she put forward are contained in this bill.

The legislation—I'll just review it for members—would, if passed, act on three of the commissioner's recommendations on the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. It would require all institutions subject to FIPPA and MFIPPA, as those two acts are called, to ensure that measures are in place to preserve records; to prohibit the wilful destruction of records with the intent to deny someone access to records; and to introduce a fine of up to \$5,000 for the wilful destruction of records.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, our government consulted with the commissioner and her office about her recommendations to assist us in the development of this legislation. We wanted to make sure that we reached a consensus between the two of us on what we would put forward.

I'm going to be very transparent here with the House: We are not proposing an amendment with respect to the commissioner's fourth recommendation. I want to be clear, and certainly I've been very open in my discussions with her. That recommendation was to legislatively require the duty to document all key decisions within government.

Currently, Mr. Speaker, there is no legislative duty to document, in either freedom-of-information or record-keeping legislation, in any other jurisdiction in Canada. Although I think we all understand the spirit behind the duty to document, I think we can also ask ourselves: What exactly does that mean?

Obviously, we keep cabinet records and treasury board records, and decision notes are kept. We keep many of the steps leading up to it. But at what point does the duty step in? At what point is something merely informal? I've spoken with the IPC, and I think she understands

that these are questions that probably need more exploration.

What we have committed to do is to work through the various federal-provincial bodies that meet to discuss this, to work with other jurisdictions across Canada to explore this—as I say, I think everyone understands and accepts the spirit of it—to move forward. Specifically, Mr. Speaker, to give you more of the technical details, my ministry will be working with the information management subcommittee of the federal, provincial and territorial CIOs to determine the best path forward.

Regardless of how we proceed on this front, our recent and ongoing training on records management for staff continues to emphasize the need to manage and create public records in order to document key government decisions, activities and operations, and I want to stress that, Mr. Speaker. The fact that this fourth recommendation is not part of the legislation does not mean that we don't take it seriously.

All major policy decisions are always documented through meeting minutes, briefing notes, House notes, management board and treasury board notes as well as cabinet minutes.

I highlighted in some detail a number of the key parts of the bill. I do want to allow time for my colleague from Ottawa South to speak, who, as I say, has a particular passion for this area, but there's one final area that I want to touch on—and this bill is vast, so I've really just given you some of the highlights—and that's the role of the Ombudsman.

I think all of us recognize the important role played by not only the provincial Ombudsman, but other individuals who act either in that role, have that title or serve that purpose—that third party that the public can go to when they feel that the obstacles they've encountered really can't be moved aside, that they need to work their way through the red tape and find answers. We all know our provincial Ombudsman has been tireless in working through a variety of issues for citizens. He gets thousands and thousands of complaints a year that he deals with. He also looks at systemic issues within certain sectors and comes forward with special reports.

The Ombudsman in the province of Ontario has very broad authority over many of the activities of the government, but when it comes to the broader public sector, the Ombudsman's role has been limited. There have been a number of individuals in this Legislature who have certainly called for his oversight in a number of areas. I think, of course, of children's aid societies as one that there's been discussion on here, going on 11 years. I've seen private members' bills and questions in the Legislature, and that's just one example.

What we did is we first of all worked with the Ombudsman—I want to put that on the record—and came up with a package that would extend his powers, and then more general Ombudsman powers throughout what we affectionately call the MUSH sector. The first step is that the provincial Ombudsman will now have authority over municipalities, over universities and over school boards.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to put on the record—because I think there's been a little bit of confusion about this oversight. In many of these cases, we already have existing ombuds, as they are called. In the university system, many universities have an ombudsman and in the municipal system, there has been some media about the city of Toronto ombudsman. This is in no way trying to undermine their authority. The fact of the matter is, as I said at the outset, there are many, many people who deal with problems and disputes within the system who do an outstanding job. When I spoke with the provincial Ombudsman, he made it clear that his philosophy—in fact, some of this reflected in the legislation—is that when you have a problem, you go through the dispute mechanism. You work your way up the line, so to speak. You go to the tribunal or the special office or, in the case of some of these other institutions, the front-line ombudsperson, you present them with your situation and you work with them to solve it.

But at the same time, having this provincial Ombudsman have an umbrella role over them does two things. First of all, in those rare cases where someone really feels that the system is working against them and wants a fresh pair of eyes, then we have the provincial Ombudsman there to help with it. The second thing, and I think this is important to note, is that in many cases, what the provincial Ombudsman is doing is taking a look across the line. Yes, there may be something that's very specific to one municipality but, in other cases, there may be problems of a similar nature, to use the municipal sector as an example, that are popping up in a variety of municipalities. What he would want to do is to investigate and put forward a report on some of the systemic problems that are happening and, in that way, provide a different sort of look than an individual ombudsman could do.

Again, to just comment on some of the media reports, this is in no way meant as a criticism of the fine, fine work that is done by a number of people in the system who serve the role of ombudsman. I think of the universities and I also think specifically of the city of Toronto, where they have an outstanding individual who is doing a great job. She is seen as a real leader in this field. She will be allowed to do her work. This is, just as I say, providing another pair of eyes in those rare instances, and also his ability to look at some systemic issues.

So that's expanding the provincial Ombudsman's role, but in two other areas, Mr. Speaker—and I'll wrap up in a second on this note—we saw a need for a more specialized Ombudsman's role. That was the whole area of children's services—particularly, of course, children's aid societies.

**0930**

What this legislation would do is take an officer of Parliament, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, and give him the same power and authority as an ombudsman. Again, we put together the framework in consultation with the provincial Ombudsman to make sure that the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth had a similar role to that played by Mr. Marin.

Also, in the whole area of health care, we have a patient Ombudsman who will provide a similar role. The understanding is that in both of those areas—they're very broad, they're very specialized. By creating or giving these new powers to these individuals, they can specialize in those areas.

Mr. Speaker, believe it or not, that is only a quick look at a very, very detailed bill. For those of you who have had a chance to go through it, you're going to find that there are a number of other initiatives that we could highlight and I'm sure will be highlighted during the course of debate. Together, it is a very, very comprehensive package.

I'll just end where I began: This is about open government, and open government is about engaging citizens, giving citizens a sense of ownership of their government and giving citizens a sense of responsibility towards working to solve many of the problems and challenges that we face. But in order to do that, we have to make sure that they have the information, that they have access to the data and analysis that we have, but also, there has to be a level of trust. There has to be a level of accountability, openness and transparency, and that's what this bill is about. I cannot state enough that this is one of the most comprehensive packages that has ever been brought to this Legislature in terms of accountability. I think, in general, it's a very, very comprehensive bill, and it outlines a lot of good work where a number of ministries came together.

I think this is a very, very important step. I look forward to the debate and discussion. Quite frankly, I look forward to support from all sides of this House, because I think it's in all of our interests to continue to build trust and confidence with the people of Ontario. This bill goes a long way towards that.

As I said at the outset, I will be sharing my time with the member from Ottawa South. I know he, too, will want to speak upon the themes of this bill, but also its breadth. With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much and yield the floor to the member from Ottawa South.

**Mr. Michael Harris:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Point of order, the member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

**Mr. Michael Harris:** Yes, Speaker. I believe we have unanimous consent that all members of the Legislature be permitted to wear pins in honour and remembrance of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, as today is Vimy Ridge Day.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member from Kitchener–Conestoga has asked for permission to wear the Vimy Ridge pin. Agreed? Agreed.

The member from Ottawa South.

**Mr. John Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak in the leadoff to the debate on Bill 179, the Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act. I'd like to thank the Minister of Government Services for sharing his time with me.

Before I begin, I'd like to take a moment to thank my colleagues and friends here at Queen's Park for their kind words and thoughts on the passing of my father, who

died on Sunday. Over the last week and a half, I've had an opportunity to spend some time caring for him and being with him, and that would not have been possible without the support I've received from all of you. I thank you.

As a young man, the first and most important lesson my father taught me was about the keeping of a confidence. If someone shared something with you in confidence, you kept it to yourself, not to be shared with anyone else. He said it was important because keeping a confidence was all about trust, and trust is the key to working together and moving forward.

Trust is an essential ingredient needed for success in any endeavour. Transparency, openness and accountability are also all about trust. Bill 179 is about trust. It's about building trust in this Legislature, its members and how we conduct our business. It's about trust in government and the broader public service, and how they use the resources we are giving them. It's about building trust in our schools and universities as they serve our young people. It's about building trust in our hospitals, long-term-care homes and home care as they care for our loved ones. It's about building trust in our child protection system as it strives to watch over children and youth at risk.

Building trust is essential to our work. That's why I felt strongly when I introduced Bill 108, the Transparency in Members' Expenses Act, and that it was the right thing to do. If we wanted to build trust, we needed to do our work, we needed to take the first step and we needed to lead by example to build trust.

I'm very pleased that the measures in Bill 108 have been included in the act; it is the first of many steps in this bill. Bill 179 is broad and far-reaching. It expands the mandate of the Ombudsman to include municipalities, school boards and publicly funded universities; it creates a new patient Ombudsman for hospitals, long-term-care homes and community care access centres; it strengthens the mandate of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth to better serve those involved in the child protection system; it broadens expense disclosure from 17 agencies to include all 197 agencies in the broader public service; it requires that leaders of the opposition parties and their staff be subject to the same rules as the Premier, cabinet ministers and their staff; it authorizes the government to establish a framework for executive compensation in the broader public sector; and it makes mandatory for broader public sector organizations to publish their business plans and other relevant financial documentation.

The Minister of Government Services has worked closely with the officers of this Legislature to put this bill together, and the Premier has committed to leading the most open and transparent government in the country. Bill 179 will do that.

I know that the member from Trinity–Spadina has been pushing for Ombudsman oversight over universities and school boards for some time. I know that the member from Timmins–James Bay has said that he is generally in

favour of these measures and that he is willing to sit down and take a look at it. I also know that the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex was one of the first to disclose his expenses online. So I know that building trust and openness and transparency is important to all of us here in the Legislature.

I also know that our Ombudsman, André Marin, has said, "I look forward to seeing this bill come forward to the Legislature. It is a strong step toward a more democratic, accountable and open Ontario."

Bill 179 is legislation that all members of this Legislature can support. As we debate, it is important to remember that this bill is all about building trust as we go forward. Often in debate, there is a temptation to slip into finger-pointing and maybe some recrimination, and what I would urge all members to do is to remember that this is something that's about building trust in the future, not just for tomorrow or today as we debate but five, 10 and 20 years from now. That's something that all Ontarians deserve, and I believe that we need to come together and make this legislation work.

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

**Mr. Rob Leone:** To the member for Ottawa South, we offer our sincere condolences on the passing of your father.

I think that, certainly, this is an important piece of legislation. We've been seeking accountability on this side of the House for some time, particularly in this minority government. With respect to things that happen in government, it's our job as the opposition to raise these issues. I think this legislation does some good things; it does make us a little bit more proactive in disclosing information that the public may want from time to time.

We've had conversations in this House, particularly on the member from Ottawa South's bill, with respect to the disclosure of MPP expenses. I'm certainly happy to disclose to the public what my expenses are, and I'm pretty sure that members of the Legislature will agree that some proactive measures are necessary.

What I do disagree with is that by coming in with an accountability act, I fear that the government is attempting to whitewash its sorry record on accountability, particularly with relation to what has happened and transpired with the gas plant scandal in this province, where it took the opposition—collectively, as an opposition; both the PCs and the NDP—working together to actually get some answers for the people of Ontario. It shouldn't be that hard to get answers for the people of Ontario. It shouldn't take a potential contempt of this Legislature to get answers for the people of the province of Ontario.

**0940**

We're very concerned, obviously, that this government thinks that by enacting this legislation, it wipes clean its sorry history on accountability and transparency. We will do our due diligence, Mr. Speaker, and debate this piece of legislation. I look forward to listening to the debate this morning.

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



**Miss Monique Taylor:** I'm happy, as always, to be able to stand in this House and speak about accountability because it's definitely something that needs a fix. This bill is something that we as New Democrats, as you know, are happy to see: the MUSH sector getting some oversight. It's something that we've been calling for, for many years. We're definitely happy to see that in this bill.

There are a lot of half measures that are happening. We're concerned that there's a patient advocate, instead of the Ombudsman, having oversight of the hospitals. I'm concerned that the Ombudsman is not getting any oversight over the children's aid societies. But I'm also confident in the work of our child advocate. I just hope that he's given enough tools to actually do the job that needs to be done.

There's a lot in this bill. How many schedules do we have? We have nine schedules in one bill. That's a lot to absorb within one piece of legislation. And there are gaps throughout it. So I know that we'll be looking forward to making some changes to this, to make sure that there is real accountability.

Schedule 1 establishes the authority to establish executive compensation frameworks. Well, that's really great, because on this side of the House, New Democrats have been calling for the capping of CEO salaries, but under this schedule I'm not really sure. They're talking about putting in frameworks of compensation of public sector executives, but there are no real caps attached to this. So it could be a very long process before we get to anything that would seem suitable for the people of this province.

I'm happy to have had this moment. Thank you.

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

**Hon. Liz Sandals:** I'm pleased to comment on the remarks of my colleagues the Minister of Government Services and the member for Ottawa South. Certainly, we all want to extend our condolences to the member for Ottawa South on the loss of his father.

I thought perhaps I would comment briefly on the things in the bill that will have an impact on the education sector. The first of those would be the controlling of senior executive compensation in the broader public sector, because that will apply to school boards. Our government, if this legislation is passed, would be establishing compensation frameworks, and that would include hard caps for executives in the broader public sector, including school boards. Heads of organizations would be required to submit attestations concerning compliance with the compensation frameworks, and employers would actually be required to repay any amount in excess of those caps as a debt to the crown. So there actually are not only hard caps, but penalties contemplated if those aren't followed.

There is a requirement to publish business plans and other financial documents. Quite frankly, I think school boards, given their current accountability requirements, already publish their financial statements. The budget process is public; annual reports are public. So I think

they will already be meeting the requirements in that respect.

Certainly, the one change for school boards will be the expansion of the Ombudsman's role to have oversight over school boards. That's something that we look forward to working with our school boards and the Ombudsman on, to figure out exactly how that would work in the future.

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

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I was pleased to be here this morning to listen to the leadoff speech by the Minister of Government Services, and more recently by the member for Ottawa South. I too extend my sympathies and pay respect for the mourning of the loss of his father, and the fact that he was here today to speak.

I will switch now to a different tone. This is comprehensive legislation, as the House leader said. It's well overdue and needed at this time, with all the inquiries and the OPP walking around here, investigating everything that moves.

The theme that was mentioned by the member from Ottawa South really struck a note with me this morning. He used the word "trust." Unfortunately, I'm not going to have a full hour this morning. In this House, trust is the most important sentiment that could ever be felt, expressed or shown. There's an old axiom that says if you want to know if something is true, go and observe it. The observers in this House would say that they've broken trust.

I'm not trying to cast aspersions, in the positive mood that we're in this morning. I know that your remarks were quite sincere. Your private member's bill—I think it was Bill 108—to build in accountability is reflected in some of this bill, but I put it to you that after 10-plus years, it's too little, too late.

It's in that tone that I think our leader, Tim Hudak, has been pressing to bring some debate here in the House of having respect for the House itself in terms of accountability, I suspect you'd call it. They use that term "openness and transparency and accountability." They throw it around like Frisbees around here, so I'm quite cynical, in fact, of the sentiments being expressed.

I will have more to say this afternoon or sometime later. I look forward to the former mayor of Etobicoke's remarks today.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member from Ottawa South has two minutes.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I'd like to thank the member from Cambridge, the member from Hamilton Mountain, the Minister of Education and the member from Durham for their remarks.

I would like to address the member from Cambridge's remarks, just to say that this is about going forward. This is about what we're doing. What we do in this House is try to look out 10, 15, 20 years in the future. That's what this bill is about. It's not what's behind us. We'll continue to discuss what's behind us, but let's not lose focus on what this bill is about.

In response to the member from Hamilton Mountain, I thank her for her remarks and her general words of support. I would not describe the measures in the bill as half measures. Those measures were worked out with the current Ombudsman. He has expressed support on a number of occasions, initially describing the bill as historic and 35 years in the making. The measures that are outlined in this bill in terms of hospitals, long-term-care facilities and community care access centres will work. The measures outlined that increase the mandate for the child advocate will work, and I would encourage her to look at the legislation and support those measures.

I'd like to thank the Minister of Education for her remarks.

I agree with the member from Durham that trust is essential: trust in this House, trust in each other. We need to continue to build that trust. That was the point of my remarks. I hope he took them in that spirit. We're all colleagues here. We're all here because we want to make things better, because we want to take care of those things that are important to the families that we serve. To do that, we need to build trust.

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

**Mr. Douglas C. Holyday:** Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the member from Durham.

Before I commence, I would like to pass my condolences on to the member from Ottawa South, on your recent loss.

I rise in this chamber today, as the accountability critic for the PC opposition party, to speak on the merits but lack of clarity of the proposed Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, 2014, known as Bill 179. I should point out that I have serious reservations about the creation of new bureaucratic formations overseeing existing bureaucratic formations.

**0950**

The omnibus piece of legislation is a far-reaching proposal that, if enacted in full, would expand considerably the scope and impact of controlled supervision of spending by public sector agencies and elected officials. The bill, introduced on March 24 by the Minister of Government Services, expands the mandates of previously established oversight institutions—that's the Ombudsman and the Integrity Commissioner—and creates new advocacy structures, plus it requires you, Mr. Speaker, to publish the total expenses of all provincial members. I'm not sure if this covers expenses related to the Premier's office and those of ministers. Besides strengthening advocacy, reach and penetration, it adds broader enforcement rules for lobbying groups while adding greater investigative powers under the children and youth act, 2007, to provide greater ability for stronger advocacy of protective measures.

As Bill 179 moves forward to the day it receives royal assent, our party will discuss in detail the intent of this legislation that affects the responsibilities and powers of no fewer than 10 separate initiatives, requiring a plethora of centralized oversight operations. But while doing so,

we reserve the right, as opposition members, to seek clarifications and offer such amendments as we deem necessary to foster the goals of accountability, oversight and transparency without creating a paradigm shift in how this is to be achieved.

If this bill is passed in its totality, it will create a huge power grab that could stifle and hinder and even control the broad-based work of any or all of the ministries that have regulatory powers on the drumbeat of the lives of our total provincial population.

The Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Attorney General, Community and Social Services, Health and Long-Term Care, Finance, and Children and Youth Services are those ministries that will be affected. I can even see the involvement of an upper chamber or meeting place where these unelected and quasi-government officials with extraordinary powers meet to exercise their control over the regulatory affairs of the province.

Prior to moving on with this exercise, I would like to make a number of personal observations about the form and the tone of the minister's recent address in this House.

It appears that the government is attempting to capture the moral high ground to portray themselves as the party dedicated to rectify all social governing imperfections at all levels, and to ingratiate themselves in the eyes of the electorate as the moral saviours of the democratic system of government in Ontario. It seems to me that the speech must have been written by a crusader or witch-doctor wordsmith hell-bent on curing this government of its recidivist behaviour of the past decade.

You can't create moral authority through legislation. The righteous baffle-gab and sanctimonious tones of the recently converted from irresponsible spending to that of watchdog of the public treasuries and defender of oppressed Ontarians trapped under bondage to the irresponsible debt-producing actions of the McGuinty-Wynne years do not ring true. The only thing missing from the minister's performance were the words of Onward, Christian Soldiers, accompanied by the Salvation Army band.

I believe that you shouldn't strive to monitor and alter the affairs of governing at all levels by producing another layer of the machinery of government.

Our party fully understands the requirement for greater oversight of the procedures that administer delivery of services and the expenditures related to these activities. We are concerned that Bill 179 inadvertently brings on duplicative measures with ensuing costs. There really needs to be more creative investigation on the specifics of adding staff for new bureaucratic creations that will instill a Big-Brother-knows-best mentality in the art of governing.

It would be worthy of note if some background material could be provided on the administrative costs—office, legal, communications, staffing—required to research and fund the appropriate talents to be recruited to perform the duties called for by the existing and now new government bodies and public sector entities.

Later in this address, I am going to review the effects of these proposals on the 10 acts impacted by the omnibus act that creates a central authority, provided in the minister's notes provided to the NDP and ourselves.

But we should stop at this juncture to analyze just where Bill 179 will take us. In reality, the bill calls for new bureaucratic formations to oversee existing bureaucratic formations. At what cost to the taxpayers? We don't know.

Creation of a patient Ombudsman by amendments to the Excellent Care for All Act, 2010, formulates duplication in client services. Duplication costs money. There are no costs to these changes offered on an act-to-act basis to supplement complaint regulations already in place. It is now the plan to have an Ombudsman who reviews the ombudsman's offices of municipalities, corporations, school boards and universities. This will even include the responsibilities of the local dog catcher. All these creations act to collectively constitute entities with costs and staffing that will overlap existing agencies and drive up the cost of governing to the taxpayer. Many of these proposals speak to the rampant inability of our existing bodies to administer the basic functions of accountability under this government.

It is interesting to note that the previous NDP and PC administrations were able to provide stable and efficient oversight, only to have all that unravel under the McGuinty-Wynne administration. Overall, despite the need and value of the proposed major accountability measures, this legislation is, in a negative sense, a resounding condemnation of past Liberal ineptitudes. The solutions recommended are a recognition of the failure of the current legislative acts to come to grips with accountability in major functions of public administration by this government. The Liberal initiatives in this regard are long overdue, much like closing the farm gate after the cattle have wandered off. There can be no more obvious egregious malfunction and abrogation of responsibility than the cancellation of the two gas plants, at a cost of \$1.1 billion, when it was announced that it would be some \$40 million. But I will return to that later.

I do not wish to be too harsh in my assessment here, but it appears to me that these ombudspeople—my word—will constitute a mythical race of administrators capable of presiding over provincial civil servants, countless municipal management employees, public sector managers, school boards, MPPs and everyone else—except the Speaker's office, the Premier's office and possibly the Human Rights Commission—in judgment of their performance. In real terms, this new swathe of enlightened ombudspeople will stand alone as protectors of both the public purse and the rights of taxpayers to receive that which is theirs that is now decreed through the awkwardly named Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, 2014.

The range of change to present policies is comprehensive, as follows:

The Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act, 2014, will authorize Management Board of Cabinet

to order designated employers to provide compensation information. This is a major intrusion in the affairs of public corporations with a board and stakeholders to oversee them.

Amendments to the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, 2010, call for the preparation and publication of business plans by public sector organizations. Most of these organizations already operate under an annual business plan direction.

Amendments to the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability Act, 2002, and related amendments: Information on expenses is to be posted online within 90 days of notification by the Integrity Commissioner. Would this change current procedures, except for exposure of same?

Amendments to the Excellent Care for All Act, 2010, create the office of a patient Ombudsman to handle complaints against long-term-care and community care access corporations. It might be needed, but it will place a huge burden on the CCACs to handle frivolous complaints.

Amendments to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act amend the act to require the preservation of records and list offences that apply if not enforced. I'm not sure what this does. We need to find this out before we proceed.

Amendments to the Legislative Assembly Act require the Speaker to post information about payments to MPPs for travel expenses other than their electoral district costs—more paperwork for the Clerk and the Speaker.

#### **1000**

Amendments to the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998, amend the act by adding new oversight and enforced powers. Lobbyists beware.

Amendments to the Ombudsman Act and Related Amendments amend the Ombudsman Act extend jurisdictional powers over municipalities, boards and universities. This is the most dangerous expansion of oversight of all.

Amendments to the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act, 2007, provide the act with new investigative powers to oversee children's aid societies and some residential licensees. We, of course, support this completely.

Amendments to the Public Sector Expenses Review Act, 2009, allow the Integrity Commissioner to select public entities that will have the duty to provide copies of all expense claims. This will produce a game of Russian roulette for whoever falls under this descriptive enterprise.

Now we find that the main thrust of this legislation is to give birth to a new class of overseers which are described in part of my analysis as ombudspeople, a term that describes their function as monitors of just about all the government services in Ontario. These ombudspeople will be arbitrarily designated by the government to reign over all of us, and much like the persons who act as arbitrators in society today, they might not possess any specific academic qualifications except for their labelling

by this government as worthy and qualified to perform. It makes it sound like Ontario is a dystopian place, which is what the above description implies.

This list includes the Ontario Ombudsman, the patient Ombudsman, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, the provincial audit group, and the Information and Privacy Commissioner. This creation of a ruling structure of Orwellian proportions with CIA-like powers that will be subject to no audit or supervision is a frightening prospect. We must be careful that the cure is not more dangerous than the disease.

Unfortunately, the need for this omnibus bill emerges from the ashes of the public skulduggery that has been perpetrated on the unsuspecting public by those ensconced in the office of the former Premier of Ontario. This era of hard-drive recording of decisions made and their manipulative concealment and eventual destruction of this evidence by a Premier's staff is truly cause for alarm.

But what are we to do when the real decisions of government are not reached in an open forum? No omnibus bill can overcome this kind of behaviour. I don't wish to get too far off topic here, but these questions have to be asked. Has the role and purpose of elected government been so compromised by the ability of the digital-age technology to subvert parliamentary rules and government accountability that transparently rendered proceedings of a democratic government are now made irrelevant?

Another question arises: How can we assume that the Ontario Ombudsman, accountable to nobody in particular and given oversight powers for municipalities, corporations, commissions, school boards and universities, is competent to suitably handle these responsibilities? Where will it end? It gives power to anyone—citizen or not—that, if used exponentially, could severely impair government operations and decision-making. This reach would, in effect, make his office duties and powers greater than those of our existing ministers, who must abide by the time-tested rules of governing.

Finally, I would make one more observation. I believe that all the savings to be realized by the implementation of Bill 179 over a 10-year period won't add up to nearly as much as the \$1.1 billion spent to cancel two gas plants that didn't even produce one kilowatt of electricity. No matter how many layers of supervision are created, it won't stop a Premier and compliant cabinet from ignoring time-honoured rules of conduct.

With the costs and duplication of oversight in mind, it is our recommendation that the government committee receiving the bill for debate and discussions call for input from the existing bodies so affected by these measures to ascertain prescribed transparency as to procedures and at what acceptable costs to achieve the objectives outlined.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member from Durham.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I'm a little bit disappointed that I'm up this morning, because I would have preferred to have the whole hour uninterrupted, but—

*Laughter.*

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I don't mean that humorously; I think this is a serious bill. I think the minister started this morning by saying that it's a comprehensive piece of legislation, and indeed it is. If you look at it, the bill itself—just for the public here to get a sense—is 75 pages in two official languages. I think there are 10 schedules in it, and there are amendments to a number of very important bills, the lobbyist register etc. I might go through those, just in the bill. It's important for the public to understand.

First of all—I want to be on the record—we support transparency and accountability. There's no question about that. However, at the same time, we are suspicious. It's a feel-good piece of legislation. We agree, but we don't believe a thing that they're saying.

Honest to God, their motives are questionable. Why are they doing this at this time now? They should have a bill in here about jobs and the economy. Look at the young people: There's no future for them. Kellogg's is leaving; Heinz is leaving; Caterpillar is leaving. We're still buying Kellogg's cereal; it's just not made in Ontario anymore. That's the troubling truth of what's going on.

We have the highest energy rates, the highest electricity rates in North America.

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** Wrong.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Well, you have two minutes. You can refute that. But my point—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** I'd like to remind the member from Durham to stick to the issue. He's drifting. Thank you.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I can't imagine how I could start drifting. I've only been up for a minute or so. However, I was trying to put things into perspective. I take deference to the Speaker, and I'll be silenced to that extent.

This Bill 179, as I said before, is comprehensive. In fact, that's a very good place to start. The member from Ottawa South—I had a chance, thanks to the terrific staff here, to have a look at his bill, Bill 108. In this bill—this is a good part to start—I think it's got merit. If we could have a discussion on this, that would be something that we could digest in a sitting here.

But this bill here—I don't think it's ever been debated, but the explanatory note says that this report of members' expenses “must set out every payment made to a member in respect of a travel, accommodation or other expense. The reports must include the amount of each payment and an explanation of each expense. The Board of Internal Economy is required to post the report on the website”—it's already available; it's already done. It's called the member's expense. We file it every year. What that has in it is every trip, every cup of coffee, everything that you've done. It's posted and it's distributed to all of the media here once a year. It's an annual report.

I think we just recently got our report for last year, did we not?

**Mr. Rob Leone:** It's almost done.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Yes, it was just done.

I'm going to put this on the table. I think the House leader—I wish he was here, because this is the way I

would handle that. It has passed all the sniff tests by the bureaucrats, or the civil servants, to be fair. They've signed off on it and issued you a cheque. If they have questions, they will call you or return it with the expenses questionable and make you explain it or sign off on it, and that's posted.

If I have a website—there's no tinkering with it—then that should be posted. You just press on “member's expenses”: Boom, it shows up. It would be reporting, whether it's me or Ms. MacCharles, the Minister of Consumer Services—she's from Durham region.

Now, here's the issue: Ms. MacCharles is a minister. Well, I don't get to see all of hers.

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** Oh, yes, you do, because they have to post them.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Well, they do, but here's the deal: Half the time they're travelling with the deputy or other staff, and they pick it up. There's where the beguiling begins, the twisting of the—

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Now, I should put it this way: This is all within the context of Bill 179. Let's keep it in small, little digestible bites. I know for a fact that we cannot, should not and, I agree, will never charge alcohol. We are representing the public. We shouldn't even be consuming it, actually. Moderation, I suppose, in all things. I'm not a teetotaler or anything like that—close to it, perhaps.

But here's the issue: That stuff often shows up because we can't get a hold of the staff's, the civil servants', side of it. Even travelling, in fairness—I've had the privilege in my 19 years here of travelling on a committee. Well, wait a minute. That is luxury. I'm not trying to cut off our own entitlements here—

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** You're thinking of the federal government.

1010

**Mr. John O'Toole:** No, I'm not thinking of the—

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** The MPs.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** No, no, no. I don't want to be distracted by the Minister of Environment.

When they travel at committee, quite often it's picked up by the Clerk of the committee—bingo. How about the Speaker of the Legislature? I've been to soirees there that are worth questioning. Let's not tear ourselves down. As long as we keep it in perspective: We're representing the people of Ontario. If we could keep the partisan stuff out of it, most of the time we could move along here, but everybody wants to get the winning shot, which brings me back to Bill 179.

It's like the old much-said-about-nothing, or nothing-said-about-something. In this case here, there's a lot in this bill. There really is. It's comprehensive. It's 75 pages or so. As I said before, the member from Ottawa South as well as the minister used these very powerful, suggestive, visualized words; these words were “openness,” “accountability,” “transparency”—empathetic language, body style, all this stuff. To me, it's smoke and mirrors. The

truth will always be found out. I think everything we do here should be printed and published. It is.

Here's the issue, Mr. Speaker—you know this as well; you raised an issue yesterday at a committee. You were trying to have more openness and accountability. You asked for some access to security reports on the Pan Am Games, I believe it was. What happened? The government side voted him down. What's wrong with it?

Now, if you look at some of the investigations going on—I don't want to get into the legal matters. In all fairness, the Premier flips the question to the House leader. “Oh, it's before the courts,” or, “It's being investigated. I don't want to interfere.” But it makes you harder. When we asked for more information on the Ornge thing, what they did is they opened up Niagara Falls and flooded the paper out—thousands, millions of documents, all redacted. You can't find the answers. It's like looking for a needle in a haystack. Openness and transparency is in question period when you're asked, “Did you or did you not agree with the closing of the gas plants?”

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** And Tim did. He campaigned for it.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** See, the Minister of the Environment keeps trying to get me off message, which often happens.

Here's the issue, though—the whole issue there is exactly that. They do not ever answer the question. It's tragic. There are FOIs; they're delayed; they're denied. It's proprietary information. All of those rules have to be looked at and reviewed.

At the same time, if you're government, you have reasons to be working in confidence when you're building relationships and trust with stakeholder groups or with, for instance, investors in things like the Presto card. There was a bid on that. That's the card they use—I don't have mine with me, but I have one—for transit. They had a bid on it, and I think it was quite expensive—maybe \$100 million. I think it cost \$500 million. Now why do we have to go looking into that? Why aren't they warning us? Why isn't the auditor stepping in on an ongoing basis, saying, “These are things that should be watched”?

I would expect that pretty soon, the way the Speaker's looking at me, I'm going to be terminated here—well, not terminated, but asked to yield the floor. But I won't. I want to speak to the people of Ontario and certainly the people of my riding of Durham.

I've been to pretty well every province and every Legislature—the territories as well. I've been to Westminster a few times. I'd say that there's this idea of the government having secrets or the government having it hard to get to the bottom of things.

This bill, I think, has a lot in it that—I don't think we need the Ombudsman snooping around at every single thing. But when he or she is asked to look at it, they certainly should have every access without any barriers or conditional blockades, and trust the person in that position. We use the word “trust” here. The officers at the Legislature, whether it's the commissioner of the environment, the Integrity Commissioner, or in this case,

the Ombudsman—Mr. Marin is wont to have his picture in the paper the odd time. I would say that he's—

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** Nineteen times in his report.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** There you go, the Minister of the Environment. I wish he'd call my mayor in Clarington and have a discussion with him, because he's concerned about things that I'm trying to be heard on. It turns out that—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** I thank the member from Durham, but it being 10:15, he will continue where he left off at a future date.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

*The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.*

#### WEARING OF PINS

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Introduction of guests: the member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

**Mr. Michael Harris:** Actually, on a point of order, Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent that all members of the Legislature be permitted to wear pins in honour and remembrance of the battle of Vimy Ridge, as today is Vimy Ridge Day. They're laid upon each member's desk.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Kitchener–Conestoga is seeking unanimous consent to wear the ribbons for Vimy Ridge Day. Do we agree? Agreed.

The Minister of Consumer Services.

**Hon. Tracy MacCharles:** Thank you, Speaker. Also on a point of order, I believe you will find we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear the daffodil pins today in recognition of the Canadian Cancer Society's Daffodil Month.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The Minister of Consumer Services is seeking unanimous consent to wear the ribbons. Do we agree? Agreed.

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** I want to welcome the Holy Trinity Catholic High School from Bradford, who will soon be joining us. I'd ask all members to help welcome them.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** I'd like to introduce my neighbour from the great township of Coleman, Ken Laffrenier, who just happens to be the father of our great page, Callista.

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** I'd like to introduce Christina Thomson, the senior executive assistant of the mayor of Kingston; my long-suffering chief of staff, Sabrina Grando; and the employee I've had the longest in my office, Mary Yoannidis. They're both here to observe this.

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** I'd like to introduce Henry Koskamp, from my riding of Perth–Wellington, who

helps to operate Koskamp Family Farms, and a friend of his from Stayner, Andy Van Niekerk. Welcome.

**Hon. Bill Mauro:** I'd like to introduce to the House my newest staff member, sitting in the east lobby for his very first time in question period, Mr. Peter Rankin.

**Hon. Tracy MacCharles:** We're joined today by individuals from the Canadian Cancer Society. I'd like to specifically welcome Ray Ong, Saajid Motala and Andrew Noble, and thank them for all the wonderful work they do.

**Mr. Monte McNaughton:** These guests haven't arrived yet, but I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today Bryan and Heather Smith, from my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. They live in Lucan, Ontario.

**Mrs. Amrit Mangat:** I would like to welcome Ronnie Gavsie, president and CEO of the Trillium Gift of Life Network, and Carrie Dyson, communications adviser at the Trillium Gift of Life Network. They are in the east members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Hon. Yasir Naqvi:** The guests are not in the House, but I'm sure they'll be in soon. I want to welcome Anne Leonard, from Arrive Alive Drive Sober; Gwyn Chapman, from Parents 4 Safe Communities; Carol Fagan, from Fight Against Impaired Driving; and Matt Evans, of Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mr. Monte McNaughton:** I have another guest coming to Queen's Park today from Lucan, in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. I'd like to welcome Bill Smith to Queen's Park today.

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** We are joined today in the public galleries by members of the Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists, including Peggy Allen, president, and Mary Cook, executive director. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Hon. Ted McMeekin:** I don't think they're here yet, but we are being visited today by Chris May and some of his colleagues from the Chartered Professional Accountants association. We want to welcome them to Queen's Park.

**Mr. Rick Bartolucci:** She's not here yet, but I want to inform the House that one of our legislative security officers, Maria Mangoni, has just returned from successfully running the marathon in Rome. She is one of 19,000 who ran it and one of very few who finished it. Congratulations, Maria.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** That just proves that you cannot outrun security, so don't try.

We have with us today, in the Speaker's gallery, a parliamentary delegation from the Scottish Parliament: the Right Honourable Tricia Marwick, the Speaker of the Scottish Parliament; Ms. Linda Fabiani, member of Scottish Parliament; and Ms. Rhoda Grant, member of Scottish Parliament. Welcome to Ontario. Thank you for being here.

I'm told that the Speaker is going to grade me today, so I'm not sure whether or not I'm going to pass.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member for Simcoe–Grey.

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** I seek consent to stand down the PC lead questions until the fifth PC rotation.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** We will stand down the rotation. I do not believe it is unanimous consent. It's basically just information for us.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** We do need consent? Sorry. All right. I've been schooled again. We do need consent. Do we agree? Agreed.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I'm sorry. The reality was that I heard some heckling, and I wasn't sure if it was a yes.

Do we have agreement? Agreed.

The leader of the third party, on questions.

## POWER PLANTS

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, David Nicholl, the bureaucrat responsible for government record-keeping, said that he knew the government's own security branch was investigating the possibility that Liberal staff had been illegally wiping computers.

When did the Premier learn that her own government was investigating deleted hard drives?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** As I have said many times in this House, I learned of the allegations against the former Premier's chief of staff on March 27 when those became public.

There is an investigation ongoing. I do not have the details of that investigation. I will not interfere with that investigation. I really believe that we need to let that investigation roll out.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** The Premier has now repeated again that she was as shocked as anyone when the allegation of breach of trust broke out on March 27. The Premier knew, however, that there were multiple investigations happening and knew they were affecting her offices. The Premier said she was as surprised as anyone, but what exactly did the Premier think the police were looking for?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Again, I did; I learned of the allegations on March 27—that is absolutely true—like everyone else. The investigation is ongoing. I am not going to interfere with that investigation, nor do I have the details of that investigation, and that's as it should be.

What I did when I came into this office, as I have said to the member opposite: As I opened up the process, I made it clear that there were questions that had been asked that needed answers, and that there were documents that needed to be provided to committee. The scope of the committee was expanded. We have provided those hundreds of thousands of pages of documents. I

have appeared before the committee twice, and there have been dozens of people who have appeared before that committee and have answered the questions the committee has asked.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I'm asking specifically about when the Premier knew that there were investigations going on in her offices. Of 22 staff who had their computers wiped, nine of those people are still Liberal staffers. Three of them are in the Premier's office. One works for her in agriculture and food. Two of them have been promoted to chief-of-staff roles.

The government has been seized with this scandal for over a year, but the Premier seems to be saying she was as surprised as anyone when the news broke on the 27th of March. Is the Premier saying that none of her staff ever told her about this?

1040

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** You know, it was common knowledge that there was an investigation into questions about record-keeping. We had conversations with the Information and Privacy Commissioner. The rules were changed as a result of conversations with the Information and Privacy Commissioner. We knew that the privacy commissioner was looking into this last spring.

The OPP investigation was known about, last June. That was common knowledge. The allegations, the recent allegations, I first knew about on March 27, because I am not interfering in the investigation. It is ongoing; it was known that it was in place; and it will continue to roll out. I will continue not to interfere in that investigation.

## POWER PLANTS

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My next question is also for the Premier. Yesterday, media reports indicated that the OPP are still hoping to talk to a number of individuals, including Dalton McGuinty, the man whose legacy the Premier is sworn to uphold. Does the Premier think that Dalton McGuinty should agree to be interviewed by the OPP anti-rackets group?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Again, the investigation is ongoing. The investigation will include people as the individuals leading it choose. I have no control over that.

As the leader of the third party knows, the former Premier, Dalton McGuinty, has appeared twice before the committee. I have appeared twice before the committee. I have done everything in my power to make sure that, as questions have been asked, they have been answered, and I will continue to do that.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I was asking about the OPP investigation. You know, it's not just Dalton McGuinty; the report indicates that the OPP is hoping to talk to several key Liberals, including the former chief of staff and his deputies. At committee, the OPP indicated that some of those folks have declined to do so. Does the Premier think they should talk to police?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I think that the leader of the third party knows full well that I do not have control over every person who might be asked to come before a committee.

I know that there have been people who have been asked to come before the committee who were former PC candidates, for example, and they have not shown up. I think individuals make their decisions.

My decision was to appear before the committee twice. We have done everything in our power to co-operate with the people who are asking questions and make sure that they get those answers. We have done that repeatedly; we will continue to do that.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Mr. Speaker, I'm talking about the OPP anti-rackets squad request to speak to people. The Premier says this is an open and accountable government that respects the value of taxpayers' dollars, but all that people see are Liberals avoiding accountability and a Premier scrambling to distance herself from the legacy of Dalton McGuinty.

Can the Premier answer a very simple question? As leader of the Liberal Party, will she urge all fellow Liberals to co-operate fully with the OPP investigation?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Mr. Speaker, I have been clear: This is an investigation over which I have no control. I am not interfering with the investigation. It is up to the OPP, who are directing the investigation, to continue to do that. I will continue to not interfere in that. As we are asked questions, as the committee does its business, we will continue to co-operate in every way.

#### POWER PLANTS

**Mr. Victor Fedeli:** Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. When the people of Ontario heard about these wiped computers in your office, they were furious. They knew it all along; they felt it in their bones. Now the OPP are hot on the trail.

If somebody dropped this in my lap without warning, I'd be apoplectic. I'd come out swinging. Your reaction? You're concerned. If you really didn't know anything, why weren't you furious with these people and demanding answers from them?

The only people you seem to be mad at are the PCs, the very people who are exposing your scandal. So instead of fighting to get to the truth, you're fighting to keep the truth from coming out. That's not what people expect from a Premier. They want someone who will fight for them, not someone who is fighting against them.

Premier, why are you fighting against the truth coming out?

*Interjections.*

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

Premier?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I know that the government House leader is going to want to comment on the

latest details around the committee, but I just want to say this: I really believe that it is my responsibility as the Premier and the leader of this party, it is my responsibility as the leader of this government, to make sure that over-the-top rhetoric is not part of my modus operandi. What I have a responsibility to do is to make sure that as questions are asked, we answer them; if there is a process that needs to be changed, we change that process; if there are rules that need to be changed, then we change those rules. That's exactly what we've been doing.

My responsibility is to take action to make sure that, as we go forward, mistakes that were made are not made again, and we ensure that we have all of the information that is asked for made available. That's my responsibility.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Victor Fedeli:** Premier, many in our caucus have spent a lot of time getting to the bottom of your gas plant scandal. We've all seen the systematic attempts to keep us from getting the truth out. You say you brought in the Auditor General, but that's only after the Liberals blocked us from doing it. You say you weren't involved in the Oakville scandal, yet we found your signature on the documents that kick-started this whole scheme. You say you weren't involved in Mississauga, but you co-chaired the campaign when it was cancelled.

Premier, those steady hands of yours have left a lot of fingerprints on the gas plant scandal. Does the committee have to call you in a third time to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

*Interjections.*

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

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Government House leader.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Mr. Speaker, I listened very, very carefully to the member from Nipissing's question, and he seemed to leave out the fact that his party made the exact same promise in the last election. He forgot to mention that his leader posted a video on YouTube saying that if he was elected Premier, the gas plant would be done, done, done. He forgot to mention the fact that when we asked Progressive Conservative candidates to come forward in the committee to talk about the policy analysis they had done, the costing they had done, to ask the same questions they're asking, they miraculously couldn't appear. Despite the fact that one even said she would appear, she surprisingly, at the last minute, said, "Oh, no, I can't."

Please, it's a little rich for them to be standing up to talk about getting to the bottom when the fact of the matter is that there are all these inconvenient facts that they leave—

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

#### POWER PLANTS

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** My question is to the Premier. Premier, long before your date of March 27, when you



say you first found out about this, government services had a forensic investigation of the deleted emails and deleted hard drives in the Premier's office. On September 5, they had identified that 24 hard drives in the Premier's office had been deleted.

Did the Premier ever discuss with your Minister of Government Services that investigation?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Minister of Government Services.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Again, I would direct the honourable member, I would direct all honourable members, to the document that was made public through the court proceedings about two weeks ago. That clearly references the reporter investigation that he's talking about as part of the OPP investigation.

I can inform the honourable member that, as Minister of Government Services, I had a discussion with my deputy early on where I indicated to him that any interaction between my ministry and the OPP—I did not wish to know anything about it, to be briefed on it or to be in any way connected, because I wanted to make sure that it was fully independent.

I am pleased to say that the deputy and members of my ministry respected that. I was given no information about any work being undertaken by the Ministry of Government Services.

Again, let's let the OPP continue their work.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** That is an unbelievable answer to the question. Nine of the 22 staff, Premier, whose computers were wiped are still Liberal staffers. Three of them still work in your office, and one who used to work in the Premier's office works daily with the government House leader.

My question to the government services minister: Did you raise—yes or no—this issue, before the date the Premier said, directly with her?

1050

**Hon. John Milloy:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure where the New Democrats have been for the last year or so. I have an article here from June 7, 2013, which outlines the news that the OPP is conducting an investigation into this matter. That was a matter of public record, now going on close to a year.

As I just indicated, I felt the prudent course, as minister, was that I in no way be involved or have knowledge of the OPP investigation because, unlike members of the opposition, I respect the independence of the NDP—

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** OPP.

**Hon. John Milloy:** OPP. I correct my record, Mr. Speaker.

I also respect the independence of the NDP, Mr. Speaker.

As the OPP indicated, interference by politicians could, in fact, jeopardize the investigation.

#### ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

**Ms. Soo Wong:** My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, as you know, today is the Inter-

national Day of Pink. The Day of Pink is an anti-bullying initiative which began in Nova Scotia after a grade 9 student was bullied in school for wearing pink. Two students who witnessed the incident bought pink shirts to fight against bullying and stand with the student.

Young people across Canada, including schools in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, are wearing pink today to draw attention to the harmful effects of bullying.

This demonstrates the importance of speaking up against all forms of discrimination and homophobia. It also demonstrates that, together, we can stop bullying and end discrimination, particularly in our schools.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can she please inform the House why it is so important that our schools are welcoming and safe places for Ontario students?

**Hon. Liz Sandals:** Thank you to the member for Scarborough—Agincourt for her question.

It is so important that we all take a stand and say we will not accept bullying in our schools.

As chair of the Safe Schools Action Team and Minister of Education, I visited schools all across the province that are taking a stand against bullying. I think of one school in Guelph where I visited with the students in the gay-straight alliance, the GSA, at this school. They told me that one of the things they had done that had the greatest impact was that they arranged to meet with the staff in the staff cafeteria and had a very open conversation with the staff about things the staff could do differently in the school to create a better atmosphere for gay and lesbian students.

Another student told me that she wasn't gay, she wasn't a lesbian, but that the GSA had supported her in her bullying situation—

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

**Ms. Soo Wong:** Initiatives like the International Day of Pink show that our young people want to stand up to bullying. But we know that bullying doesn't just happen in our classrooms. It occurs on the Internet, on websites like Facebook and Twitter. We also know there have been tragic incidents of young people taking their lives because of the bullying they have received in the classroom and online.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can she inform the House what our government is doing to combat bullying outside the classroom?

**Hon. Liz Sandals:** The member is absolutely correct: Bullying often does occur outside the school, which is why, for the first time in Ontario, we have recognized cyberbullying in legislation and included cyberbullying as part of the definition of bullying.

We've also given principals the authority to take action when there is bullying that takes place online that has a negative impact on the school.

I think of one school that I visited here in Toronto that took action beyond just looking at student cyberbullying. They actually set up an email line where kids could report bullying online. The vice-principal monitored that, and the school was able to set up workshops for the kids

about homophobia, racism and ethnic discrimination and deal with all sorts of facets as a whole school community and reduce bullying.

### POWER PLANTS

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** My question is for the Premier.

Premier, since you were appointed by the Liberal Party a year ago, you've talked a lot about running an open government and wanting to engage in a lot of conversations. This makes your recent behaviour hard to explain. A few weeks ago, your House leader accused my colleague the member from Nipissing of divulging confidential documents to the public. That was quickly exposed as nothing but a ploy to cover up your own incompetence and distract attention from your scandals.

Premier, you're at it again. Your attempts at intimidation against our leader, Tim Hudak, and the member from Nepean–Carleton are unwarranted and undemocratic. It is our job as the official opposition to question and hold your scandal-plagued government to account. Will you drop this charade today and get on with the task of providing Ontarians some hope? If you won't, we'll be glad to do it.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Before I go to the Premier, I'm going to offer advice to all members that we should not be tiptoeing around unparliamentary language to the best of our ability. If it gets there, I'll let you know.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Government House leader.

**Hon. John Milloy:** We all recognize the fact that this is a time for debate, this is a time for discussion, but at the same time, all of us inside the House and outside the House have to stick to the facts. I've shared quotes before. I have a new one from the Ottawa Citizen. I believe it's today, April 9: "The Tories seem to have no real theory of what happened. The idea may be to fling as much muck as possible and hope Ontarians blame Kathleen Wynne for something."

The fact is, we need to be dealing with facts, and I am pleased and I am proud that the Premier has consulted her lawyers in this. As I've noted a number of times, the member from Nepean–Carleton is familiar with this situation. It was not that long ago that she, as a result of a lawsuit, had to retract something that she had written. That's all we ask: Deal with the facts and apologize and withdraw those things that are not—

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

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Back to the Premier: Premier, through the information to obtain and the justice committee, we've learned a lot about how your party made the decision to cancel the gas plants and the efforts made by Liberal operatives to systematically destroy the evidence. We have reason to believe that the wrongdoing occurred at the highest level of your McGuinty-Wynne government. There's much to be uncovered, and despite your efforts, we're going to keep asking the questions that you don't want answers to.

Premier, is it not true that the reason you initiated this frivolous action is because you know the OPP's investigation could still take some time, and you're afraid of other embarrassing revelations coming out prior to a potential spring election? I'll ask you again: Will you drop this today and let us get on with the jobs we've all been sent here to do?

**Hon. John Milloy:** Again, we're asking people to deal with the facts. I know everyone in the House likes when I do this. Let's tell you that the reviews are in. Let's share some of them. Toronto Star, April 1: The Leader of the Opposition "went far beyond what the facts show." Toronto Star, again, April 1: The Leader of the Opposition is "inventing fanciful scenarios about the first days of Wynne's premiership." Ottawa Citizen, April 1: The PCs "asked repeatedly whether Wynne's computer was among those wiped, which makes little sense: the police are crystal clear that they're interested in computers in McGuinty's office, where Wynne did not work." Globe and Mail editorial, April 1: "Ontario Progressive Conservative leader ... is on thin legal ice." The Globe and Mail editorial goes on to say that the Leader of the Opposition's "claim that Premier Wynne was personally behind any wiping of government computers, when there is no evidence to support such an allegation, goes too far."

Let's deal with the facts, and if they're not, they're going to hear from the Premier's—

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

### NUCLEAR POWER FACILITIES

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** My question is to the Minister of Energy. The CEO of Bruce Power is front and centre in today's newspapers, calling on the government to sell off more of our electricity system to private operators—specifically him. Is that the government's plan?

**Hon. Bob Chiarelli:** Many of us here in this chamber know Duncan Hawthorne quite well. He has a very distinctive way of communicating. However, he also is an entrepreneur, and he's going to do whatever he can to generate benefits for his shareholders.

The government is not currently looking at the disposing of any of our energy companies. Our updated long-term energy plan sets out the refurbishment schedule for Bruce's units and for OPG's units. Mr. Speaker, there's an unbelievable level of co-operation now between OPG and Bruce Power on how they can generate efficiencies in moving forward with that significant project.

1100

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** Families who are stuck paying the highest hydro bills in Canada get a little anxious when they hear "Liberal" and "private power deal" in the same sentence.

It has been clear for some time that the folks at Bruce Power and TransCanada—TransCanada, who did very well out of the gas plant scandal, by the way—are hoping

to create a private monopoly in nuclear power. Will the minister take that idea off the table?

**Hon. Bob Chiarelli:** Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to work to generate efficiencies in the electricity system, whether we're partnering with the private sector or other public entities.

He raises the question of electricity prices. As I said on other days in this Legislature, when you look at the comparative numbers from a third party independent—Quebec Hydro—the price in Ottawa is 12.39 cents per kilowatt hour; Toronto, 12.48 cents; Edmonton, 13.9 cents; Calgary, 14.8 cents; Halifax, 15.45 cents. If you want to look at the US comparison, which the other party looks at frequently, Detroit is 15.54 cents, Boston, 16.50 cents, New York, 21.75 cents. We are competitive, and we're not going to listen to your BS.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Excuse me.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** There's no point of order. Just stop.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Order.

New question.

#### ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

**Mr. Grant Crack:** Thank you, and good morning, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. As our government transforms Ontario's transportation network, it is crucial that we ensure that we bring new economic opportunities to each and every part of this province. This is important to me, as I represent a rural community, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

On Friday, the minister made an announcement in North Bay on the future of the ONTC. Yesterday, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane asked the minister to clarify our plan forward on the ONTC. However, Speaker, I believe the member appeared to need some clarification on some of the major facts regarding the ONTC.

Speaker, through you to the minister: How is our government delivering transit solutions and providing certainty for communities in northeastern Ontario?

**Hon. Michael Gravelle:** I want to thank the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for the question and an opportunity to clarify some important facts that were maybe set out incorrectly yesterday.

I do think it's fair to say that all members recognize that there have been tremendous changes in the telecommunications industry. From our perspective, and I think it would probably be shared by many, it doesn't make a great deal of sense for a government to continue to run a telecommunications company that's in direct competition with the private sector. So indeed we have reached a purchase agreement with Bell Aliant to purchase Ontera. To inform the member opposite on an important point:

Ontera has been losing money over the past decade, in terms of their costs exceeding their revenues. This particular purchase agreement with Bell Aliant will give the province value within three years. Bell is better positioned to attract industry partners and invest in capital. We're going to continue to make sure services are provided to communities in Iroquois Falls, Temagami, Marten River, Tilden Lake, Moosonee and Moose Factory and all—

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

**Mr. Grant Crack:** Thank you, Minister, for that clarification. It's obvious that the minister has taken the needed action to find a sustainable solution for the ONTC while providing certainty for northeastern Ontario residents.

The minister mentioned funding to the ONTC for core transportation services for northeastern Ontario. We all know that providing investments in transportation services and infrastructure assists economic growth and benefits many sectors.

Speaker, can the minister tell us of the new strategic investments that are being made to improve the ONTC's transportation service and infrastructure and the economic benefits that we can expect?

**Hon. Michael Gravelle:** There's no question about it: There were some very necessary improvements to continue transformation of the ONTC. A sustainable and a bright future is very much possible for the ONTC.

The decisions that were made and the recommendations that came from the ministerial advisory committee in particular determined that focusing on core transportation services was absolutely crucial. We will continue to operate motor coaches—the bus service—the Polar Bear Express, freight rail and refurbishment services. They will be staying in public hands.

With a \$23.2-million investment added on to that over three years to improve service and the accessibility of motor coach services—we're purchasing 11 new buses—and to refurbish passenger coaches for the Polar Bear Express, we're making real improvements and providing a bright future. By reaching this decision, we are also providing much-needed certainty to the future of the ONTC. Transforming the ONTC is part of our plan to ensure a prosperous regional economy that attracts more people and more investment in northern Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I want to bring some clarity to an issue. The member from Toronto–Danforth stood on a point of order. We do not traditionally and conventionally entertain points of order during question period, but we will entertain them after. There was a purpose and a reason for his point of order and it goes back to what I have been exercising, and that is to try to listen carefully to what people say in the House, and regrettably—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I would ask the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex not to intervene.

I do not always hear things that are said in the House because of the heckling and because of the volume of noise. If any member wishes to stand and withdraw or correct their record, I would ask all honourable members to do so, if anyone said anything that they should not have.

Minister of Energy?

**Hon. Bob Chiarelli:** I withdraw the comment that I made, Mr. Speaker.

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

New question? This is, for clarity's sake, the lead question.

#### AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

**Mr. Frank Klees:** That's right.

My question is to the Minister of Health. The criminal investigations that are reaching into the offices of the Premier and ministers in this government will ultimately expose the pervasive corruption of this government. While the focus, to date, has been on the Premier's office and on ministers and on political staff, it appears now that civil servants have been co-opted into highly unethical conduct as well. That's precisely what's taking place in the Ministry of Health.

Can the minister tell us why Assistant Deputy Minister Patricia Li and the new head of the air ambulance oversight, Richard Jackson, would direct ministry staff to alter a letter to say that the Ministry of Health did not have a copy of the forensic investigation team's audit report on Ornge when they both knew that there were copies in the ministry at that time?

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

As I did listen carefully, I'm going to ask the member to withdraw.

**Mr. Frank Klees:** Withdraw.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Minister of Health and Long-Term Care?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** What I can say to the member opposite is that Ornge has been under a lot of scrutiny and, as the member knows, the committee has been meeting for a long time. We have legislation before the House, Bill 11, that would complete the work that needs to be done to bring the appropriate oversight to Ornge.

In terms of the specific question that the member has asked, I will undertake to look into that allegation. It is certainly not behaviour that I am aware of, nor would I condone.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Frank Klees:** Apparently some emails survived this government's cleansing. Here is an email trail that was gleaned from a dump of emails to the public accounts committee just last week. In the first email, Charles Meehan of the Ministry of Health wrote the following: "The only edit is a sentence"—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The Minister of the Environment, second time.

**Mr. Frank Klees:**—"added after discussions with Patricia Li." This is an email sent to the solicitor at the Attorney General responsible for the Ministry of Health. The edit, he says, "is intended to clarify that the Ministry of Health does not have a copy of the report and that no staff in the ministry have read or accessed the ... report."

Here was the response from Paul Kaufman, in the Ministry of the Attorney General. He said, "I don't know how we can say this—my understanding is that the ministry does have possession ... so the statement is not true."

Can the minister tell us: Why is her—

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Thank you. Stop the clock.

*Interjections.*

1110

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

I will remind the member that when I say "Thank you," that's the end of your time for questioning, and when I stand up, you sit down. Stop, please.

The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** It appears to me that the emails make it clear that they corrected when they found an error.

As I said, I will look into this issue. What I can tell you is that progress at Ornge is significant under the new leadership of Ian Delaney and the CEO, Dr. Andrew McCallum. We have seen a remarkable improvement in the quality of care. I think the member opposite would agree that, under the new leadership and the volunteer board at Ornge, we have seen significant improvements.

Ornge is into a new chapter. The right changes are being and have been made. I look forward to discussing that more.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** New question? The member from Newmarket–Aurora.

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I'm not talking about Ornge; I'm talking about the Ministry of Health. I'm talking about the assistant deputy minister who has oversight responsibility for Ornge. She is the one who directed staff in her own ministry to falsify a statement regarding a matter taking place in the Ministry of Health. That is what happened.

I'd like to know this, because 11 months after that record was changed at the direction of the assistant deputy minister, the minister herself testified that there were no copies of that record because they had forwarded it directly to the OPP. I want to know from this minister: What can we rely on to be the truth that we've heard from her or any of her civil servants on this file?

*Interjections.*

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

I correct my record. It was the final supplementary.

Minister?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I think those of us who are paying attention to what the member from Newmarket–

Aurora has done in the past would have confidence in knowing that he might not have the whole story. He has a remarkably consistent track record in bringing forward just part of the story.

What I can tell you is that Paul Kaufman is our ministry lawyer. He noticed that an error had been made and corrected that error. Thank you, Speaker.

#### AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

**Mr. Frank Klees:** Again, I'm going to direct this to the Premier. I'd like to know from the Premier if she sees a contradiction here, because we certainly do. On the one hand, the Premier professes a new era of open and accountable government, and yet she has just observed her own Minister of Health sidestepping a very direct question about the conduct of her assistant deputy minister.

She now stands up in her place and tells me that I have the facts wrong. I have emails that say very clearly what happened. Even after Mr. Kaufman alerted the fact that this is not true, guess what? Her own civil service under Mr. Richard Jackson came back and said, "Well, let's word it this way." Mr. Kaufman came back and said, "No, it's still not true."

I'm asking the Premier this: Who can we believe in your government? You have civil servants now who are not telling the truth. Your minister stands up for them. Where is your transparency? Where is your accountability? What is your definition of truth?

*Interjections.*

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

Premier?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Speaker, as I said in the original question, I will certainly look into the allegations raised by the member from Newmarket–Aurora. I can also say that he has raised many questions in this House, has made other allegations in this House, and every time I follow up on them, as I undertake to do, almost without exception he gets his facts wrong.

I will happily look into this allegation as well.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Frank Klees:** Well, that's very interesting, because the first time I raised concerns about Ornge, the minister deflected it, and guess what? There is now a criminal investigation into that organization.

Back to the Premier: On the one hand, the Premier is asking us to support anti-SLAPP legislation in this place. That's before this House now. Yet the Premier is carrying on in the tradition of Dalton McGuinty to sue the very people who are bringing forward facts that should be examined by this Legislature.

Can the Premier tell me this: How does she square bringing anti-SLAPP legislation before this Legislature and herself laying lawsuits against the leader of the official opposition and the member from Nepean–Carleton to

in fact ensure that the real issues are not dealt with? How does she square that?

*Interjections.*

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

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Durham, come to order. The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, second—actually, maybe even third time.

Minister of Health.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Well, thank you, Speaker. I believe that that was supposed to have been a supplementary. I'm not sure that it had anything to do with the first question.

What I can repeat is that I will look into these allegations, as I have always looked into the allegations raised in this House by the member from Newmarket–Aurora and by others, and I will happily report back on what I find.

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

**Mr. Frank Klees:** The fact of the matter is that my question was not to the Minister of Health. It was a very direct question to the Premier about how she can square sitting there listening to her Minister of Health avoid the truth when, in fact, she is committed to transparency.

I'm going to ask the Premier one more time—

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I have been listening very carefully. Please withdraw. Let's not weave in and out of this. Just withdraw, and then ask your question.

**Mr. Frank Klees:** I'll withdraw, and I'll ask the Premier a very straightforward question. I asked her to define how she considers truth. What is her definition of truth? I asked her that question, and she refused to answer that.

The people in this province are very confused about that as well. What she has chosen to do is to refer the matter to the courts. I'm going to suggest that I believe that, in the end, it will be a court that makes the decision about this government—it will be the court of public opinion. The court of public opinion—

*Interjections.*

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

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** To the Premier.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I'm happy to answer the question of the member opposite. I had referred the first question because it was a health question, and then the question changed.

Let me just say this, Mr. Speaker: What I believe is in the best interests of the politics of this province, the political discourse and serving the people of the province is that we deal with facts. The only reason that I have challenged the allegations and accusations of the Leader of the Opposition is that they are not based in fact. Otherwise, I would be happy to continue to discuss the

issues around the placement of energy infrastructure and the rules we have changed around the retention of documents, but I will not debate allegations that are completely false.

### POWER PLANTS

**Mr. Douglas C. Holyday:** My question is to the Premier—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Excuse me. Stop the clock, please. How this place works is to come to order when the Speaker asks. I'm going to ask the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to come to order.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The minister responsible for seniors can hide his face all he wants. I'm not impressed. Think about this.

The member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

**Mr. Douglas C. Holyday:** My question is for the Premier. Just about every day there are questions on the gas plant. Just about every day, you deflect some of the questions off to your House leader. Just about every day, the House leader tries to implicate the rest of the House in the decision made by your Liberal government by saying that everyone was a party to wanting to get the gas plants taken down.

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Now, this might even be true, but the mistake was putting them there in the first place, and I think it's high time that you quit sidestepping responsibility for blowing 1.1 billion tax dollars and get the House leader to admit the fact that it was putting them up in the first place that caused the problem. When are you going to do that?

*Interjections.*

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

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to remark that it's great that the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore has paid very close attention to the answers that we've been giving, because it's very clear that this was a decision that all of the parties had taken, that all of the parties had decided, and we implemented the promise that they had made.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Douglas C. Holyday:** Mr. Speaker, the fact is that it was the Liberal government that built those plants in the wrong place in the first instance and wasted \$1.1 billion. They also could have rectified the problem without spending all that money if they had just taken some time and done it in the proper way, but they were so concerned about getting on with an election, they didn't care about tax dollars. I want to know: When are we going to get some accountability from your government, and when are you going to quit sidestepping responsibility?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Government House leader.

**Hon. John Milloy:** I have a whole binder of quotes here, Mr. Speaker, and once we go through Hansard, I think I'll be able to add some more.

But don't believe me; this is the document that the OPP filed with the courts. You'll want to hear it.

"In September 2011, a provincial election campaign began and the Liberal Party"—this is the OPP—"of Ontario promised to cancel the construction of the plant in Mississauga if they were elected. The Ontario Progressive Conservatives and the New Democratic Party also made similar promises if elected.

"On the 6th of October 2011, the Liberal Party won the provincial election and formed a minority government. Even though they made the same promise during the election, the opposing parties"—

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

### MINING SAFETY

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is to the Premier. This week, we learned of yet another tragic death in an Ontario mine; 36-year-old Paul Rochette, a millwright with two young children, was killed on Sunday in Vale's Copper Cliff smelter.

It has been 30 years since a provincial commission investigated mine safety. Since then, scores of miners in Ontario have been killed, and thousands of others have been injured. Last year, the Premier rejected a public inquiry into mine safety and instead chose a review, but at the very first of public hearings in Timmins and Kirkland Lake, the government didn't advertise or even put out so much as a press release or media advisory to invite participants. Does the Premier think this is acceptable?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** The Minister of Labour.

**Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** Thank you to the honourable member for this question. I think all of us in the House were saddened to hear of this incident, and I know that our thoughts are with the worker, his family and his colleagues.

As this investigation specifically is ongoing, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the specifics of this issue, but what I will tell you is that this government is committed to protecting the health and safety of miners and all workers in the province of Ontario. We know, and we agree, that it's time to thoroughly take a long look at mine safety in this province.

The Chief Prevention Officer for the province of Ontario has undertaken a comprehensive mining safety review. We have an advisory group with industry, labour, and health and safety representatives. We are going to continue this review, because what we know is that we need to improve mine safety, and we need to make it even safer in the province of Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Saying the right words is simply not good enough. On April 28, the day of mourning for injured workers, MPPs across this province attend ceremonies to remember those who are killed or injured

on the job. As elected representatives, we need to do everything in our power to end workplace deaths and injuries.

The Premier refuses to conduct an inquiry. Will she commit today that the government review panel into mining safety will have the resources necessary to conduct numerous site visits to mining operations both below ground and above ground and advertise them with vigour?

*Interjections.*

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** And it would be nice if the Liberal caucus over there paid attention to this question, because people are dying on the job in Ontario and they should be doing something about it.

*Interjections.*

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

Minister of Labour?

**Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** I would like the House to know that the review has been under way for some time. It was under way before this incident took place and it's going to continue.

Ontario's Chief Prevention Officer has undertaken that review with an advisory group that is comprised of industry reps, labour reps, and health and safety reps. Public consultations are being held right now. They've already been to Timmins, Kirkland Lake and Sudbury; they are going on to Marathon and London in the future.

I am encouraging all Ontarians who are interested in this very important issue to register, attend these sessions and provide their comments as to how we can make mine safety an important issue in this province, which obviously needs to have some more attention—that we need to improve safety. We can make it even safer, I believe, if we all work together and we get all viewpoints on this.

## ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

**Mrs. Amrit Mangat:** My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. We were to have a very special visitor with us in the House today. Unfortunately, he has not been able to join us, but I would like to tell all of you a little bit about him.

Eleven years ago, at the age of 65, Merv Sheppard became the oldest lung transplant recipient in the history of Toronto General Hospital's program. Since then, he has been working tirelessly with wait-listed patients, recipients and families to help them understand the transplant process.

Merv's selfless work is an inspiration to me and others across this province. It also reminds us of the importance of organ donation. April is Be a Donor Month. The Trillium Gift of Life Network is working with its partners to encourage Ontarians to register to be an organ and tissue donor.

My question for the minister is: How can we best follow Merv's example and each do our part to encourage more Ontarians to help save lives?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Thank you to the very fine member from Mississauga–Brampton South for that question. I want to join the member in thanking Merv Sheppard for all the work that he has done. I know that he has recently been recognized by the Trillium Gift of Life Network's board of directors for his tireless dedication to raising awareness about organ and tissue donation and transplantation. I know all members in the House join me in congratulating him.

Social media can be a very effective tool, particularly when it comes to reaching out to younger people. That's why TGLN has been very active on Facebook, on YouTube and on Twitter to encourage more people to register their intent to donate their organs.

Today is Trillium Gift of Life Network's MPP Twitter day. I want everyone in the House today to join me in tweeting their support of organ and tissue donation. Here's my tweet: "It takes two minutes to save eight lives. Register to be an organ donor now @ beadonor.ca #beadonor #beahero #howcanyounot."

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mrs. Amrit Mangat:** I know we can all do more as individuals to encourage more Ontarians to register online at beadonor.ca. Make a power of attorney so that someone they trust will ensure their wishes are followed.

But government has a responsibility too, and I am convinced that our government can play a positive role in getting more Ontarians to register as donors.

**1130**

I would like to ask the minister, through you, Speaker, what our government is doing to increase organ and tissue donation rates and decrease wait-list times for patients awaiting life-saving transplants.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Speaker, organ and tissue donation is one of the greatest gifts any person can give. One person's donation can save up to eight lives and help another 75 through tissue grafts.

I'm proud to say that 2012-13 was a record year, with 1,009 organ transplants in Ontario, 63% more than in 2003, and we've more than doubled the number of registered donors. Some 2.8 million of us are now registered, but that's still less than one in four Ontarians. It's good progress, but it's not enough.

The launch of beadonor.ca has made it easier than ever for Ontarians to become donors. TGLN's Gift of 8 campaign increased registered donors in communities right across Ontario, and we now ask people in all Service-Ontario centres if they'd like to sign up for organ and tissue donation when they renew their driver's licence or Ontario photo cards.

Together, we'll continue to register more Ontarians to be organ and tissue donors.

## POWER PLANTS

**Mr. Todd Smith:** My question this morning is for the Premier.

Premier, yesterday I asked you how much of your taxpayer-funded salary was spent on your personal legal

drama that's playing out here at Queen's Park, and you responded by telling me that you like to run.

Well, we know that you like to run from scandals. We know you like to run from accountability. We know you like to run from the legacy of that Premier you idolized and sat next to for 10 years. Heck, this morning—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Finish, please.

**Mr. Todd Smith:** Mr. Speaker, this morning she even ran from very pointed questions directed at her from the member from Newmarket–Aurora—but I digress.

Since you wouldn't answer my question yesterday, I'll give you another shot: How many hours were taxpayers paying your salary so you could deal with legal—

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

Premier?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** The point I was making yesterday was that I work full-time every day for the people of this province. I start early in the morning and I end late at night, and I will continue to do that.

I will continue to push for debate that is rooted in fact. That is what I will continue to push for.

So I'll continue my schedule, and I reiterate my offer—I didn't see you this morning at a quarter to 6, but I'd be happy to see you tomorrow morning.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Todd Smith:** Back to the Premier. I was busy on my elliptical machine, myself.

We all know that the Premier likes treating taxpayers like her own personal piggy bank, and that's what got us into the mess in the first place. You think that taxpayers are your own ATM machine. But using taxpayer resources to deal with your personal legal problems—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I don't need the member from Etobicoke North to help me.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I want the Minister of Rural Affairs to come to order, I want the member from Eglinton–Lawrence to come to order, and I want the Minister of Energy to come to order.

**Mr. Todd Smith:** Thank you, Speaker. They're getting quite a workout there this morning, aren't they?

They shouldn't be using taxpayer resources to deal with a very personal legal scandal. This is all about the gas plant scandal. They can't spin it anymore. Government resources are used to communicate it, publicize it, plan it—how many taxpayer dollars are you using on your own little legal drama?

*Interjections.*

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

Premier?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to be very, very clear with the member opposite and the people of the province: There are no tax dollars being used in order to advance the legal case. Those bills are

being paid by the Ontario Liberal Party. I would not use tax dollars for that purpose.

Let's just understand what is at stake here. The political discourse in this province must be rooted in fact. I do not take legal action lightly. It is not something that is in my nature; it is not something that I am inclined to do. But it is very important to me, as we discuss the issues in this province, that we talk about facts and that we make—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Stop, please. Stop the clock. The Minister of Rural Affairs is warned.

New question?

## NATURAL GAS RATES

**Ms. Cindy Forster:** My question is to the Premier. Recently, we've learned that the Ontario Energy Board approved an application from Enbridge for a 40% increase to natural gas rates. Then we heard that the OEB refused a request from the Consumers Council of Canada and from the Vulnerable Energy Consumers Coalition for a special session to review the impact of Enbridge's planned rate hike. Even the OEB staff said the request was entirely in order.

Why is the OEB refusing to hear from the consumers, and why were they so quick to grant this drastic increase in gas rate hikes?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** The Minister of Energy.

**Hon. Bob Chiarelli:** The consumer groups that intervened in the process, Vulnerable Energy Consumers Coalition and Consumers Council of Canada, submitted that the board should consider approving the rates on an interim basis and allow more consideration for smoothing out over time, which is exactly what the OEB has done.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Cindy Forster:** Well, Speaker, my question is not about the smoothing. It's about the initial increase.

My office has heard from many constituents, and they're worried about their future. With hydro rates set to increase by 45% and unemployment rates in my riding the highest in the province, constituents are feeling squeezed.

Jim Lamontagne from Welland wrote to my office on March 30 to describe the impact of rising costs on families: "The elderly couple that live beside me that are on a tight budget did not want to turn up their heat this winter due to the fact that they couldn't afford it. They were bundled up with their jackets inside their home all winter."

Did the OEB consider these families when they decided to approve a 40% rate hike without asking Enbridge the hard questions to determine whether or not the rate was even justified?

**Hon. Bob Chiarelli:** I've heard the members from the third party on occasion raise the question of Enbridge's gas increases and other issues with respect to energy pricing, but I have not heard them offer any solutions. I would like to know what solution you're offering. The



implication is that we should interfere with the proceedings at the Ontario Energy Board, which would be totally, absolutely illegal and irregular, in order to do that.

The Ontario Energy Board's mandate is to look after the interests of the consumer. That is one of its main mandates. It examines the issues, it rules on them and it gives rational reasons for the decisions. One of the rational reasons is that, year over year, energy consumption has gone up by between 15% and 20% because of the nature of the winter. They choose to totally ignore that.

#### RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** My question is for the Minister of Rural Affairs. Minister, Ontario's economic landscape is changing. Ontario's small and rural communities are becoming more complex and diverse and face unique challenges when it comes to economic development and job growth.

There are currently a number of programs designed to assist rural municipalities with these challenges, including the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund and the Eastern Ontario Development Fund. While these programs address many important priorities, such as business development and innovation, there is always room to do more.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Rural Affairs, could the minister please update the House on what our government is doing to strengthen rural economies?

**Hon. Jeff Leal:** I do appreciate the fine question from the member from Oak Ridges–Markham. As always, creating jobs and growing the province's rural economy are key priorities for this government. This is where initiatives like the Rural Economic Development program come into play.

RED supports high-value, low-cost projects that build a foundation for economic growth. These projects show off the innovation and community partnerships which are so important and emblematic of rural Ontario.

Since 2003, through the RED program, our government has invested \$171 million in 418 projects, which has generated over \$1.2 billion in local economic activity and, more important, 35,000 jobs. I know that by working together we can strengthen rural communities every day in Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** Thank you to the minister for that answer. I'm glad to hear that the Ontario government takes the economic needs of small and rural municipalities seriously.

I have many small, rural communities in my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, and many have benefited from business retention and expansion projects in the past through the Rural Economic Development program. However, my constituents would like to know even more about this program: what the parameters are, how they

apply and all the details related to this particular program.

Speaker, through you: Could the minister please elaborate on what kinds of individual projects the Rural Economic Development program does support?

**Hon. Jeff Leal:** On Monday, I was in the wonderful community of Stratford, Ontario, and I was in the company of a very distinguished former member, Hugh Edgihoffer, who served so ably from 1967 to 1990, and as Speaker from 1985 to 1990. He was there to celebrate with us, along with municipal leaders, \$170,000 that we're investing in local projects, each geared to enhancing the local economy and creating jobs.

First of all, I want to talk about a great one in the little community of Shakespeare. A company there has developed, Quality Fertilizers Inc., which is using the funds to promote its new product line of fertilizers made from recycled natural materials—an enormous breakthrough in the province of Ontario. It's a perfect example of a unique project in rural Ontario, and it's worth investing in.

Local projects like these, funded through RED, are all about key partnerships. By working with our rural partners, working with municipal leaders and working with the private sector, we can do great things—

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

#### AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

**Mr. Frank Klees:** My question is to the Premier. Earlier today in this question period, I tabled our concern about an assistant deputy minister, Patricia Li, counselling staff to make a statement in a letter to Ornge that was untrue, and found to be so by their own counsel.

Once the Premier has had an opportunity to consider the facts, and it is in fact proven that the assistant deputy minister conducted herself in that way, I want to ask the Premier: What will the consequences be for that assistant deputy minister?

*Interjections.*

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

Premier.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care said that she would look into this issue. She would determine what the facts are. She will do that.

The member is asking me a hypothetical question about what might happen in the future. I do not have an answer to that question, nor do I choose to answer hypothetical questions. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care will look into the matter, and we will get the facts.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

*The House recessed from 1143 to 1500.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### VIMY RIDGE ANNIVERSARY

**Mr. Michael Harris:** Today marks an important day to honour and remember the sacrifice our Canadian soldiers made during the battle of Vimy Ridge in France on Easter Monday, April 9, 1917. It was 97 years ago that the four divisions of the Canadian forces came together for the first time to occupy the French hill of Vimy Ridge from the German army. This allied victory was a significant milestone for our country as we joined together as one nation to defend our freedom during the First World War.

We cannot forget that this success came with great sacrifice. Throughout the three-day battle, more than 15,000 brave Canadians overtook the Germans under heavy fire. At the highest peak of the ridge where the memorial now stands, soldiers battled machine guns with their bayonets in a long, costly fight to victory. Some 3,600 Canadians were killed during these three days, and another 7,000 were wounded.

I am proud to stand here today on behalf of all members of the Ontario Legislature to pay our respects to those who gave their lives. Now, a radiant Vimy sculpture stands as a tribute to these fine men and women from the First World War. The memorial has a statue of a woman representing Canada, a young nation mourning her dead. Below is a tomb to remind us of the soldiers killed in France who have no graves. Today, we wear these pins to honour all the heroes from the battle of Vimy Ridge. I hereby encourage all Ontarians to take some time to reflect today on Vimy day, and I would like to thank the Vimy Foundation for teaching young Canadians about this important part of our history.

### WINDSOR SCULPTURE PARK

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** It wasn't exactly a rumble in the jungle, but let me tell you about the ultimate showdown that happened recently along the sculpture garden on Windsor's waterfront—quite the battle, I must say, between 32 large-scale, internationally recognized works of contemporary sculpture by world-renowned artists. I want to say kudos to the Windsor Star for launching an online contest to see which sculpture the folks in our area liked the most. They attracted thousands of votes. The ultimate winner was revealed this past Friday.

Can I get a drumroll, Mr. Speaker?

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** Thank you. The winner is: Tembo the elephant. That's right. Tembo beat out Tiger, Penguins on a Waterfall, Eve's Apple and, finally, Morning Flight. Tembo, by artist Derrick Stephan Hudson, is a bronze elephant—a kind one, not the ones you have to be careful of, roaming around on other parts of the planet. She's more than nine feet tall, 16 feet long and weighs in at about the same weight as eight new cars. Congratulations, Tembo, on your newly minted success.

To all the MPPs, I invite you to Windsor to enjoy these fine pieces of art on Windsor's waterfront. They were donated years ago by the Odette family of Eastern Construction fame. You can't go wrong. The sculpture garden is open year-round. Admission is free. Parking is available. Speaker, I'll even throw myself in as your free tour guide and make a personal introduction to Tembo.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I can't rule drumrolls out of order. The invitation is an open invitation. I appreciate that.

### ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

**Mr. Steven Del Duca:** I'm pleased to rise today in support of a truly wonderful cause. Today is recognized as the international day against bullying, a day dedicated to promoting respect and understanding for everyone, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

We have all been touched by bullying, I'm sure, at some point in our lives, directly or indirectly. That's why I'm pleased to see that schools in my community of Vaughan will be participating in this important day of awareness, wearing pink in celebration of diversity and difference. This is a great initiative that works hand in hand with the work being done by our government.

Almost two years ago, we made a commitment to help eliminate bullying in Ontario schools by introducing the Accepting Schools Act. This act requires that school boards take preventive measures against bullying and also helps to support students by promoting respect for diversity.

We are never too old to take meaningful steps against bullying, and I want to thank everyone in Vaughan who has taken the time today to help contribute to this tremendous cause. Thanks very much.

### EVENTS IN HALIBURTON-KAWARTHA LAKES-BROCK

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** I'm pleased to rise today to provide congratulations to two exceptional achievements in my riding.

The Bantam A Highland Storm beat the Mount Brydges Cougars 7-2 in the third game of their playoff series to win the OMHA all-Ontario title for the A.A. Ash Morrison trophy. Storm coach Drew Bishop said that he was happy with how his team came together and the character that they demonstrated as they battled back from a one-game deficit to start the series. The community, friends and families came out in large numbers to pack the A.J. LaRue Arena in Haliburton to capacity. I'm proud to say that this win marks the first Bantam B division win in Highland Storm history.

Another first is a young golfer who was invited to Augusta, Georgia, to compete in the inaugural Drive, Chip and Putt Championship where the Masters are being played this week. Nyah Kelly, who is only nine years old, travelled from her hometown of Bobcaygeon to Augusta

National Golf Club to compete in the championship on Sunday, April 6. Nyah is only one of 88 young athletes, and just two Canadians, who had the opportunity to compete in this event. To get into the event, Nyah's name had to be selected from more than 17,600 lottery entrants, and she had to come in first or second in two qualifying tournaments in New York state. In her TV interview, Nyah claimed that she wants to play on the LPGA tour one day, and I look forward to seeing her achieve this goal.

I would like to congratulate both the Highland Storm and Nyah Kelly on their outstanding accomplishments.

#### MINING SAFETY

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** Forty years ago this April, members of the United Steelworkers of America, Local 5762, took the rare step of striking for better working conditions. These strikers were concerned about exposure to radiation, silica dust and other toxic substances.

The wildcat strike against Denison Mines lasted three weeks, but its impact resonated far beyond Elliot Lake. The message sent by striking miners and their union and the unrelenting pressure by the Ontario New Democratic Party helped push forward the appointment of a royal commission to examine the health and safety of workers in mines. This royal commission, known as the Ham commission, made many recommendations, including the need for mandatory worker participation and representation in workplace health and safety matters. These recommendations and the growing recognition that hazardous working conditions in all sectors of the economy were robbing workers of their health led to the passage of Bill 70, which established the Occupational Health and Safety Act in 1978.

Next week, the United Steelworkers will be hosting a forum to remind and educate participants about the important role the strike in Elliot Lake played in bringing about the Occupational Health and Safety Act in Ontario, as well as to commemorate the miners who had the courage to take action for their health and safety. We thank these USW workers for standing up to improve working conditions in our places of work. However, much still needs to be done to ensure that everyone who goes to work returns home safely to their family.

#### ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

**Mr. Shafiq Qaadri:** I have a statement here in which I'd like to first of all salute, recognize, endorse, and publicize the concept of organ donation. I would like to recognize not only the Ministry of Health but also the Minister of Health for various programs; for example, [beadonor.ca](http://beadonor.ca), which makes it somewhat easier, more efficient and streamlined to register as a potential organ donor.

To this day, we still have excess cardiometabolic disease, whether it's heart disease, diabetes, stroke, lung disease and so on. Individuals who are unfortunately

forced to wait for too long on transplant waiting lists may not actually acquire the organ that they need. That's why programs such as the Trillium Gift of Life, as was mentioned earlier today in question period—a single organ donor may in fact be able to affect eight lives, and that's an exponential curve that we'd like to support.

We're pleased to say that organ and tissue donation had a record year in 2012 to 2013. More than 1,000 organ transplants, perhaps the ultimate gift of paying it forward, happened in the province of Ontario, an increase of 63%. Yet there is, of course, an extraordinary need, any organ that you could name: kidneys, heart, lungs and so on, even things to do with the eye. So I encourage everyone: Become an organ donor. Register at [beadonor.ca](http://beadonor.ca).

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#### HUNTER APPRENTICESHIP SAFETY PROGRAM

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** I want to recognize an issue that was brought to my attention in my riding. Youth hunting is a viable activity that introduces our young people to the principles of safe hunting and an appreciation for nature and conservation.

The Ontario Hunter Apprenticeship Safety Program is a program that endeavours to introduce young people to hunting at a responsible young age. The program pairs youth hunters with mentors who teach them about hunting and the importance of safety. Youth are not eligible for hunting tags; therefore, they must use their mentor's tag if they are successful in their hunt. The problem is that most hunters only have a single tag for the week during the hunting season, so while hunters want to mentor youth, they face the trade-off of not being able to engage in the hunt themselves if they give up their tag.

I'm calling on the Minister of Natural Resources to enhance the Hunter Apprenticeship Safety Program by reviewing the tag allocation system with the aim of accommodating our youth hunters. If we can get more apprentices, we'll have more safe and more responsible hunters in the future.

#### MISSISSAUGA COMMUNITY THEATRE

**Ms. Dipika Damerla:** Ye Chowk Hamara Hai translates into "this is our town square," and this was the name of a play that I attended over the weekend. What made the play special was that it was community theatre at its best. Writer and director local Mississauga resident Zafar Shah also played one of the central characters in this bilingual Punjabi and Urdu language play.

Sitting there in the audience, it was hard not to be impressed by the professionalism and superb production values of the play. Equally inspiring was the message of this entertaining play: the idea that the people of Pakistan and India have much in common and that here in Canada we must reach out and build on our shared history, culture and language to live as one—to live as Canadians. This was community theatre at its best: engaging, relevant and promoting local talent.

I would like to pay tribute to all of the performers: writer, director and actor Syed Zafar Hussain Shah; Rana Sarfraz; Shahid Awan; Gurbir Bal Gogo; Muazam Khan; Karmjit Gill; Paramjeet Deol; Rashda bano, producer; Azfar jameel; Khadija; Ahmed Jafri; Bilal Cheema; Sajjid Ali Khan; Malik Zafar; Asadullah; Dr. Ali Naqvi, actor and producer; Raja Ashraf; Riaz Cheema; and Jamil Zafar.

I would also like to thank Haji Mohammed Jameel, a constituent of mine who invited me to this performance and was one of the sponsors.

I wish this young community theatre group much success in the years to come.

### AUTISM

**Mrs. Jane McKenna:** As we all know, last Wednesday was World Autism Awareness Day. This special day asks us to appreciate autism spectrum individuals for their unique gifts and potential. It also asks us all to dedicate ourselves to making things better for those living with autism.

One of my constituents is doing just that. On May 12, Chris Elgar will set out from Toronto's Billy Bishop airport in a Piper PA-24 Comanche, aiming to fly this light aircraft around the world in 80 days. He will be joined by long-time friend and fellow pilot Dave McElroy. The two men are retired but are by no means cooling their heels.

The duo's amazing feat aims to raise \$250,000 for Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children, a world-renowned leader in autism research.

Their first stop will be Scotland, McElroy's adopted home for the past 12 years. There they will announce a second fundraising goal of \$250,000 for Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance, which delivers front-line care in time-critical medical emergencies.

From there, they will touch 60 other airports in 25 countries over six continents, logging roughly 78,000 kilometres by July 31. You can follow their daily progress and make donations online at flyrtw80.com.

## REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

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

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes):** Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr22, An Act to revive 434753 Ontario Ltd..

Bill Pr23, An Act to revive 1360906 Ontario Limited.

Bill Pr27, An Act respecting Toronto International Film Festival Inc.

Bill Pr29, An Act to revive 394557 Ontario Limited.

Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill Pr28, An Act respecting YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

*Report adopted.*

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### BRUNO'S ALIGNMENT LIMITED ACT, 2014

Mr. Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr30, An Act to revive Bruno's Alignment Limited.

**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):** Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

### JURIES AMENDMENT ACT, 2014

#### LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES JURYS

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 187, An Act to amend the Juries Act / Projet de loi 187, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les jurys.

**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. John O'Toole:** Over time, I have had inquiries from constituents who are over age 65 and perhaps caring for a spouse being required to fulfill jury duties. The act amends the Juries Act to permit persons 65 years of age or older to elect not to receive a jury service notice and to be re-entered into the jury roll, and also to opt back in in the event that they wish to participate. I'd ask all members to give this consideration for seniors today who are aging at home.

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### CANCER CARE

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** April is Daffodil Month in Canada, an opportunity for all of us to show our support for people fighting cancer. I would like to welcome

members of the Canadian Cancer Society who are with us today.

This year, the Canadian Cancer Society celebrates its 76th anniversary. Since 1938, the Canadian Cancer Society has been funding research and cancer prevention programs. It has been supporting people living with cancer, along with their families and caregivers, and it has been advocating for public policies to improve the health of Canadians. My heartfelt thanks go to all the dedicated staff and compassionate volunteers of the Canadian Cancer Society for their steadfast commitment to the fight against cancer.

I think today is a good opportunity to note just how far we've come in improving cancer care in Ontario. I'm proud to say that over the past 10 years, our cancer system has seen significant improvement. Today Ontario is a leader in cancer care in Canada and around the world. We measure more, we know more, we report on more, and we're committed to enhancing the quality of the cancer system while ensuring accountability and continual improvement.

1520

This past year, after a groundbreaking study led by Cancer Care Ontario, we acted to transition all mammography with digital computed radiography to digital direct radiography to ensure that we're using the most effective technology to detect breast cancer.

Working with our health partners, Health Quality Ontario is now leading the implementation of a province-wide physician peer review program in all facilities where diagnostic imaging services are provided, including mammograms and CT scans.

This commitment to quality is why, according to the Cancer System Quality Index, an Ontarian who gets cancer has one of the best chances of survival anywhere in the world. But we know we must do even better. Too many Ontarians are diagnosed with cancer every year. Too many sons and daughters, parents and loved ones wake up every day to fight this terrible disease. Our government is committed to giving them the supports they need in their struggle against cancer.

Early detection is key. Cancer screening is easy, and it saves lives. It is imperative that Ontarians get screened for cancer, and we've worked hard to expand screening services and availability across the province.

Our integrated cancer screening program includes breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screening under a single, coordinated provincial umbrella.

We broadened the scope of the Ontario Breast Screening Program in 2011 so high-risk women are screened earlier, starting at age 30. This means 90,000 more screens and adding 67 new breast screening sites for a total of 167 screening sites across the province.

We launched Canada's first province-wide colorectal cancer screening program to combat the second-deadliest form of cancer in the country.

And beginning in fall 2013, women eligible to be screened for cervical cancer within the Ontario Cervical Screening Program now receive regular notifications to

invite them to screen, advise them of their test results and remind them when it is time to return for screening.

And now we offer free vaccine to protect girls against the human pap—

**Mr. Shafiq Qaadri:** Papilloma.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** —papillomavirus—thank you, Doctor—which can cause cervical cancer.

In 2009, we further expanded cancer detection by funding the PSA test to help fight prostate cancer, the most common cancer among Canadian men.

We've more than tripled funding for cancer-fighting drugs and, since 2006, we've added 57 new cancer drugs to our formulary. We've also invested \$29.5 million in capital funding for Cancer Care Ontario to support cancer radiation equipment upgrades and replacement. These investments have helped to modernize the provincial radiation treatment capacity for cancer and have contributed to improved access to care in more communities around Ontario. And we have the results to show for it: As of November 2013, 98% of cancer patients in Ontario started radiation treatment within the four-week national target.

Of course, Speaker, the best way to fight cancer is to prevent it in the first place, and that was why I was so pleased when all three parties in the House came together on October 9 to pass our government's Skin Cancer Prevention Act. This vital legislation comes into effect on May 1. It will help protect young people against the harmful effects of ultraviolet radiation by restricting them from using tanning beds. We could not have passed this legislation without the advocacy of the Canadian Cancer Society and so many others who have been affected by this terrible disease.

I'm also proud of our continued efforts towards our goal of having the lowest smoking rates in the country. Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable cancer, and while we've accomplished a great deal with Smoke-Free Ontario, I know there's more we can and must do.

That's why last November, I introduced new legislation and proposed new regulations to strengthen the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. The Youth Smoking Prevention Act would, if passed, prohibit smoking on playgrounds, sports fields, and restaurant and bar patios. It would increase fines for those who sell tobacco to youth, making Ontario's penalties the highest in Canada. It would ban the sale of flavoured tobacco products to make smoking less appealing to young people. And it would prohibit tobacco sales on university and college campuses.

I believe that when it comes to the health of our kids, we're all in agreement, so I call on all members of this House to work together to quickly pass this important piece of legislation.

It's also important to recognize the sacrifices made by those caring for loved ones who have cancer. Our government has introduced legislation, the Leaves to Help Families Act, which, if passed, would allow caregivers to focus their attention on what matters most—

providing care and support to their loved ones—without the fear of losing their jobs. This legislation was introduced more than a year ago. It was debated in this chamber for dozens of hours at second and third reading. It's time for members of all three parties to pass this proposed legislation.

I want to again thank the Canadian Cancer Society for its hard work and for its advocacy. My deep appreciation also goes to Cancer Care Ontario for its partnership and hard work in managing our cancer system. And to all of our dedicated doctors, nurses, technologists and all the other providers who treat patients and help the people of Ontario stay healthy, thank you.

My thoughts are with so many Ontarians—too many Ontarians—who battle this disease every day, as well as their families and loved ones. I'm committed to doing everything I can to ensure they get the care they need, so let's wear our daffodils with pride to let people with cancer know that we stand with them in their fight.

#### INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PINK

**Hon. Liz Sandals:** Today I'm proud to stand in recognition of International Day of Pink.

As members of this Legislature know, the International Day of Pink started a few years ago when a young man in ninth grade was bullied for wearing a pink shirt in a Nova Scotia high school. Two other students took action, buying pink shirts and handing them out to friends to wear to school. This ballooned into hundreds of students wearing pink to show support for the bullied student. They stood up against bullying and showed that it would not be tolerated in their school.

I want to recognize all of our young people who are wearing pink today in schools across Ontario, recognizing that positive actions can make a difference. In particular, I want to thank Jer's Vision for providing such leadership on bullying prevention issues across Ontario—and across Canada, in fact. I would also like to thank all the members who are wearing pink today to raise awareness of the importance of bullying prevention and to help put a stop to it.

Speaker, while we have taken important steps to prevent bullying in our schools, we know that there are still far too many students who feel unsafe or unwelcome. Students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered or questioning are too often targeted. Sadly, we all know the tragic impact that bullying and homophobia can have.

When I was the chair of our government's safe school action team, I heard first-hand accounts of how devastating bullying can be on a student's success. That's why we have taken measures to make our schools safe, inclusive and accepting, so our students can thrive.

Since our government's Accepting Schools Act passed in 2012, Ontario school boards must take preventive measures against bullying and support students who want to promote understanding and respect for everyone.

Putting an end to bullying cannot be done by one person alone. We need students, parents, school staff and

community groups working together to prevent and address bullying in our schools.

While it is important for the entire school community to play a role in bullying prevention, sometimes it's difficult for students to know who to turn to when they are victimized. That's why we continue to partner with Kids Help Phone so that our young people have access to 24/7 telephone and Web-based professional counselling services.

Speaker, it's incumbent upon all of us to speak out about bullying, not just today but every day.

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

1530

#### CANCER CARE

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** I would also like to welcome the members of the Canadian Cancer Society who have joined us in the gallery this afternoon.

I'm pleased to rise today to recognize Daffodil Day, part of the Canadian Cancer Society's Daffodil Month, which of course is their national fundraising campaign. This month is an opportunity for us to reflect upon the thousands of people living with cancer in Ontario and to remember our own loved ones lost to cancer.

During this fundraising campaign, volunteers are involved in numerous activities to raise funds for the fight against cancer. The funds raised through this campaign help the Canadian Cancer Society in all the invaluable work they do to prevent and fight cancer.

Daffodil Month is also an opportunity for us to think about how we provide cancer care and supports in Ontario. We are very fortunate to have Cancer Care Ontario, which is the government's cancer care adviser. They are committed to continuous and systematic improvement in prevention, screening and the delivery of care for the patient. But we also know that there are things that we can still do better.

Currently, treatment for cancer is only covered if it is administered intravenously in hospital. Oral treatments, on the other hand, are not covered by the province unless you are over 65 or on social assistance.

Cancer treatments taken orally have been a game-changer, allowing patients to live longer, and we know that 60% of all new cancer treatments being developed are oral medications. By not funding oral cancer treatments, we are creating significant barriers to fair and equal access to cancer treatment. We are discriminating based on cancer type and a patient's age, income and geography. I hope that this is something that we can address in the very near future.

Mr. Speaker, in honour of Daffodil Day, I hope the members of this House will take this opportunity to not only reflect on the way that cancer has touched their lives, but also the way that we, as legislators, can improve health care for Ontarians living with cancer.

Finally, thank you to all of the members and volunteers of the Canadian Cancer Society for the vital work

that you do across all of our communities each and every day.

#### INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PINK

**Mr. Rob Leone:** I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus to discuss the Pink Shirt Day that has raised awareness about bullying in our schools. I want to take note about the definition of bullying that the ministry has provided, and I'm going to discuss it.

Bullying is typically a form of repeated, persistent and aggressive behaviour directed at an individual or individuals that is intended to cause, or should be known to cause, fear and distress and/or harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem or reputation.

Bullying occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance.

Bullying can take many forms. It can be physical: hitting, shoving, stealing, or damaging property. It can be verbal: name-calling, mocking, or making sexist, racist or homophobic comments. It can be social: excluding others from a group, or spreading gossip or rumours about them. It can be electronic, which is commonly known as cyberbullying, which is the spreading of rumours and hurtful comments through the use of email, cellphones, social media, websites and text messaging.

I'm very pleased that governments right across the country are raising this issue. I recently went to the movies, and I saw a federal government advertisement that showed and raised awareness about cyberbullying and what cyberbullying means in our communities.

My children enjoy watching TVOKids on the weekend, and I notice that there are segments raising awareness with stories of kids being brave and showing this is an important issue and that they, too, can stand up against the bullies.

D.J. Shepherd and Travis Price of Nova Scotia have started an international movement, and we're very pleased to have them. I know Travis Price actually ran for the Progressive Conservatives in Nova Scotia recently, and we're very proud that he has chosen to take the step in trying to get elected.

But he has two main messages for kids. This is a quote: "You can survive this, and as dark as times may seem, (remember) that someone such as myself, that has been bullied, has been on the edge and has been able to get through this, and here I still stand."

The second point he wants us to remember is that we can stand up for one another. "When you see bullying happen, when you see this in your school, you can stand up, make a difference and make that bullying stop.... It is up to youth to really make a difference in this movement.

"Politicians help with legislation and RCMP officers help protect us, but really it is up to the kids to say enough is enough within our schools and change the culture within the school (so) bullying is no longer tolerated there."

Mr. Speaker, I want to echo Mr. Price's words. He says it right on point.

#### INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PINK

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** Speaker, it's a privilege to rise on behalf of the NDP caucus to recognize the International Day of Pink and to say thank you to every student, every teacher and every Ontarian who stands up to bullying in our province day in and day out. We're standing with them in solidarity to say that Ontario is no place for discrimination.

I also want to thank the activists who devoted their efforts to raising awareness across Ontario. Their work to combat bullying in all its forms is vital to building welcoming communities where intolerance is not accepted.

And I want to say thank you to everyone who has organized an event today in honour of the International Day of Pink.

In particular, Jer's Vision is doing extraordinary work. They are the youth organization that delivers programming to over 75,000 people every year across North America, and which has been instrumental in establishing the International Day of Pink. Jer's Vision continues to lead the fight against homophobia, sexism, racism and discrimination in all its forms, and I commend their work.

Speaker, when bullying occurs in our province, in the hallways, on the playground and online, it's our entire province that suffers. In the most apparent cases, physical violence occurs, but the taunts and slurs of invisible violence do just as much damage. It is that kind of violence that hurts people's minds and breaks their souls. It replaces dreams with shadows that weigh on a person's entire life and the lives of the people they love. Bullying diminishes all of us.

Two years ago, we passed the Accepting Schools Act. New Democrats worked hard to ensure that gay-straight alliances could be formed in our schools and be recognized by that name. I hope that it has made a difference in at least a few lives.

Speaker, there is much work that remains to be done. In particular, when students do not receive the supports they need in school, there are greater opportunities for bullying to occur. When there are too few adults in our classrooms because of inadequate funding from the provincial government, those students are put at risk. There is much more to be done, and together we must do that work to make our province safe and inclusive for all Ontarians.

#### CANCER CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** It is a pleasure for me to add a few words for the great people at the Canadian Cancer Society, in honour of April being Daffodil Month.

The need for the government to do more is ever-presenting, and we know this. I dream of a day when the four big determinants of health when it comes to chronic diseases, such as most cancers, have been worked on, and those, of course, are stop smoking, healthy weight, healthy diet and exercise.

*Applause.*

**M<sup>me</sup> France G elinas:** For sure.

If people in Ontario had access to a robust health promotion campaign that would target those four areas—healthy weight, healthy food, stop smoking and exercise—up to 80% of our chronic diseases would disappear and up to 20% of our cancers would be gone, right here, right now. It would make a huge difference.

We have in front of the House right now my Healthy Decisions Made Easy bill that deals with two of those. It deals with flavoured cigarillos—something that I know is close to your heart, Speaker—as well as calorie labelling. In and by themselves, they’re not going to change the world, but they’re going to be one small step on a road that has tremendous opportunity to change things for the better.

When you see a volunteer from the Canadian Cancer Society selling some of those beautiful little daffodils that most of us are wearing today, please donate generously.

I can tell you that I was really proud that this House finally passed the tanning beds bill. That was something that all of us can be very proud of. I can tell you of the blood, sweat and tears that the volunteers from the Canadian Cancer Society had put behind that bill. This is a bill that took a long time. It was introduced on many occasions by me, and we had hoped that it would go through, and finally it did, in the fall of 2013. Why? Because of the hard work on the ground of people who support the Canadian Cancer Society, who give their time, their effort and their energy to make things better for themselves, for their loved ones and for all of us.

So to the Canadian Cancer Society, thank you. Merci. Meegwetch.

1540

## PETITIONS

### PROPERTY TAXATION

**Mr. John O’Toole:** It’s a real privilege for me today to stand in the House and raise a petition that is important to my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

“Whereas MPAC”—the Municipal Property Assessment Corp.—“failed to comply with legislation, international standards and methods recognized by the courts;

“Whereas amendments to the legislation since 2004 have resulted in the weakening of public interests due to ambiguities and interpretations;

“Whereas the public has identified many problems with over-assessments by MPAC, but these over-assessments have not been”—and are not being—“appropriately investigated;

“Whereas the escalation process and appeals process is costly, unfair and ineffective;

“Whereas key facts and evidence are being withheld or ignored that have resulted in costly delays and undermined the public’s confidence in MPAC assessments;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to establish a committee to make inquiries into: (a) the applications of the respective home statutes by MPAC, IPC/ON and the ARB”—the Assessment Review Board; “(b) a complete performance review and financial audit of MPAC and ARB; (c) make recommendations to improve the escalation and appeal process; (d) estimate the financial impacts on individual homeowners and fiscal circumstances of taxing jurisdictions, and; (e) make findings of misconduct or wrongdoings” public.

I’m pleased to sign it and support it generally, on behalf of Leonard Subotich, who is from Toronto and who has been arguing with MPAC for years.

### ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas there is an estimated 208,000 Ontarians diagnosed with Alzheimer’s and related dementia today, and that number is set to increase by 40% in the next 10 years;...

“Whereas Ontario’s strategy for Alzheimer’s disease and the related dementia has not been revised since the implementation of a five-year strategy in 1999;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to immediately review, revise and implement an updated, research-informed, comprehensive strategy to respond to and prepare for the rapidly growing needs of those living with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature and give this petition to the page. Thank you.

### GREENBELT

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

“Whereas the town of Oakville is studying further land use in the vicinity of Third Line and Bronte Road in Oakville known as the Merton lands; and

“Whereas the province of Ontario is the majority landowner in the study area; and

“Whereas despite the objections of the previous Harris-Hudak Conservative government, the Glenorchy Conservation Area was preserved as 400 hectares of natural area for generations to come; and

“Whereas despite the initial objection of the town of Oakville and region of Halton planning department Glenorchy Conservation Area became the first addition to Ontario’s greenbelt; and

“Whereas Ontario’s greenbelt is the largest permanent greenbelt in the world, protecting nearly two million acres from development; and



“Whereas residents of Oakville want the natural heritage area of the Merton lands added to Ontario’s greenbelt; and

“Whereas the Tim Hudak Progressive Conservative Party voted against the formation of Ontario’s greenbelt;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support the request from MPP Kevin Flynn and the mayor and council of the town of Oakville to include the addition of these lands in Ontario’s greenbelt.”

I attach my name to it and I will pass it to page Isabella. Thank you very much.

#### PENSION PLAN

**Mr. John O’Toole:** Yes. It’s a surprise today. I get to speak. Anyway, I have a petition here from my constituents as well. It reads as follows:

“Whereas General Motors has contributed significantly to the Ontario and local economies and was a significant contributor to the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund (PBGF); and

“Whereas the General Motors of Canada salaried pension plan fund (plan 0340950) is severely underfunded due to the” Bob Rae “government’s lack of responsibility in allowing policies (regulation 5.1 ‘too-big-to-fail’ legislation) which permitted” General Motors and other companies “to underfund the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund; and

“Whereas GM is experiencing severe financial problems and there is a potential for” complete “bankruptcy;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, support the GenMo Salaried Pension Organization in petitioning the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to honour its commitment to totally fund the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund; and

“That in any approved restructuring plan of General Motors of Canada, provision be made to ensure GM fully funds pension plan 0340950; and continues to provide lifetime benefits to retirees” as promised “and surviving spouses in accordance with its retirement commitments” and promise; “and

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario take immediate action to protect the pensions of” General Motors and other retirees in Ontario, and more importantly, Sears at the current time.

I provide this to Mira, one of the pages.

#### OSTOMY SUPPLIES

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I have this petition that was collected by a lady in Markham, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas inflation has risen almost 37% in the 21 years since 1993, and with the cost of ostomy supplies rising, on average, 2% yearly;

“Whereas there has been no increase in the ADP base amount;

“Whereas according to the 2009 survey, the data indicates that the average ostomy pouching system wear-time (flange and pouch) is five days;

“Whereas with an average suggested retail price of \$15 for each change, many persons with an ostomy are spending a minimum of \$1,500 and an average of \$2,400 per year, far exceeding the ADP grant and the intent of the 75% coverage;

“Whereas additionally, people with temporary ostomy receive no government support, adding an additional burden to their health care needs;

“Whereas they may have their temporary ostomy for a number of years, they receive no assistance through the ADP grant as the ostomy may one day be reversed;

“Whereas the association frequently receives phone calls from people who are unable to find the money to buy ostomy supplies;”

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

“To act now and to raise the ADP grant amount to increase the coverage for ostomy supplies back to the 75% level that was set in 1993, and to increase coverage to include people who have a temporary ostomy.”

I’ll ask my good page Callista to bring it to the Clerk.

#### GREENBELT

**Mr. Bas Balkissoon:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the town of Oakville is studying further land use in the vicinity of Third Line and Bronte Road in Oakville known as the Merton lands; and

“Whereas the province of Ontario is the majority landowner in the study area; and

“Whereas despite the objections of the previous Harris-Hudak Conservative government, the Glenorchy Conservation Area was preserved as 400 hectares of natural area for generations to come; and

“Whereas despite the initial objection of the town of Oakville and region of Halton planning department Glenorchy Conservation Area became the first addition to Ontario’s greenbelt; and

“Whereas Ontario’s greenbelt is the largest permanent greenbelt in the world, protecting nearly two million acres from development; and

“Whereas residents of Oakville want the natural heritage area of the Merton lands added to Ontario’s greenbelt; and

“Whereas the Tim Hudak Progressive Conservative Party voted against the formation of Ontario’s greenbelt;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support the request from MPP Kevin Flynn and the mayor and council of the town of Oakville to include the addition of these lands in Ontario’s greenbelt.”

Mr. Speaker, I support this petition, I sign it, and I will send it to the table with Calvin.

1550

## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I have a petition signed by a great many of the constituents in Oxford.

“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...; 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, for allowing me to make this presentation. I will sign the petition.

## OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** This petition is on behalf of people from Algoma–Manitoulin and across northern Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads ‘that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles’;

“Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

“Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

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

“We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately.”

I support this petition and present it to page Eli to bring down to the Clerk.

## USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

**Mr. Shafiq Qaadri:** Speaker, it’s a particular pleasure to present this petition in front of you, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas virtually all Legislatures in Canada have fully embraced digital technologies;

“Whereas digital communications are now essential for members of Parliament to conduct their business, correspond with constituents, respond to stakeholders, stay in touch with staff, store data and information securely, keep ahead of the news cycle, and to remain current;

“Whereas progressive record-keeping relies on cloud technology, remote access, real-time updates, multiple-point data entry and broadband, wireless and satellite technologies;

“Whereas as there is more to full exploitation of technology than having an email address;

“Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has been considering the value, utility and usage of digital devices within the legislative precinct and within the chamber of Parliament itself for several months;

“Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

“We, the undersigned, respectfully request all various decision-makers of the assembly and government to fully embrace digital technologies, empower members, acquire the optimal Android and Apple devices, maximize the many technology offerings, and orchestrate a much-needed modernization of the conduct of parliamentary business for the eventual benefit of the people of Ontario.”

I agree, sign it and send it to you via page Milana.

## BREASTFEEDING

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I have this petition that comes mainly from the people of Brantford, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas Health Canada, the Canadian Paediatric Society and the World Health Organization recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life with continued breastfeeding along with other food sources for up to two years and beyond for optimal health;

“Whereas breastfeeding is normal and natural but like childbirth it can be complicated requiring specialized support for a family’s success;

“Whereas lactation consultants are trained, internationally certified breastfeeding specialists who can assist women having breastfeeding problems, and be resources of breastfeeding expertise in the community;

“Whereas Brantford, until 2005 when the service was cut, had a breastfeeding clinic run by lactation consultants at Brantford General Hospital which was highly utilized;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario “to facilitate the reinstatement of a lactation consultant-led breastfeeding clinic in Brantford General Hospital.”

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

## AIR QUALITY

**Mr. John O'Toole:** It's a pleasure to have this many opportunities to represent my constituents' needs. This is another one that is scary; it's going to be debated today with Bill 173.

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented as a revenue-neutral, temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas emissions and vehicle failure rates have dropped dramatically between 1999 and 2010, the Drive Clean program has clearly outlived its usefulness; and

"Whereas Ontario's new Drive Clean tests are"—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John O'Toole:** —just a moment; the Minister of the Environment is talking—"recording higher-than-normal failure rates, even in cases where there is nothing wrong with a vehicle's emission systems" at all—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John O'Toole:** The Minister of the Environment is here, too. I hope he's listening.

"Whereas this causes added inconvenience and higher costs for Ontario drivers; and

"Whereas in the case of pre-1998 vehicles, it is becoming increasingly difficult for owners to find an establishment that will provide the 'tailpipe' test for vehicles without the required on-board computer; and

"Whereas the Drive Clean program has generated a" significant "profit to the government of \$19 million over the past two years"—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John O'Toole:** You'll get your time later—"despite a Supreme Court ruling that revenue-neutral government programs cannot generate a profit, the government is refusing to return this surplus to Ontario taxpayers;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Ontario government to take immediate action to end the Drive Clean program and return accumulated profits to Ontario taxpayers."

I've been badgered the entire time. I'm standing up for my constituents, and I'm signing this petition and giving it to Jonah—

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC  
AMENDMENT ACT (KEEPING  
ONTARIO'S ROADS SAFE), 2014  
LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LE CODE  
DE LA ROUTE (ASSURER LA SÉCURITÉ  
DES ROUTES DE L'ONTARIO)

Mr. Murray moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 173, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of various matters / Projet de loi 173, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne diverses questions.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Mr. Murray?

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** It's a great pleasure to lead off debate, I won't just say for my party, but I think this is one of those rather remarkable pieces of legislation that—

**Mr. Mike Colle:** You're going to share time with me and the member from Scarborough—

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** I'm getting to that, don't worry. I'm getting to that. My mentor, obviously, and dear friend, and parliamentary assistant, and long-time city councillor, and former TTC member and my big brother, the member for Eglinton–Lawrence, will be sharing time with me, as will the father of the distracted driving initiative, my friend from Scarborough–Rouge River. I'm very honoured to share time with them today.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** Very good.

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** Thank you very much. I want to assure you that the member for Eglinton–Lawrence will keep me on track and on time for the rest of this.

It's a great pleasure. For the past 12 years, Ontario's roads have placed among the highest in safety in North America, consistently ranking either first or second. Our government is very proud to have continued that tradition—I think members in both parties opposite who served in government, and their records, have shared that. This is a shared legacy of the people of Ontario and the actions of all parties.

When you think about that for a moment—Mr. Speaker, you're from Stoney Creek, a very fine area. It's a little warmer. It's not quite the Windsor banana belt, but it's a little more temperate than Ignace or Dryden or those vast areas of northern Ontario which have very challenging weather conditions. That we can beat California, Texas, Iowa and Kansas to maintain safe roads is a real tribute to the people of Ontario: our police, everyday Ontarians who drive, and I think it's something all of us as MPPs and all of our parties share. It's a shared legacy which we want to leave to our children as their inheritance as well.

We could not have achieved this without the OPP, our municipal police services, MTO staff, our private contractors—the entire community of people who keep our roads safe. We also acknowledge the work of hundreds of individuals and organizations who work tirelessly to promote and improve road safety in Ontario. These partners work in areas like cycling, impaired driving, distracted driving, injury prevention, pedestrian safety, trucking and countless others to help raise awareness and advocate for change and save lives. The Canadian Automobile Association, the cyclists unions, Ontario Trucking Association—I could go on and probably name about 50 organizations from Cornwall to Kenora. We are blessed with the civil society base of volunteers who care about safety on our streets and on our highways.

Despite Ontario's excellent road safety record, there are still more things the province can do to improve its

road safety programs and outcomes. On average, one person is killed every 15 hours and one person is injured every eight minutes in Ontario. Even though with a safe record, that is a threshold we can improve. That is why we continue to look for new and effective ways to save lives by keeping all Ontarians safe on our roads.

**1600**

Keeping people safe, Mr. Speaker, is the single largest priority of this legislation, and I think as it contains legislation from members in all parties, you'll see that commitment throughout the bill and throughout this House.

We introduced the legislation last month. If this is passed, it will help reduce collisions, injuries, fatalities on our roads and highways. This bill is the result of the collaboration of members of this Legislature. It also builds on different private members' bills and has laid the groundwork for several of the road safety issues we need to address.

I want to thank several of them: the MPPs for Eglinton–Lawrence, Parry Sound–Muskoka and Kitchener–Waterloo, who have formed the cycling caucus. They've been advancing that. This is something I wish we'd see more of in this House, where we claim our right as MPPs to represent our people and put the people's business ahead of politics. I want to acknowledge those three MPPs, particularly, for their leadership.

I also want to acknowledge one of my mentors, a friend, and someone who has inspired a large part of this bill, whose private member's bill dealt with the important issue of distracted driving after a tragedy in his community and a terrible loss of life. That is the member for Scarborough–Rouge River, MPP Bas Balkissoon, who has been passionate about this. I am glad that this bill reflects and respects the work of that member and the constituents he represents.

Also, the member from Parkdale–High Park, MPP DiNovo, who is supporting bicycle safety and proper passing distances between motorists and cyclists—I've had the pleasure to spend quite a bit of time with her. She shared her concern and, quite frankly, she has raised this matter before and has seen some criticism for it. I am glad to see her work reflected in this bill. I want to thank my friends in the third party, the New Democrats, for their leadership on this issue as well.

The legislation includes the efforts of our friend and very distinguished member of this Legislature, as I said earlier, the MPP for Parry Sound–Muskoka, Norm Miller. He has advocated for allowing cycling on paved shoulders of provincial highways, and other measures, including paved highways as a matter of course in all highway construction. If you've been up to the beautiful part of the province he represents, cycling tourism as well as regular tourism is a big part of life.

Mr. Miller and I have had some very positive conversations, and we discussed—people often think of cycling, for example, as an urban issue. Well, one third of all trips in Ontario are less than five kilometres, which means that one in three of us could probably do our commute by walking, by—

**Interjection:** Cycling.

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** —cycling.

There was a study that just came out that showed that the parts of Peel region where people can walk had the lowest levels of diabetes, and the areas in which people can't walk and need to use a car, where there aren't walkable neighbourhoods, had the highest levels of obesity and diabetes.

It's interesting: They say that 70% of trips in many smaller and mid-sized communities can actually be done by cycling. There's actually a higher level of cycling in many parts of rural Ontario than there is in urban Ontario.

To my friend from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington: Your community is one that has some brilliant initiatives on cycling, which I know you are supportive of.

I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I didn't also mention my friend from Simcoe North, MPP Garfield Dunlop, who has advocated for the move-over legislation. This is an initiative that will really reduce the number of fatalities of tow truck drivers and other emergency vehicles that show up on the scene, where those workers are particularly vulnerable.

It has been a while since we've had a bill that I think so many parties can lay claim to. I've often said in this House that my favourite time is private members' public business, on Thursday afternoon, because it's the one time we get to treat each other with a little more respect. It's the least partisan time of the week.

I made this commitment to my colleagues, and the Premier asked us to take this kind of approach as ministers: to be a lot less partisan, to actually remember that we're MPPs and Ontarians before we're Liberals, Conservatives, New Democrats, labour, business or wherever we came from. This bill reflects that, and I don't say this in an arrogant way, that somehow the government has a monopoly on this. This reflects a higher level of non-partisanship, I think, from all members of this House; otherwise, this bill would not have been possible without their co-operation. The Keeping Ontario Roads Safe act addresses many of the issues of safety and well-being of all those who use our roads.

If passed, this legislation would strengthen our existing impaired-driving laws. The legislation would also address the growing problem of distracted driving, increasing fines to as high as \$1,000 and applying three demerit points. That would be set by justices; what we're doing today, because we don't set that, is creating the range, which I think is consistent with the will of the courts, evidenced by recent decisions of some of our justices in court.

In 2012, Ontario had the lowest impaired-driving offence rate in Canada. This is a rather remarkable achievement, but there is more we can do to address drinking and driving in our province, so we are proposing to require more drivers who are repeatedly caught drinking and driving to complete an intensive alcohol education program. This would be followed by a treatment and

ignition-interlock monitoring program if they continue to repeat this dangerous behaviour.

This reduced suspension with ignition-interlock conduct review program would also be expanded to repeat offenders. Research indicates—and it is quite extensive research in many places—that installed ignition-interlock devices are effective at preventing drinking and driving. That is why we would extend the program, to reduce the risks posed by repeat drinking and driving by monitoring their driving behaviour. What we want to make sure of is that we are using the techniques that have worked most effectively around the world.

The Keeping Ontario Roads Safe act would also be the first step in strengthening identification of medically unfit drivers, and this is a challenging issue. Ontario's mandatory reporting program for physicians is a key method of identifying individuals with a medical condition that makes it unsafe for them to drive. This bill would ensure that in the future the Ministry of Transportation can accept reports from a broader range of health care practitioners.

As that science and the medical review/nursing review bodies are establishing those standards, we will make sure that these are not political or bureaucratic decisions, but that they are in fact based on proper medicals and proper science. This will help keep our medical review program among the most stringent in North America, and serve to help quickly remove unsafe drivers from our roads. I want to thank the Ontario Medical Association, the CAA and also seniors' groups for helping us with this piece of the legislation.

We are also proposing to improve the safety of tow truck drivers. As I mentioned earlier, tow truck drivers can face significant risk when they help motorists on roadsides of busy highways. If this bill is passed, motorists will be required to slow down and, if safe to do so, move over when they approach stopped tow trucks with flashing yellow lights on the side of the road, as is the case with police officers and other emergency responders. This measure would help ensure that drivers exercise greater caution with stopped tow trucks providing help to motorists, preventing needless collisions.

This legislation would also be one step in giving Ontarians healthier, more convenient and safer choices in how they get around. These proposals would introduce measures to improve the safety of cyclists, such as requiring all drivers to maintain a minimum distance of one metre when passing cyclists and vice versa, and increased fines and demerit points for dooring of cyclists, which all of our police authorities tell us is a problem.

This is a law that now exists in 29 of the 50 states and in Nova Scotia, and was heavily advocated for by the Ontario Provincial Police, the CAA and others who wanted something better than simply "reasonable distance," which is almost unenforceable. As many pointed out—both motorist organizations and cyclist organizations—it's very hard to educate people to a standard that isn't specific.

The Keeping Ontario Roads Safe act would also help keep pedestrians safe in our communities. Overall, the

number of pedestrians killed in Ontario has declined significantly over the last 25 years, but pedestrians still represent approximately one in six motor-vehicle-related fatalities, and ironically, this often happens in pedestrian corridors. That is why the bill would require drivers to yield the whole roadway to pedestrians at school crossings and pedestrian crossovers, and would support municipal requests for new pedestrian crossing devices.

As you may know from recent reports, Mr. Speaker, we do still have some challenges, in spite of many enhancements, with motor vehicle inspection stations. The Keeping Ontario Roads Safe act would modernize Ontario's Motor Vehicle Inspection Station—MVIS—program to protect consumers and improve the standards of this important program.

The system we now have was established in the 1970s and is no longer working the way it should be. We need to improve the way vehicles are checked and branded, to make sure that unsafe vehicles are not being fraudulently inspected, rebuilt and finding their way onto Ontario roads.

#### 1610

If you've been watching some of the consumer programs of late, you can see some of the horrible vehicles that seem on the outside—because they've had bodywork done—to be in reasonably good condition, but, in fact, are literally a car wreck waiting to happen.

Currently, ministry-licensed stations and mechanics that fail to follow our standards can often continue their business for a lengthy period of time after they have been identified as a problem. These are often businesses and individuals who are knowingly endangering lives by illegally repairing damaged vehicles.

If passed, this legislation would replace the current licences and performance contracts between inspection stations and the Ministry of Transportation and secure a third party contract administrator to oversee the program, consistent with initiatives in other jurisdictions that have been much more effective than the program we currently have in place.

We anticipate that these new contracts would include many remedies to allow quick and effective action against inspection stations that do not meet our standard. There is a strong commitment from the government to work with members on both sides of the House to achieve those standards and a methodology that would be satisfactory.

In the event that a station's actions warrant termination of its contract, we expect such action could be taken more quickly than under the current system. These measures would create more rigorous oversight to make sure inspection standards are being followed and can be enforced quite quickly. They would also protect consumers from stations and mechanics operating without a ministry licence or without adhering to ministry standards.

The program will continue to include offence provisions that will allow enforcement officers to lay charges in serious situations, and we are proposing to standardize

finer and allow courts to impose short-term imprisonment upon conviction for certain offences.

This legislation would also extend the current six-month limitation period for offences so the ministry would be better able to lay charges when it learns of misconduct after the fact. Evaluating these stations more rigorously from action taken more quickly will prevent unsafe vehicles being fraudulently inspected, rebuilt, sold to consumers and driven on our roads.

The legislation would also transfer regulation-making authority for the program to the Minister of Transportation and the ministry and would be authorized to set standards by ministry directive. Again, we look forward to those discussions with members on both sides of the House. This would help change inspection standards more quickly to keep them up-to-date with modern advances in technology: things like telematics and many other new advances that have come out in the last decade.

This legislation would improve mandatory vehicle branding programs to prevent vehicle fraud and protect consumers who buy used vehicles. I want to thank the Minister of Consumer Services for her work on this with us as well. Under this program, vehicles that have been written off because of collision or flood are branded by the minister as either salvage or irreparable, and vehicle owners can make written appeals to challenge the accuracy of the vehicle's brand.

Currently, many requests are submitted by individuals who have knowingly purchased an irreparable or salvage vehicle and appeal the brand based on fraudulent motives. If passed, only the person who owned the vehicle at the time it was damaged and reported it to the ministry would be allowed to appeal its brand. This would prevent appeals by those looking to make a profit by illegally rebuilding vehicles or selling damaged vehicles to unsuspecting consumers.

The ministry would also be permitted to appoint a third party administrator to review and decide branding appeals. The vital changes to motor vehicle inspection and mandatory vehicle branding programs proposed in this bill would protect consumers from unscrupulous parties and keep unsafe vehicles off the roads.

There are components in this bill, as many people know, on cycling, walking and active transportation, which are the healthiest and least expensive solutions to congestion. A growing number of Ontarians are choosing cycling as a way to get around, and that's why last year we released CycleON, Ontario's 20-year strategy to become the most cycling-friendly jurisdiction in North America. If passed, the legislation would build on the strategy to give cyclists more ways to travel and improve their safety on our roads and highways.

The Keeping Ontario's Roads Safe act would introduce several measures to further help motorists and cyclists to share the road safely: increasing fines for drivers dooring cyclists from a range of \$60 to \$500 to be more consistent with similar offences in the range of \$300 to \$1,000, and raising the demerit points from two to three. Where practical, motorists would be required to

keep a minimum distance of one metre between their vehicles and cyclists when passing. These measures would help cyclists stay safe when they travel near vehicles on our roads and on highways.

I particularly want to thank the Ontario Trucking Association, the Ontario Provincial Police and the Canadian Automobile Association, who really advocated for these standards. Not only have they advocated for the standards, but they're also already, even in advance of this proposed legislation, undertaking greater education measures with their members, hopefully being optimistic that this House, given the appearance of all-party support, would do that. I want to thank them, because the education and enforcement are critical parts of this.

These measures would help all of us stay safe when we travel near vehicles on roads and highways. The legislation would also help ensure that cyclists are visible by allowing the use of flashing lights on bicycles and increasing the fines for cyclists who do not use the required bicycle lights and reflectors.

We propose to promote safer opportunities for cycling by allowing cycling on paved shoulders of unrestricted provincial highways, reflecting one of the private member's bills. This would improve cycling for both cyclists and motorists, allowing cyclists to keep out of the flow of high-speed traffic.

The legislation would also support cycling in urban areas by allowing municipalities to create contraflow bike lanes, which we don't do now. If you've been to Manhattan recently, one of the densest areas, the contraflow bike lane program there is extraordinarily effective and has reduced fatalities and eased motorists. These measures would provide more direct routes and connectivity for cyclists, giving cyclists more choices and creating less congestion on our roads. That's why we're proposing measures to support cycling and active transportation with our municipal partners. I want to thank the Association of Municipalities of Ontario as well for their work.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I have one last issue before I conclude, and that is the issue I started with, which is distracted driving. It is currently illegal for drivers to talk, text, type, dial or email using hand-held cellphones and other hand-held communications and entertainment devices. When I was walking home from work yesterday, I just by happenstance kept account of what percentage of drivers, when I looked into the cars, were actually texting. It averaged one in four people I walked by, walking from Queen's Park all the way to Parliament and Mill Street the other day. One in four drivers had a cellphone in their hand while they were driving during rush hour—one in four. This gives you a scale of how serious and how ridiculous it is. One of them I noticed because I nearly ended up on her fender. It is currently illegal.

As I said, the evidence speaks for itself: A driver who uses a cellphone is four times more likely to be in a crash than drivers who are focused on the road. This is why safe driving requires undivided attention. Drivers need to

focus on the task at hand. Keep your eyes on the road and your hands on the wheel. All road users need to feel safe on our roads and highways, no matter how they choose to travel.

We have great success in keeping our roads safe. Thanks to all of us—current and past governments—Ontario is the North American leader in road safety. I encourage all members to support this legislation.

One last thing on collision trends: In Ontario, fatalities from distracted driving are exceeding those of drinking and driving already. More people are being killed as a result of that, and the fines and the changes in the licensing system would go a long way.

I just want to conclude by saying that this is a historic piece of legislation. I want to thank the official opposition and the third party for their leadership as well. We often say we all support these things—and every party is guilty of it—and then we rag the puck and don't get it through the House. I'm hoping this is something that we can get to committee very quickly.

I want to commit to you, as I had when we started this process, to maintain this as a nonpartisan discussion. I don't think road safety is a Liberal, Conservative or NDP idea, or a Green Party idea; it's just a good idea we all share. I look forward to working with members on all sides of the House for the speedy passage of this bill so we can save lives.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** It was very thought-provoking to hear the minister speak, because all these issues he raised about safety on the roads really touch all of us in all of our communities. I know he mentioned that there are four private members' bills that are incorporated in this bill: the member from Scarborough–Rouge River's bill on distracted driving, the member from Parkdale–High Park's bill about cycling safety and passing distance, MPP Dunlop's bill about tow truck operator safety, and MPP Miller's bill. So there are ideas from individual MPPs.

1620

Just as they put forward the bills, I remember that over 10 years ago we had a situation where a car ran a red light in my riding and killed a person and injured nine other people who were waiting at the streetcar stop. Out of that people said, "What can we do? These people are running red lights." Then I found out that this red-light running was an epidemic, really, that people are always trying to beat the red light and T-boning people. So I put forward a private member's bill at that time to introduce red-light cameras at high-collision intersections. I know the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London was talking about how frustrated he was yesterday with his Ryan's Law, waiting a year to get a bill in. I think it took me about five years until we finally got a bill that allowed red-light cameras to be installed in high-collision intersections, because the technology helped save lives. The police could not babysit every intersection, so we needed improved technology. But that was an initiative that came

out of something that happened in my riding, for people's safety, and I'm sure the other MPPs have had similar initiatives come forward on traffic safety. That's why these things need attention when they're brought forward by MPPs.

Just to reiterate, this bill is about safety and better roads and better conditions on the roads. We sometimes take for granted that these roads have to be built in the first place. They have to be maintained, and they have to be maintained at a high standard, because if the road isn't maintained at a high standard, you can see what can happen in terms of lack of proper snow clearing or proper level of repair—the proper shoulder repair. If you've driven through the GTA in the last couple of months, you can see the horrendous conditions our roads are in. In all my life, I've never seen so many potholes. Those potholes are a reflection of the fact that not only has it been a severe winter with a lot of extra salt being used but the fact that, over the years, municipalities and the provincial government think, "We'll just resurface the road and it will be okay." So the roads look okay, but basically, many of those roads haven't been rebuilt properly and made to withstand the ice conditions, the salt conditions.

Everybody says, "Oh, yeah, we'll just drive," but we need to invest in our roads. We need to invest in transit. We need to invest in road safety. And it's not a one-time investment of capital dollars. You have to pay people to work on keeping our roads safe, whether it's the police, whether it's road maintenance crews—an investment of dollars. It's a constant work in progress.

In the GTA, we're up to about six million people, with how many cars? We've gone from probably about 500,000 cars in the GTA to over, probably, a couple of million cars. It's amazing the number of added cars. And have we really built new roads? We've widened the 401 continually. We've widened sections of it. It's never stopped. But somehow we expect that our roads are still going to be safe, are going to handle all these extra millions of cars. In Toronto, we've built one new piece of road in 20 years—one piece of road. We're saying, "The cars are everywhere. We can't do anything about it." Well, everybody's driving more. We're not building any new road infrastructure. We have to continue to invest in road infrastructure, in making them safe and making them, again, up to standards. That kind of investment is critical to make our roads safe.

Plus there have to be laws which remind people about the serious responsibility we have in our roads. I looked at the stats. The number one killer in BC now is distracted driving. It's no different than other provinces now. It used to be drunk driving. We used to be worried about speed. Those are not the killers now. The killer is—I see the Minister of Transportation on his cellphone there.

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** I'm taking notes, Mike.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** Anyways, distracted driving is something we're all plagued with because of the fact that our cars are no longer four wheels with a motor. Our cars are entertainment centres. I mean, if you go into some of

these fancy new cars and you look at the dashboard, you'll say, "Holy God, where am I, in a movie theatre?" There are so many gadgets. How can you keep your mind on the road? You've got all these things flashing and you can email, text, see movies. You can talk to your mother-in-law in Shanghai. You can do anything in your car. It's taking away from paying attention to the road. It's tempting, because all these things are at our fingertips. Therefore, something has to be done about distracted driving.

I know that the member from Rouge River has put forward a private member's bill to try and deal with this, and it's incorporated in this bill that there has got to be a heavier penalty, because people are doing it continually. They're being induced to do it by the way our cars are now filled with all these incredible gadgets, which are supposedly to enhance safety, yet they augment your distraction at the same time. That's the contradiction. We need to have this stiffer penalty and demerit points, which they're doing in other provinces.

I just want to mention that there's also increasing conflict at times, especially in cities, sometimes between pedestrians, motorists, cyclists. I think one of the reasons for that is because our roads are so congested that people are getting totally stressed out by the constant waiting in traffic, the constant lost time. Therefore, you've got motorists that are uptight; you've got cyclists that are trying to get by, and they're getting uptight.

You've got pedestrians who are trying to cross the street, and—Mr. Speaker, you've seen it too—sometimes pedestrians are on their cellphones as they're walking across. That's one thing that really bothers me. I mean, we have all the things about motorists and cyclists that bother me, but I see pedestrians with this very arrogant attitude. They're walking across the street; they don't even look left or right. They think it's their God-given right to go across the street, texting, without even looking to see if there's a cyclist or a motorist coming, making a right-hand turn. They just walk ahead as if that light is green and, basically, they don't have to pay attention.

We all have to pay attention, whether we're motorists, whether we're cyclists or whether we're pedestrians. That's critical for road safety. But it's really hard to pay attention when you've got two things in your ear and you're texting. There are even cases of cyclists that are texting and so forth. We need to put some kind of protocol in place which cools the temperatures down and gets people to be more cognizant of the shared responsibility we have on roads.

It's just like when we make right-hand turns. I always try to look in my mirror to make sure there isn't a cyclist coming in the right-hand line. In the past that wasn't the case, but now, the cyclists are on the right. So you have to look at the cars, the pedestrians and a possible cyclist coming in on your inside lane. It is a very daunting task to drive these days, despite all the gadgets and all the safety devices, which are good, but, again, they're not the answer.

In this bill, there's also a number of initiatives which make our roads safer and promote safe cycling. The

reality is that the cycling community, and the number of people cycling, is exploding all over the province, whether you go to the Niagara Peninsula, whether you go to Hamilton Mountain, whether you go to Kitchener, whether you go to Prince Edward Island or Windsor or the banana belt by Pelee Island, or by Eriean and those wonderful places down there where you go smelt fishing—not smelt fishing, perch fishing. The smelt have disappeared, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of the Environment is here; he'll tell us why.

Anyway, the thing about it is that cycling is happening. It is an incredible industry. There are so many people opening up cycle repair shops, bike repair shops. They're opening up all kinds of sales of bicycles. Cycling tourism is huge. It's a great generator of jobs. They're connected with the wine industry, with the restaurants, with sightseeing, with healthy living. Cycling is a reality.

I know that, myself, in the last couple of years, I was always a casual weekend cyclist with my Raleigh bike. But in recent years, I had a young man approach me, and his name is Michael Ovens. He is a blind cyclist. He cycles on the back of a tandem. He does this charity ride that goes from Toronto to Collingwood, and they have these tandem bikes. He said, "Oh, you can do it." I said, "Well, I haven't been on a bicycle"—and he wanted me to do 70 kilometres, half. I said, "I don't know if I can do it." But I did train, and I did go to some spinning classes. Anyway, I learned a lot about what's happening, in terms of where cycling is going, through Michael Ovens and his Cycle for Sight initiative, which raises money for people with blindness.

#### 1630

The fact is that cycling is there. We have to make it safer, and that's why, in this bill, we look at the dangers of dooring, which happens to cyclists and also motorcyclists. Certainly there is the whole issue about paved shoulders—Norm Miller has talked about this for a number of years—where it was prohibited. This is the crazy thing: You could not go on the shoulder with your bicycle. A big transport truck is coming at you, and you couldn't ride on the shoulder. It was prohibited by law on the 400-series and the major highways. This bill says you will be able to cycle on the shoulder and, hopefully, this will mean enhanced, safer shoulders for our cycling community.

But this is the reality all across the province of Ontario: We have to have good rules that apply to the motorist, the pedestrian and the cyclist. In this legislation here, we're trying to put forward a pretty practical framework of safety rules—that's really what it comes down to—that people of all ages have got to adhere to, again motorists, cyclists, pedestrians.

It's a reminder that we have to constantly improve safety because of the increased speed, the increased number of cars, the increased number of cyclists. It only makes sense that we go ahead and put these protective rules in place that are necessary because, whether it's our children, our grandchildren, our loved ones, our neighbours that are in cars, innocently going to work, taking a



bike to work or walking to work, whatever it is, they deserve to have their safety protected. That's what the intent of this bill is, to try and bring in some safety standards that can be applied in a reasonable way across the province of Ontario so we will have safer roads.

Again, the thing is, roads are part of our economic reality. If we don't have good roads, basically our economy comes to a standstill. We have to keep our roads moving with cars. We have to keep our roads safe. It's an economic reality that we have to invest in our roads. We have a great infrastructure across Ontario, but we have to invest even more to make them sustainable, so we don't end up with pothole hell, as we have here in Toronto this year. We have to invest in safety by road maintenance and good rules.

We cannot assume a person is going to always be doing the right thing, because as human beings, we're constantly distracted, we're constantly in a rush. Every time we get in a car, it seems we're late for something. We never get in a car and say, "Oh well, I can take my time." We always say, "Well, I have to get there. I'm late." That kind of mindset, because of this rush-rush society we're into, adds to the added danger on the roads. We have to try and slow things down, get rid of all those gadgets. Maybe we should sell those gadget-free cars, just the old dashboard—remember when all you had on the dashboard was a radio? That's all you had. Maybe we should go back to the old—my 1957 Ford just had a little radio. Anyway, it was a lot safer in those days.

We need to invest in safety, and that's what this bill is all about, Mr. Speaker. It's about investing in the safety of the people of Ontario. Whether, again, you're in a big city or a small town, we've had horrific accidents, sometimes on our back concession roads, so everybody has got to be supportive of this investment in safety. That's the bottom line about this bill.

I hope that members on all sides look at a way of bringing forward this agenda of this bill, the Keeping Ontario's Roads Safe act, so that we can do our job as MPPs.

I thank you all for listening and I pass the torch on to my esteemed member from the far east in Toronto, Scarborough—Rouge River member Bas Balkissoon.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member from Scarborough—Rouge River.

**Mr. Bas Balkissoon:** I'm pleased to rise today and join the Minister of Transportation and my colleague from Eglinton—Lawrence in providing full support to Bill 173, Keeping Ontario's Roads Safe, as it was introduced by the minister earlier.

The bill aims to amend sections of the Highway Traffic Act dealing with impaired driving, pedestrian safety, tow truck safety, medical reports, vehicle inspection systems and a number of miscellaneous amendments, including one that is very important to me: distracted driving. I just want to say that I offer my thanks to the minister for his support on distracted driving concerns and having my suggestion included in this act.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to focus my comments on distracted driving. As you know, last fall I introduced my private member's bill, the Manoranjana Kanagasabapathy Act, Bill 116, which aimed to amend the Highway Traffic Act to increase the penalty for the use of hand-held devices while operating a motor vehicle.

If you will recall, the bill was named after Manoranjana, a 52-year-old woman who was tragically killed in an accident involving a truck that crashed into a TTC bus on Steeles Avenue at Middlefield Road in my riding, on Tuesday, August 13, in the year 2013. Twelve other individuals were injured in the accident, including three people who were taken to Sunnybrook Hospital's trauma centre. I just want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, that, as you can see, one person's error has created several other people's hardship, including one person who died. That person's entire family was affected.

There were two specific components to my bill. It proposed to increase the penalty for using hand-held devices while driving to a fine of not less than \$300 and not more than \$700. More importantly, the bigger piece of my bill proposed to add three demerit points to each offence.

I am pleased that, in the interim, the Chief Justice recently increased the set fine to \$280, which is within the current range of \$60 to \$500. I hope that, when Bill 173 is approved, the set fine will increase further. I will have to continue to work with the minister and hopefully somehow get to the Chief Justice to make sure that that fine is set at something that is very significant.

Bill 173 proposes a number of other important changes to make our roads safer. I'm happy that my private member's bill has been adopted and included as part of the larger bill, along with my colleagues from the other side of the House who have also had their private members' bills included, but most important to me is that Bill 173 proposes a fine of not less than \$300 and not more than \$1,000. The minister has gone a little bit deeper than I had proposed, and I'm happy to know that he has a higher concern than I do. So I'm pleased to be here to support this bill.

I agree with the minister that it is more appropriate to deal with demerit points in regulations, as he has proposed to me. The reason I do that is because, in the current Highway Traffic Act, demerit points have always been dealt with in regulations. I recognize that.

Unfortunately, as a member, when I propose a bill I don't have access to regulations, so I did what was available to me, which was to propose demerit points in Bill 116. I'm going to say that I'm pleased that the minister is quite happy to entertain my request to change the demerit points; he's going to do it through regulations, and I'm going to be waiting patiently till he gets that done.

**Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** I heard him.

**Mr. Bas Balkissoon:** My colleague here says that he heard it, so I've got a witness.

Distracted driving continues to be a growing concern. Since introducing my private member's bill, my staff and I are more aware of this. We continue to see people using cellphones while driving.

The minister described his own incident, but I want to describe another one. I was on the highway, and the car that was in front of me was travelling well below the speed limit and somewhat erratically. You could see it shifting along the highway. Being a little frustrated, I took my time and waited, and at the first opportunity, I passed the vehicle. Sure enough, the person was on the phone, not realizing that they put themselves at risk and they also put everybody else around them at risk. I was at risk having to pass the vehicle. So it's a little frustrating, and I knew that something had to be done. I'm glad the minister has brought this bill so quickly, since introducing my private member's bill.

**1640**

I'm hoping that since included in this bill are other members' bills on all sides—all three parties—we will all join together and make sure we let this bill go through second reading very quickly and let it go to committee, and that it will come back here and we'll adopt it. Hopefully we'll have this legislation in place very, very quickly.

Mr. Speaker, CAA recently conducted a survey of their members, and the result of that survey stated that 85% or more of respondents feel that sending text messages or emails, reading text messages or e-mails and/or using an app on a smartphone is unsafe while driving a vehicle. That tells you that a lot of the driving public out there sees this as an issue, and therefore they're depending on us, as government, to do something about it.

Based on recent CAA time trials, replying to a text message takes an average of 33 seconds. I say to all of us, think about 33 seconds. If you're driving at 60 clicks an hour, it's a long distance you're going to travel without seeing where you're going and without seeing what the traffic in front of you is doing. A whole lot of things can happen in that short period of time. It really does not take a lot to create an accident and put a lot of people in jeopardy. So I just say to all of us that we need to take this bill very seriously. Let us put it into legislation very, very quickly.

Distracted driving is a preventable offence, and as legislators we must take proactive measures to improve safety on our roads, but not only that; we should improve the safety of our constituents and our communities. The driver will always take chances, but it's the other innocent people that I think we, as legislators, have to be concerned about.

It is proven that if you text and drive, most likely you're going to get into an accident. I would say that because of that, I want to thank the minister once again for doing what he's doing here today. Hopefully all of us will support this bill going through very quickly.

I just want to compare this bill to the seat belt law that came in many, many years ago. When the seat belt law came in, it took 13 years for legislators to realize that just a law saying you must wear your seat belt did not bring compliance. It was when demerit points were added that the police reported that compliance was achieved, to the

point today where we have more than 95% compliance with that particular change.

The law was changed for hand-held devices in 2009; we're about five and a half years away. We recognize we have a problem. I think we need to do it now and do it quickly, and hopefully we'll achieve compliance a lot faster than the drinking and driving and seat belt legislation, as it occurred in the past.

I would say to all of us that this is an important law. I want to congratulate the minister for including all the issues of my colleagues and creating an act that is non-partisan. It's really about our community, our residents and the people we represent here in the Legislature on a daily basis.

I also want to thank Mr. Ken Kandiah and his family for their commitment in asking me to push this government to change the law. They wanted to make sure that their sister and the mother of two children—that her life was not given up without something being done about it. I'm really pleased to be able to work with that family, and to be able to be here in front of all of us and see that the minister has brought a very comprehensive bill that would allow something to be done and done very quickly.

So I appeal to all my colleagues across the House: Let us do the right thing. Let second reading go as quickly as it can to committee, because everything in this bill is something that is needed for our society. Hopefully, it will come back from committee very quickly, we'll adopt it after third reading and we'll get it into law quite quickly—I'm hoping before we break for the summer recess.

Thank you for the opportunity to add a few points.

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

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I certainly listened with pleasure and with interest this afternoon to the minister speaking for a few moments and sharing his time with the members from Eglinton–Lawrence and Scarborough–Rouge River.

The general thrust here is, the minister was putting across that we're going to come together on this and do something in a non-partisan way. I think that would be a really lovely idea.

I would say, too, that in the acquiescent remarks that were made, the minister did mention the four private members' bills—from Scarborough–Rouge River, Parkdale–High Park, from Garfield Dunlop, as well as Norm Miller—on the bicycle bill and the tow truck operators, all of which are included in here to some extent.

I have a desire to have an hour's leadoff on the bill.

I want to put in perspective too, though, that I do agree on the principle of safety, and we all have a collective responsibility to do the right thing.

I initiated some action, because of a tragedy in my riding, on driver distraction and carried the ball on driver distraction for quite a while. It served a useful purpose—the debate on driver distraction.

I agree today that the fine increase is something that is going to be really important—that the enforcement

people don't use the big clout to get the big cheque. They've got to look at people's driving records and the file when they pull up behind a person. If it's a first offence, perhaps a \$200 or \$300 fine would be fine; or maybe even taking a course on driver distraction, one of those simulator courses, would be a good idea. But if it's a second or third infraction, whack them with \$1,000 and the three points, and their insurance will go up and pretty soon they'll be out of a job.

My sense is that driver distraction is the leading cause.

I commend the member from Scarborough–Rouge River for his work and the attention he has brought to the issue as well.

I am looking forward to our critic, who has done a lot of work on this file: the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London. He will make remarks. Hopefully, he'll have the courtesy to share a bit of his time with me, but we'll have to wait and see on that.

Anyway, I think it's a productive afternoon.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** It is a pleasure to stand up in support of Bill 173. I would like to commend the member from Eglinton–Lawrence and the member from Scarborough–Rouge River for making very salient and passionate points, particularly on the distracted driving issue.

For those of you who don't know, I've served with the member from Eglinton–Lawrence and the PC caucus member on the all-party bike caucus. There have been ongoing issues, in conjunction with the Minister of Transportation, on how we can actually make things better. This should be, ideally, a non-partisan issue.

The member from Eglinton–Lawrence talked about getting the bike ready. I do have a Giant bike. That's the name of it. We do ride on the shoulders of Giants—but they do need to be repaired on a regular basis, as mine does.

Certainly, the culture shift around distracted driving and around incorporating and sharing the road—I know that Share the Road has done an amazing job in this Legislature of moving that agenda forward and approaching all parties on an equal basis to ensure that legislation truly is reflective of the real needs of cyclists, of drivers, and that that infrastructure piece is also incorporated into the conversation. The one-metre rule is a really good step in the right direction.

The culture shift is happening because we're talking about it, and if we're talking about it, I really do hope that somebody is listening to it. But through legislation, we can move that agenda forward.

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

1650

**Mr. Joe Dickson:** It's a pleasure to stand and speak on this bill today. I can tell you that there are a lot of great points in here—just increasing the maximum fine from \$20 to a set fine that falls in the range of \$60 to \$500 for not using required bicycle lights and other reflectors, reflective material and permitting the use of

flashing red lights as a safety feature on bicycles. I know that they are more than an annoyance on many occasions.

I can tell you that cyclists are busy on streets, and they are, many, many times, just not conscious of traffic about them. I could take one street as an example. On Wellesley Street when we are coming over to Queen's Park, there are a lot of young people going to any number of schools. Many of the young people are going to the University of Toronto here. Many never look, and many never signal.

On Wellesley Street, just east of Queen's Park, I recently had a courier virtually run into the front of my truck from the opposite way, coming across the road. Fortunately, I had the Viper truck, so the front nose automatically goes down on it. The courier just bounced off the truck a little bit. He was most courteous and professional and apologized. I said, "Never mind that; I just want to make sure you're okay," but in fact he had run into me.

It's an ongoing scenario. I know that if Minister Murray had brought forward more information on safe driving, if he ever had a spare moment—and I know he doesn't—that would be something that we'd all love to see when we are in vehicles anywhere in downtown Toronto.

I congratulate the minister on bringing this forth. It's a great job, great legislation, and I'll certainly support it.

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

**Mrs. Gila Martow:** I'm happy to speak on Bill 173. I thought it was interesting to listen to all the comments. I live in Thornhill, which is definitely still a bedroom community. People are mostly living in Thornhill and travelling to jobs in outlying areas, often downtown.

It's interesting that the Minister of Transportation specifically spoke about the commute and that people should use bicycles for commuting. I don't think there are too many people from Thornhill who commute to downtown Toronto by bicycle. We do need to focus on creating more jobs up in the riding so maybe people could commute to work by bicycle.

I'm disappointed that the Minister of Transportation, after offering to come and tour Thornhill and the transportation issues with me, after contacting his office numerous times, still has not found the time to set a date. What I would like to show him is that people do ride bikes, especially now in the nice weather. They want to take their bikes out, they want to walk. By building bus lanes and widening the roads, we're actually making it less safe. We're building bus lanes, not bike lanes. People would prefer to see bike lanes rather than bus lanes.

I would like to make my offer to the Minister of Transportation. Since he offered to me so generously, I'd like to make the offer now to come up as soon as possible and—

*Interjection.*

**Mrs. Gila Martow:** Yes, we're very famous. We've got the famous Centre Street Deli just where they want to build the bus lane, so I'm giving her a shout-out.

We are looking forward to speaking tomorrow on making June bike month, and I'm happy to speak more then about it. We're going to have two events in the riding: May 31 in Woodbridge, which is actually just outside the riding; and in the riding of Thornhill, in Concord, on June 15, we're organizing a ride with a brunch. So I'm looking forward to seeing a lot of residents there, and I invite all the members from all three parties to join us.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** One of the three members, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, has two minutes.

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** Thank you very much.

I want to not only thank the member for Durham for his comments, but I also want to acknowledge his very good work on distracted driving. I apologize for not mentioning it earlier.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo: Again, thank you for your leadership and that of your party and your colleagues and, again, for your commitment on the cycling group in the non-partisan caucus. Excellent work, and thank you for your leadership. I hope we can work together to achieve this.

My friend, my mentor, whom I refer to as Father Joe, the member for Ajax–Pickering, who is a spiritual leader for many of us and helped me learn this place when I sat over where the member from Kitchener–Waterloo is sitting: I want to thank him for his thoughtful comments and his friendship.

To the member for Thornhill: I would love to come to you. My schedule is a little bit busy. So I just want to say to my mother, who's watching: Mom, you see. You're not the only person I forget about. I forgot about my friend from Thornhill, who I owe an apology to.

But I also wanted to show you both the transit and the rapid transit subway investments, because we had a conversation about what was being spent in Thornhill, and I enjoyed that conversation. I miss Schwartz's in Montreal, so maybe we can find some good smoked meat together.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** Katz's Deli is the best.

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** Katz's Deli, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence says. We'll have a battle at Caplansky's—which one is better.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very good bill, and the kind of bill that I wish we saw more of. As I've said many times, those of us who have served on municipal governments or school boards are all used to a much less partisan nature. I have to tell you that in my four brief years in this House, I don't think I've met a member who doesn't bring something substantive to this House. I actually hate question period, not because it isn't fun, but because I think we look our most ridiculous. We look so darned stupid. Maybe we can make this a shining example of collaboration and co-operation and just doing a good thing for our community.

I look forward to the continuing conversation, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for your patience.

## ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Before I move to the next speaker, I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in his office.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes):** In Her Majesty's name, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to the following bill:

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

## HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (KEEPING ONTARIO'S ROADS SAFE), 2014 LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (ASSURER LA SÉCURITÉ DES ROUTES DE L'ONTARIO)

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

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** I'm proud to stand up and add my two cents to Bill 173.

**Interjection:** You might.

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** Yes, and I might, if the Legislature is wanting of it, split my time a little bit with the member for Durham, just so you know.

The short title of this bill is Keeping Ontario's Roads Safe, and I believe this is a laudable goal and one that we all can agree on. I support many aspects of this bill, but I also have some reservations about some of the others, and I'll outline those concerns as we carry on.

The issue of road safety is vital, as there are over nine million licensed drivers in this province and 11 million registered vehicles, to answer Eglinton–Lawrence's question about how many vehicles there are in the province. It's not just Ontarians who use our vast transportation network. Ontario is home to 14 of Canada's 26 border crossings, with 60% of all Canada-US trade passing through crossings at Windsor, Sarnia and Niagara. Over 32 million cars and 6.7 million trucks use these border crossings on an annual basis. To say that safe roads and reliable infrastructure are an economic imperative is an understatement.

I do have to say that over the past few decades, various measures have been taken to improve the safety of roads. Building on best practices in driver training, road engineering, penalties that serve to deter unsafe driving and enforcement all help to ensure that our roads remain safe. The metric often used to determine road safety is fatalities per 10,000 licensed drivers. It's good to see that since 1995, fatalities per 10,000 licensed drivers have fallen from around 1.4 to 0.63 in 2010.

While these statistics are encouraging, I find there's an interesting disconnect between ministry statistics and

what the public sees. A survey conducted by the CAA asked its membership to give their impression of Ontario's roads today compared with five years ago. Only 12% of respondents said the roads were safer than they were five years ago. About 35% said the roads were the same, and nearly 50% of people said that Ontario's roads were actually less safe than five years ago.

So the question we need to ask ourselves is: Why is there such a disconnect between the two? I really think the answer is quite simple. Certainly, improvements have been made in road safety in the past two decades to this point, and Bill 173 does address some issues. But Ontario drivers are looking at the lack of a plan this government has when it comes to breaking up gridlock and investing in our road infrastructure, which is crumbling. I think that most people look at our roads today and have concluded that if we continue with the status quo of de-prioritizing key infrastructure upgrades, we can very well expect to see our road safety statistics get worse in the future.

So when we see the results of the CAA questionnaire, I think the message is clear. While fatalities may be down in the last couple of years, the current state of our roads is actually more dangerous than they were five years ago. People understand that the government's misplaced spending priorities are putting the safety of our entire road network at risk. The PC Party does have a credible plan to prioritize key infrastructure investments by establishing a dedicated fund to ensure infrastructure investment does not get pre-empted.

**1700**

Speaker, I'd like to go through Bill 173 and highlight some of the good parts and where we have concerns that we'd like to see addressed. I'll start off with the cycling and pedestrian part, and the parts of the bill that I'll start off with do have quite a bit of common sense to them. When it comes to pedestrian safety, I think this bill seeks to strike a good balance. While most of what it legislates, like stopping at crosswalks and having drivers wait until a pedestrian clears the crosswalk before driving forward, are already observed by most drivers, legislating it adds a degree of certainty and legal responsibility.

What I also like about this bill is that it puts the responsibility for pedestrian safety equally on the driver and the pedestrian. For instance, the pedestrian must not enter a crosswalk if a car does not have enough time, or is travelling too fast a speed, to stop. I think it's important that we recognize that all road users are responsible for safety, and I believe this aspect of the bill helps achieve that.

This bill also addresses issues that pertain to the safety of cyclists. There are roughly 1.2 million Ontarians that ride daily through the spring, summer and fall seasons; 36% of Ontarians or 4.5 million people ride monthly; and, in 2010, roughly two million visitors cycled while travelling in Ontario. It's important that we have a road network and a legislative framework that protects the safety of cyclists.

I was glad to see that the Liberal government has included a clause that incorporates the private member's

bill introduced by my colleague from the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka that permits cyclists to ride on the paved shoulders of our highways. I know that the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka brought his bill forward to ensure that cyclists everywhere in this province have the ability to ride their bike safely, so I'm pleased to see that in this bill.

Most other aspects of the bill that pertain to cyclists are fairly common practice. However, there is one aspect I'd like to address, and that's the issue of dooring. Dooring, as many of us know, is when a driver accidentally opens their door into the path of an oncoming bicycle. Certainly, this problem is most severe in Toronto and the GTA. This bill proposes increasing the fines from \$50 to a range of \$300 to \$1,000 for drivers found guilty of dooring. The government says this will deter instances of dooring.

While I'm in support of drivers being responsible and aware of their surroundings when getting out of their car, I'm not sure that the deterrence argument holds much weight in this instance. Most instances of dooring, in which a driver is negligent, do end up in court. We all have a legal obligation to reasonably avoid negligent behaviour that could cause injury to others, even with Bill 173. Because of this, the damages awarded in the negligence suit, I think, far outweigh an increase of fines in terms of deterrence. I think if you're talking about this in terms of deterring dooring, the legal process already provides a fairly significant deterrent.

I also think we need to consider the responsibility of both parties, much like Bill 173 does, when it comes to pedestrians. Cyclists must be aware of vehicle blind spots and do what they can to make themselves visible to drivers, particularly at night. As I said before, road safety is the responsibility of all road users.

I'd like to move on to emergency vehicles and tow trucks, and what this bill comes forward with. When I do drive down Highway 401, oftentimes I see a motorist receiving roadside assistance from a tow truck. Getting a vehicle hooked up to a tow truck can be a hazardous proposition, particularly when dozens of cars are speeding by, usually at 120 kilometres an hour.

This danger was unfortunately brought home in an all-too-real way when a tow truck driver from Windsor was killed two years ago while helping to change a tire. According to police reports, the tow truck driver was where he should have been. In addition to this incident, there have been many near-death occurrences and injuries of workers and motorists who are stopped due to mechanical failure, damage or accidents on Ontario's highways and roads.

The aptly named "slow down, move over" aspect of the bill is important. In fact, I'm proud to say that my colleague the member from Simcoe North was ahead of this issue and introduced a bill in March 2012 to address it. The MPP from Simcoe North recognized a danger and put forth a "slow down, move over" bill. It required, by legislation, that drivers slow down and provide distance between their vehicle and any tow truck or other vehicle

stopped at the side of the road. This protection already exists for emergency vehicles and my colleague's private member's bill would have extended the protection to roadside assistance vehicles. The bill received broad-based support with a petition submitted to the Legislature on October 15, 2012, that had nearly 7,500 signatures.

But, Speaker, I imagine you do remember what happened in October 2012—you're not answering, but that's okay: Dalton McGuinty prorogued Parliament, Mr. Speaker, and all the legislation before the House was wiped clean, including the "slow down, move over" legislation.

Finally, two years from when the member from Simcoe North first introduced it, we see the "slow down, move over" legislation reappear in this government's bill, and I commend the government for doing so. With a government bill, there's more of a chance it will become law, and the sooner we can start preventing needless deaths and injuries, the better, because the overarching concern is making sure there's good legislation in place to protect Ontarians.

I'm pleased to see that the Liberal government is borrowing ideas from members like the member from Simcoe North. It's too bad, though, they haven't more seriously considered stealing some of our other ideas. For instance, the member from Simcoe North does a tremendous job in raising awareness of the job-killing College of Trades and the associated trades tax. Considering there are 600 million people without a job in this province, this Liberal government should listen to this man, who actually spent the bulk of his career—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** I would suggest the member stick to the script. He's drifting.

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** Fair enough. Stay on the road; stay straight. Right. I'm sorry, Speaker. It's nice to see the Liberal government take Simcoe North's piece of legislation and incorporate it into Bill 173. It's too bad they didn't pick up on the others. But I'll move on. Thank you very much.

I'd like to talk a bit about distracted driving, because there has been quite a bit of commentary over the last few months. There has been great discussion about it through what the government should be doing to deter the practice, and there's good reason for this. It has only been in the last decade that mobile devices have become a fixture in our lives. Back when I started managing the family pharmacy in the mid-1990s, nobody really had an idea of what a cellphone was. There were many computers in the office, but cellphones were pretty much unheard of. But in that short period of time, the computing power of those old PCs has been condensed down into a hand-held device.

For something that didn't really exist 15 years ago, pretty much everyone has one now. I'm sure I can speak for everyone in this room when I say that not only do I carry my cellphone with me at all times, I feel lost when I don't have it with me. Meetings, schedules, emails, text messages: Every way that I communicate and stay productive can be found on my phone. The temptation to

check my phone when I'm behind the wheel, of course, is immense. However, doing so is one of the most dangerous things you can do when you're behind the wheel.

Quite frankly, the statistics are overwhelming. If I may, I'd like to go through some of these statistics to better illustrate distracted driving and its dangers.

The Ontario Provincial Police cite distracted driving as a causal factor in 30% to 50% of traffic collisions in Ontario. And this is just what is reported; many say that the figure is probably much, much higher. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 80% of collisions and 65% of near-crashes have some form of driver inattention as a contributing factor. I think it's clear to everyone that cellphones certainly lead to inattention when it comes to the task of driving.

Cellphones are one of the most common distractions for drivers. Drivers who engage in text messaging on cellular phones are 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash or near-crash event compared to non-distracted drivers. This statistic comes to us from a study by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, and it's not hard to understand why. The CAA has noted that the average time it takes to respond to a text message is 33.6 seconds. If we assume you're travelling on the highway at 100 kilometres an hour, this equates to travelling a distance of 933 metres without your attention on the road. That's almost 10 football fields. Even if you're just answering a phone call, that takes about 10.6 seconds. Again, assuming you're travelling on the highway at 100 kilometres an hour, which I'm sure we all do on the 400 series, it equates to travelling a distance of 294 metres, or approximately three football fields, without attention on the road.

As much as this is a road safety issue, there are economic consequences to distracted driving. The government of Canada has estimated that the economic losses caused by a traffic collision related to health care costs and lost productivity are at least \$10 billion annually, which is about 1% of Canada's GDP. With distracted driving increasing the probability of experiencing a traffic collision by 230%, it's very apparent that unchecked distracted driving has a negative economic impact. I find these statistics quite incredible.

These statistics and the anecdotal evidence that we get when we hear numerous news stories about car accidents caused by mobile device usage have shifted the public's focus in terms of road safety issues.

#### 1710

It used to be that drinking while driving was the number one road safety issue, but thanks to the efforts of organizations like MADD and our law enforcement agencies, we've been able to curb the number of fatalities due to drunk driving. Now, in two national public opinion polls, Canadians consider texting and driving to be the number one road safety issue. Yet despite the horrifying statistics and broad public awareness, we still find it difficult to just put our phones away when we're behind the wheel.

The percentage of Canadians who admit to using a cellphone while driving has remained between 36% and

37% in the past two years. Considering the fact that this figure was only at 25% in 2002, it's not difficult to see that we're heading in the wrong direction. But as illustrative as these statistics are, it's not enough to throw statistics at people and hope it sinks in. We need to have a conversation among our communities and make efforts to change the collective cultural attitude towards distracted driving.

I mentioned drinking and driving a minute ago. I think the evolution of that road safety issue highlights some interesting and relevant points. After all, just a couple of generations ago, drinking and driving was commonplace. There was cultural acceptance surrounding the practice. However, we know that alcohol impairs judgment and increases the risk of accidents.

At the time that legislation to deter the practice was enacted, a number of groups like MADD sprang up to educate people on the dangers of drinking and driving. Today when I ask my local police officers how many young drivers get pulled over for drinking and driving, they tell me it's very low. The people getting charged with drinking and driving tend to be older, over 50: those who learned to drink and drive when drinking and driving was acceptable. Yet our young people, as a general group, are aware of the dangers and make smart decisions when it comes to drinking and driving.

This is what we must do: We must change the cultural attitude towards texting and driving. I'm sure that was the aim of Chief Justice Bonkalo—I hope I got her name right—when she ruled to increase the fine for using a hand-held device behind the wheel from \$155 to \$280 on March 18. The Chief Justice understood that \$155 was not a sufficient deterrent for a practice that had become so deeply embedded in many drivers' behaviour, so she did what she could do to help deter a habit that claimed 78 lives in Ontario last year. I commend her move. I think she made the decision despite promises from the minister, which the MTO and the minister both have been slow to act on.

All of last year, we heard how the minister was going to tackle the issue of distracted driving. However, nothing was brought forward. The good news is that his colleague the member from Scarborough–Rouge River did. Bill 116 was brought forward in response to the tragic death of a constituent in the member opposite's riding. So he did what any good member in this House would do: He tabled a bill that would help prevent more senseless deaths.

Not only would Bill 116 have increased the fines for distracted driving offences substantially; it also proposes implementing demerit points. I have to commend the member for this inclusion because, when we talk about distracted driving, demerit points need to be part of the conversation. When demerit points are issued, they appear in a driver's record. If you get more than nine demerit points, you can lose your licence. It's that basic. When we talk about where to start in order to change the attitude towards distracted driving and take steps to deter it, I can't think of a better deterrent than the prospect of losing one's licence.

Another deterring factor when it comes to demerit points is the potential effect they have on someone's insurance rates. Demerit points show up on driver abstracts that get sent to insurance companies. If you have accumulated a number of points, you could very well see your insurance rate spike. When we think about it, when somebody realizes that they could be paying hundreds of dollars more a year on insurance if they get caught texting and driving, they'll think twice about checking their phone while behind the wheel. The previous fine of \$155 has, until now, been considered a cost of driving. Demerit points, on the other hand, carry real weight.

So I was proud to reach across to my colleague across the chamber to help him support his efforts to pass his bill. In fact, we co-hosted a press conference in the media studio to talk about the merits of his bill. When the bill came up for second reading, I gladly stood up in support and voted for it. It's a great moment when MPPs can come together regardless of their party affiliation to try to do the right thing for the people of Ontario. I know that the member from Scarborough–Rouge River agrees with me. As he's a member of the committee reviewing my private member's bill to protect children with asthma while they're at school, I know that he will work hard to press his caucus to support my bill.

We passed Bill 116 through second reading last November. However, when we returned from our winter break, it seemed that the powers that be on the government side had forgotten a great deal about their own caucus member's bill that he put forward. The Minister of Transportation never talked about it, and it never did come up in committee. It wasn't really until the Chief Justice raised the fines for using a mobile device while behind the wheel that the conversation around distracted driving restarted. Everyone started to remember that the Minister of Transportation had made promises to tackle the issue of distracted driving and that, so far, he had failed to deliver.

It was last November that the minister had told the *Toronto Star*, "We are going to be moving in the very near future." He said this in reference to distracted driving, a problem he said could be solved by a combination of an intense education campaign and the addition of demerit points. Remember, this was November of last year. But only after the Chief Justice raised the fines and reignited the conversation on distracted driving did we get the introduction of Bill 173.

When the bill was introduced, it received widespread media coverage. I want to read you a bit from the *Toronto Star* again, an article that discussed the introduction of Bill 173. This is dated March 17, 2014, and it reads as follows: "Distracted drivers on their cellphones and careless motorists who knock down cyclists with their open doors will face maximum fines of \$1,000 and three demerit points under sweeping new road safety rules introduced Monday."

CTV News in Ottawa reported as follows: "And texting while driving or 'dooring' a cyclist could cost you demerit points."

The Globe and Mail reported, “Ontario is proposing a potentially costly hike in penalties for distracted drivers by imposing three demerit points in addition to a maximum fine of up to \$1,000.

“Drivers who receive demerit points after being convicted of using their cellphones behind the wheel could face higher insurance premiums.”

The media, by and large, focused on the introduction of demerit points as an important aspect of Bill 173. There’s no reason they shouldn’t have, given that MTO’s own background on the bill reads as follows:

“To reduce collisions, injuries and fatalities as a result of distracted driving, proposed amendments include:

—increasing the fine from \$60 to \$500 to \$300 to \$1,000;

—assigning three demerit points upon conviction of a distracted driving offence;

—making a distracted driving conviction a contravention of one of the licence conditions placed on novice drivers within the graduated licensing system.”

The reason I bring this up is that I have read Bill 173, and there’s absolutely no mention of demerit points in it. I’ve spoken to a number of stakeholders to see if they picked up on something that I had missed. However, none of them could find the phrase “demerit points” in there either.

This brings to mind two questions: First, will demerit points be implemented with the passage of Bill 173? Second, when will drivers start receiving demerit points for distracted driving offences? The answer to the first is, “No,” and the answer to the second is, “Whenever the minister wants.” That’s because demerit points for offences related to the use of mobile devices when behind the wheel can be instituted through an order in council. It’s not a matter of legislation; it’s a matter of regulation.

After I had stood in support of the member from Scarborough–Rouge River’s private member’s bill, people started to ask me when this important change would be made. When it became clear the minister was dragging his heels, I asked the legislative library to provide me with a report that outlined whether demerit points could be instituted without legislative amendments to the Highway Traffic Act. I’d like to read a bit from the report so that everyone can fully understand the issue.

“The Countering Distracted Driving and Promoting Green Transportation Act, 2009”—and I’m quoting here—“made amendments to the Highway Traffic Act which were proclaimed in force on October 26, 2009. The 2009 act amended the Highway Traffic Act to generally prohibit driving:

“—if the display screen of a television, computer or other device in the motor vehicle is visible to the driver, and

“—while holding or using a hand-held wireless device or hand-held electronic entertainment device or other prescribed devices.”

In other words, distracted driving is considered an offence under sections 78 and 78.1 of the Highway Traffic Act.

In talking about the role of demerit points in the system, the report goes on to say, “The Highway Traffic Act authorizes the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations providing for a demerit points system for drivers of motor vehicles or street cars.

“The demerit point system may provide for the cancellation and suspension of licences and may require that a driver show cause why his or her licence should not be suspended.

“Ontario regulation 339/94 made under the Highway Traffic Act provides that if a person is convicted of an offence under the provision set out in column 1 of the table to the regulation (and the penalty imposed by the court for the conviction does not include a period of licence suspension) the registrar shall record in respect of the person the number of demerit points set out opposite thereto in column 2.

“The table at the end of the regulation lists various offences under the Highway Traffic Act and sets out the number of demerit points for each one.”

So here we begin to see that regulation 339/94 sets out offences in the Highway Traffic Act on which demerit points can be applied, as well as the corresponding number of points.

#### 1720

When I read this, it would appear that so long as something is an offence as defined by the Highway Traffic Act, it could be included in the regulation that outlines demerit points. So, to me, given that using a mobile device is a Highway Traffic Act offence, all the minister needs to do is simply amend the regulation to allow the inclusion of distracted driving offences.

The report confirms this notion, as it reads: “Under the existing legislative framework, in order for demerit points to apply upon conviction for an offence for violation of the distracted driving provision, Ontario regulation 339/94 (Demerit Point System) would have to be amended.

“Under the Legislation Act, 2006, the power to make regulations includes the power to amend, revoke or replace them from time to time.

“Since the Highway Traffic Act requires that regulations providing for demerit point systems must be made by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, an amendment to Ontario regulation 339/94 would also be made by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.”

There you have it. The reason that demerit points are not included in Bill 173 is that legislation isn’t even required to implement them.

I’m not saying that the minister intentionally misled the press and therefore misled the people of Ontario—

**Mr. Shafiq Qadri:** You can’t say that.

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** —however, he certainly wasn’t eager to correct the press when—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rob Leone):** I’m going to have to ask you to withdraw that comment.

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** I’ll withdraw.

*Interjections.*



**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** We'll accept you, Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker, the minister wasn't eager to correct the press when they asserted that Bill 173 would implement demerit points on distracted drivers. So we have to ask ourselves: Why wouldn't he make the clarification? Perhaps one explanation has to do with a statistic I cited earlier. I previously mentioned that 78 people were killed in distracted-driving-related incidents last year. If we take a monthly average, that equates to 6.5 people a month. Therefore, from the time the minister made mention of demerit points last November, it has been six months that we've not seen any action. Through those six months, too many people possibly may have been killed since the minister failed to extend the demerit point system last November.

Maybe the minister didn't want to correct the press because knowing that the minister could have implemented demerit points for distracted driving offences at any time since he became minister, yet chose not to, would make it look like he doesn't care, and the optics and the politics behind it would not do well at keeping his job and position or at making Ontario safe.

It's really a shame, but we've seen this so often from this Liberal government. Their own member, the member from Scarborough–Rouge River, wanted to do the right thing, and both parties sitting on this side of the House wanted to do the right thing. The issue of distracted driving is truly a non-partisan issue, and we've all been prepared, on this side of the House, to make sure the necessary changes are made to protect all drivers on our roads.

Despite our commitment to this issue and our passion to see it become a reality, we, as opposition MPPs, only have so many options at our disposal to achieve that. Yet the one person in this chamber who actually has the authority to go forward with this initiative has stalled, in order to allow the implementation of demerit points to coincide with Bill 173. All I have to say is that the timing of Bill 173 is interesting.

We have the budget-leaking team's rollout playbook, and I can say that we expect a budget quite possibly on May 1. The government so far has been able to keep their sinking ship because of being propped up by the NDP. This year, the tone between the two has been more acrimonious, so this is what I have to say to my NDP friends—

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** A point of order.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rob Leone):** Point of order, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I think that the member should speak to the bill that's before us. I think that the Speaker ruled in the right way the last time.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rob Leone):** I ask the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London to direct his comments to the bill.

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** I was just getting to that, Speaker, if you would allow me to finish my last sentence here.

To the NDP, I'm just saying: Don't let the government hold this bill over your head to ensure passage of this bill

to increase our savings. I know you're concerned that if you come to your senses and refuse to support this unaccountable government anymore, you may be perceived as the reason that some of these road safety measures will no longer become law.

But I'll tell you, as I've been telling everybody watching at home, that this minister does not need the legislation to institute demerit points. While I can't speak to his motives, I consider it a disgrace to his office if he was erroneously saying that Bill 173 is needed to implement demerit points and he uses this important road safety issue as leverage to gain support of what I can only assume is another tax-and-spend budget.

Whether the budget passes or fails, there's absolutely no reason why demerit points shouldn't be instituted for distracted driving offences. It's time we implement demerit points, deter the habit and begin to change the cultural attitude towards cellphone usage while driving.

I'd like to move into vehicle inspection centres now. Another aspect of Bill 173 that I want to address is the vehicle inspection centres. If you will allow me, I want to read a section of the bill overview that discusses vehicle inspection centres, and it reads as follows:

“Current sections 88 to 100 of the act, which deal with motor vehicle inspection stations and related matters, are repealed. They are replaced with sections 100.2 to 100.8, which create a new vehicle inspection centre system. Section 100.1 allows the Minister of Transportation to make transition regulations to facilitate the implementation of the vehicle inspection centre system.

“Under new section 100.2, the minister may establish a program for the inspection of vehicles and the issuance of certificates and stickers and other types of proof of inspection and may appoint a director of vehicle inspection standards to administer the program. The minister may enter into agreements with service providers to assist in operating the program. The minister may also enter into agreements to authorize persons to operate vehicle inspection centres and to authorize service providers to enter into such agreements.

“The director of vehicle inspection standards is given broad authority to issue directives governing certificates, inspection procedures and requirements and equipment and performance standards under section 100.7. It is a deemed term and condition of every agreement to operate a vehicle inspection centre to comply with all applicable directives.”

That's quite a vision in Bill 173, I must say, Mr. Speaker. The issue of vehicle inspection is important. I take my own truck in regularly to ensure that it's in good working order, to ensure that I'm safe on the road and I'm getting the best performance out of my vehicle. However, not everyone is able to get their vehicle to the mechanic as often as they should. Everyone leads a busy life, and even though I try my best to get to my mechanic all the time, I know there have been a couple of times when I've driven more miles than I should have without an oil change.

It's estimated that 40% of recommended light vehicle maintenance and repair is postponed or abandoned

altogether in Canada each year. Some estimates put the nationwide value of unperformed maintenance work at about \$14 billion. This does pose a certain road safety concern, because none of us wants to be driving down the 401 and see the car in front of us lose a tire or malfunction in another way that could endanger other drivers.

But, like many things, this government just doesn't seem to have much of an imagination. Every time there is a problem, they take it upon themselves to build another bureaucracy. Instead of encouraging and incentivizing people to get their vehicles inspected, this government wants to make them do so. The paternalistic ways of Dalton McGuinty certainly did not leave with him.

When I see the term "director of vehicle inspection," I read "inspection czar"; when I see "program for the inspection of vehicles," I read "mandatory compliance"; and when I see "the issuance of certificates and stickers and other types of proof of inspection," I read "more cost to the Ontario taxpayers."

Why don't we ask the thousands of tradespeople across the province who now have to abide by the College of Trades that's charging crippling membership fees so that they can—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** It appears the member didn't listen to me last time. He's drifting to the College of Trades. I'm not sure what that's got to do with this bill, so we'll get back to it, won't we?

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** I'm getting back to it, Speaker, that basically, the people of Ontario are hard-working and overtaxed in this province, and the government is asking for more. That's my fear when it comes to the inspection program and the czar who will run it. For the most part, the structure and framework of this new vehicle inspection is left to the regulations.

What this legislation does is allow for the establishment of such a program but provide no checks or balances on what it will look like. Will this be a yearly mandatory inspection? What will drivers be forced to pay for this regular inspection? How extensive will the inspections be? Will the system apply to transport trucks, personal vehicles or both? Will fly-by-night auto shops use the system to charge me for labour and parts that I don't need?

The problem here is that the minister or, rather, his chosen inspection czar has carte blanche. The irony is I think a system whereby we acknowledge vehicle inspections is not a bad thing; however, I envision something that would not force people to spend money on a yearly basis. I envision something that would, instead, encourage people without the "mommy" government stepping in to tell people to do it, because if we think outside the box for a minute, it occurs to me that there is an opportunity to engage another stakeholder group that this government has also felt the need to oversee and manage, and that's the auto insurers.

Insurers want to lower risk in their books because it means there is a lower likelihood they will have to pay out claims. People getting regular inspections and main-

tenance on their vehicles lower the risk that those people will get into an accident. For the same reason that I mentioned insurance premiums when talking about the deterrent effects of demerit points, I now mention insurance premiums to demonstrate the possible incentives of getting a regular vehicle inspection.

Some Ontario insurers do offer discounts for regular upkeep on one's vehicles. However, the discount offered in Ontario is far below, say, that of Illinois, where the regulatory burden is significantly smaller. I think this has something to do with the requirements imposed to offer discounts.

### 1730

Insurers have to submit massive rate filings that include their intentions with respect to discounts. In order to change discount amounts on policies, they again have to file with the regulatory agency. I'm going to read the regulatory requirement that deals with insurance discounts. It's outlined under section 5 of the rate filing application and reads as follows:

"If the insurer is requesting changes in the amount or value of a discount (except a group discount which is to be disclosed in section 4.n) or surcharge, or is introducing a new discount (except a group discount which is to be disclosed in section 4.n) or surcharge, the approach used in costing and a general narrative of the process must be outlined in detail.

"The derivation of the discount or surcharge should make use of the insurer's own data. The justification for the discount may be due to lower expenses due to lower acquisition costs or lower administrative costs or lower loss costs. The filing should clearly indicate the basis for the discount or surcharge. The insurer must have appropriate information to support the discount or surcharge. Should the insurer find it necessary to rely on outside data or a different source of company data, the filing must identify the source of the data and provide an explanation of its applicability in the instant circumstance. All data used in the process of developing the discount or surcharge must be exhibited and labelled.

"A comparison of current, indicated and proposed discounts or surcharges must be provided for each coverage for which discounts or surcharges are changing. Included in this should be the written premium distribution and the exposure distribution for the discounts or surcharges.

"A current and a proposed distribution of the insurer's book of business that is affected by the discount or surcharge change must be provided to determine the average premium change (shift). All assumptions and detailed calculations must be provided to support the rate level change."

So, Speaker, as clear as mud, this outlines all the data that needs to be collected, justifications that need to be made and formatting requirements for the application submission in order to offer a driver a discount on their auto insurance. As an outsider looking in, I'm left asking the question, why can't a business simply offer a discount to its customers that get their vehicles regularly maintained?

The solution for me would be to allow insurers more easily to offer discounts to their customers wanting to keep their risk low. Knowing that regular maintenance helps increase road safety, it's only natural to offer discounts to clients that keep their vehicles well maintained. Drivers in turn have an incentive to go to see their mechanic on a regular basis because they will see the return on that investment through a reduction in their premiums. That's the system we should be striving toward.

The other issue I do have here is the lack of clarity around the continuation of the Drive Clean program. Drivers are already forced to come in and get their vehicles inspected as part of that program. Throughout the life of the Drive Clean program, the government has reaped over \$30 million in revenues but has only spent \$19 million on it; it's basically just another tax grab. So I have to ask the minister, will drivers be expected to pay for an inspection administered under the existing Drive Clean program as well as an inspection administered under this new inspection czar? How much money will this government then plan to collect? Does government have any intention of scrapping Drive Clean to make way for this new inspection system, or does it intend to collect revenues from both indefinitely?

That might be just the sticking—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** There are a couple of ministers who are really having a great talk, but they might want to take it outside. The one minister is not even in his seat. Thank you.

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** The Minister of Natural Resources is here. I'd love for him to review my statement on youth hunting I did today. Hopefully, we can solve that problem there of getting the youth hunters their tags.

Anyhow, back to my talk, Mr. Speaker. The sticking point: The government has absolutely no hope of balancing its budget by 2016, particularly not with the \$5 billion in additional spending they plan to announce in the weeks leading up to this next budget. While I can't speak to the motive, perhaps bringing in another program that makes money off the backs of hard-working Ontarians is the goal.

You know what? I have a better idea the Liberals can use to help balance this budget, and that is, stop spending. Every year, government spending goes up from time to time, and we can't afford it. The Wynne government has continued with the McGuinty legacy of buying votes with taxpayer money. As a result, the government has become bloated. Now the government wants to go back to the people of Ontario and force them to fork over more of their hard-earned dollars on another vehicle inspection program. If we get this bill to committee, we're going to seriously have to look at the structure of this section.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move on to medical reports. Along the lines of poorly defined aspects of this bill, I want to briefly touch on the issue of medical reporting. In the bill explanation, it reads:

"Sections 203 and 204 of the act currently require doctors and optometrists to report to the registrar of

motor vehicles the name, address and clinical condition of every person 16 years old or older who, in the opinion of the doctor or optometrist, suffers from a condition that may make it dangerous for the person to drive.

"Sections 203 and 204 are re-enacted. Rather than imposing obligations on doctors and optometrists, the re-enacted provisions apply to persons to be prescribed by regulation. The prescribed persons will be required to make a mandatory report if a person has or appears to have a medical condition, functional impairment or visual impairment identified in a prescribed publication. In addition, a prescribed person may make a discretionary report if a person has a medical condition, functional impairment or visual impairment that the prescribed person believes may make it dangerous for the person to drive."

Now, we've had medical reporting for a long time. It's necessary that people, due to certain medical conditions, are ensured that they're fit to drive and that they're evaluated. It's necessary for keeping our roads safe. These new changes may be good. They may enhance the system of medical reporting, but again, the devil is in the details. The legislation basically gives the minister broad-sweeping powers to determine what medical professionals will be able to report to the registrar of motor vehicles patients they feel pose a risk to road safety. I think we all agree that physicians and optometrists having this ability makes sense.

But how will the minister determine what other medical professionals will be granted this ability? Guidelines for outlining which professions get to make this call and on what basis they can make that call do not exist here. The minister is basically saying, "Just give me the authority to do this, and I'll get it right." Well, I have to say to the minister, this government has been dead wrong on so many things that I quite frankly don't think he has the ability to get this right.

I have constituents who come into my office regularly who have had their licences suspended for medical reasons. Some of them have had their licences rightfully revoked while others have not. Either way, the process of dealing with a doctor and then the MTO can be burdensome, and those who have their licence reinstated spend at least a couple of weeks, even months, without the ability to drive.

Again, I hope that when we're able to get this bill to committee for deliberations, we'll be able to examine this in more detail, because I think, if done properly, there is potential to increase the safety of our roads here. However, if done improperly, there will be a lot of drivers being denied their independence based on the whim of a medical professional who has no business making such an assessment.

Mr. Speaker, I've gone over this bill. I've given you point-by-point discussions on where we're going. There are a lot of good points in this bill. As I've said before, he has taken a lot of private members' bills and incorporated them into his omnibus bill. However, there are certain areas which they didn't borrow from other members, and

it's quite vague. The vagueness of this bill is something that we really need to hear more from this government on as they deliberate over the next week or so on this bill before it goes to committee, and during committee we need to fill in the holes, the questions I've raised here, particularly with the vehicle inspection centres. How can we expect Ontarians to afford another bureaucracy, let alone having to get their vehicle inspected year by year if it's not spelled out—we don't know if it's even for cars; it could be just for transport trucks, which is a whole different ball of wax and conversation to have. How will those inspections be carried out with visiting traffic?

Mr. Speaker, I do think we need to carry forward with more debate on this bill. We'd love to hear what the NDP have to say on this bill, and we have to wait and see what the government, more so than the rest of our members, has to say. But getting this bill to committee is very, very important.

I do have to commend the member from Scarborough—Rouge River and the member from Eglinton—Lawrence, who spoke earlier, talking about working together to get this bill—good bills—passed so we have safety for the people of this province. They were both in committee yesterday talking about Ryan's Law and how, coming together, they have an excellent bill to save the lives of people with asthma throughout our school system. However, with some of the questions that were asked yesterday, I'm kind of cautiously thinking that maybe the government wants to postpone this bill. So I'm reaching out to them to rethink what the bureaucracy has told them about stalling this bill. Let's get this bill passed. Let's bring it back for third reading.

**1740**

The member from Eglinton—Lawrence talked about his bill that took five years. I don't want to wait five years. I like waiting one year. Maybe we can work together and achieve a milestone to get this bill passed in one year instead of five. We all know it's coming. Bill 135, Ryan's Law, will eventually become law. Let's do it sooner rather than later. We're all on the same page.

Back to Bill 173, if you'll let me have a little leeway with that: I kind of think—can I have a little leeway with the College of Trades? There are a few more things I've got to talk about on that. No.

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** Talk about the 1-to-1 ratio.

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** The 1-to-1 ratio of car drivers in the HOV lanes, maybe? No.

Anyway, we've done quite a bit on this.

I do have to say that there is a reception here tonight with MADD Canada, and I think we should all have time to go and visit that.

Taking care of impaired driving, I would like to have a conversation with the minister. He does make mention of the ignition-interlock device program, which I think is a great idea. However, there is a concern with getting the device installed and keeping it maintained. A lot of the service stations or the corporations or businesses that offer this service are few and far between in rural Ontario. We want these people to have operating devices

in their cars, because they did a bad thing; they drank and they drove. They need to earn the right to drive again, and they need to have proper operating interlock devices. I call out to all members of this party, particularly in rural Ontario: Take a look at which service stations are administering the interlock program and see if you can talk to people about it, because there are a lot of people on the interlock system device who are trying to get their lives back together and go to work, but because of the way the system is set up, they're failing in getting this device operating properly and getting it maintained. I think that the government needs to look at that program to ensure that there are enough people providing this service for people, with the interlock program.

I commend the government for expanding our laws on impaired driving. It's a tough topic. It affects quite a few people in this province. You could talk to five people in this room and I'm sure they all know somebody who has been affected by a drunk driver. So putting a stop to drinking and driving, making it as stringent as possible, is a great step.

We need to do that with distracted driving. Just as you can talk to someone today, that family member or loved one of someone who was hurt or killed in a drunk driving accident, give it time and you'll have the same statistics here for distracted driving.

I talk to the pages here: You're not legally driving yet, but you probably all have cellphones and iPods and such, and you're probably getting used to always having them in your hand and playing with them. Now is the time to break away from that habit so you don't always have that need, so when you start driving you're not really tempted to start pulling out that iPhone and talking. Your friends can wait to hear from you. Your parents can wait till you pull over and call them. Try to think about that now. You're in grade 7 or 8. What are you, 12, 13, 14? You're only a few years away from driving, and I want you to be safe. This bill is going to help ensure that you don't do it. The last thing you want to do is get a demerit point and then have your parents call you up and ask, "What's this fine doing here, and why did your insurance rates just triple?" Then you'd be in a lot of trouble.

So I think this is a great idea, demerit points. However, as I noted before, we don't need this bill to get demerit points. As I said before, the minister can do an order in council and create the demerit points. It could have been done last November. It's not even in the bill. I'd love for someone else to read the bill, because I've read it numerous times, I've had my staff read it numerous times, and it doesn't say "demerit points"—only in the public relations campaign by the ministry that says they're going to add it. So we can only hope, we can only trust, that when they develop the regulations to this bill, there will be demerit points added in. Again, I'd love to have that discussion at committee time because I can only speak for an hour today.

I know the member from Durham wanted to have a little speaking time. I don't think there's justification, Mr. Speaker, to only give him 10 minutes to talk in this

House. I don't think it's the right thing to do for the Legislature to have the minister—he should be a minister—the member for Durham come out and have that 10-minute discussion. He needs more time. I'm going to try to wrap up and take my full hour just so the member for Durham, in fact, does get his full 20 minutes when it comes to debate, because he has a lot to offer and contribute to this Legislature. We have to mention that he is retiring in another month or so, so we do want to give him his extra time when we go to election.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** No, he needs his time; he still has lots to say. We're going to look forward to the member for Durham talking about this bill later on, because he has been writing notes the whole time.

On cycling safety, I think we need to ensure that we continue to have our people on their bikes safe throughout the streets. I go back to my own city. I live in rural Ontario: St. Thomas, Ontario; population 37,000 people. It's pretty tough to ride your bike in that city. It wasn't designed for bike riding. There are no bike lanes. There's parking all over the place, and it's quite fearful.

I let my daughter ride her bike uptown with my wife and I to go get an ice cream or a milkshake at McDonald's or Tim Hortons, and you're fearful because it's not conducive to riding bikes. Hopefully, with the cycling groups throughout the province that are promoting safer bike routes, this bill will help ensure that everyone is safe.

Taking on Norm Miller's bill—Parry Sound—Muskoka—to pave the shoulders certainly will enhance safety when you get outside of the cities and are riding between—well, in my city, from St. Thomas to Port Stanley. Have you ever gone to Mackie's? Has anybody heard of Mackie's? Steve Peters probably talked about Mackie's, with their french fries and their orangeade—really, really great. Or in fact, if you bike-ride from St. Thomas to Port Burwell—Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, we have a great submarine there that I've invited every member of this House to come to visit, and I hope they do so.

**Mr. Rob Leone:** Great fishing there.

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** Great fishing there.

Again, we could ride our bikes there. Once these shoulders are paved, it would be a lot safer for us. But at this point, I would recommend we take a car.

Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the intention of this bill. We need to debate it, because as I said, there are quite a few empty spaces that need to be filled in. I think the people of Ontario deserve to know where they're going with these vehicle inspection stations; where these new vehicles are; how much power this person is going to have. Is he going to affect everyday cars or is he going to have to go after the trucking industry? What exactly is going on?

We all want better road safety. We want to ensure our vehicles are safe. We don't want parts of trucks coming off and we don't want parts of cars falling off, but we sure don't want to be over-regulated in this place. We

don't want it to be overpriced and have to do too many inspections. We don't want to see what happened to the Drive Clean program, where now it's just a bank machine for the government to continue bringing in money to their coffers. We know they're stretched on their dollar. They can't balance a budget, and they're looking for other ways to bring in the money.

We want to ensure that this new drug czar—drug czar; we already have a drug czar—this transportation czar—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** My other job—this vehicle inspection czar is there for a purpose and not really to generate more funds for this government.

Just as a quick wrap-up, I'm glad this bill has come forward. I hope we get to debate it for the next week or so before we vote on it for second reading and get it into committee. I look forward to talking more about this bill. I would like to hear each one respond—I guess we each have two minutes—and we'll go from there.

I do have to mention, though, two things that weren't mentioned. Mike Harris, Kitchener—Conestoga—no talk of roundabouts. He's very concerned about roundabouts and he thought something would have been brought forward in a big, omnibus transportation bill. There's no talk about roundabouts and I think we need to have that discussion. And I think maybe we need to have a discussion about electric bikes on the road, how we're going to deal with those going forward. I've talked to many police officers in my riding and there's quite a bit of concern with the legalities of safety and such on the road. I'll bring that forward for your two-minute hits and I'll be back in 10.

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

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Actually, it's a pleasure to comment on some of these statements that have been made by the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London. It's not easy to cover a very large bill, even within the confines of one hour, and there's a lot going on in this piece of legislation.

Just on the last piece, though, the roundabout issue: I do share the concern that the member from Kitchener—Conestoga has brought forward. If roundabouts are this new infrastructure model that we are moving forward with in the province of Ontario, it does actually make sense that people are trained—and it's part of the driver education piece, that people learn how to drive in a roundabout.

They are definitely very much present in the landscape of Kitchener—Waterloo, the entire region. I actually saw somebody go into one of those roundabouts, and they just kept going around and around and around—

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** That was me.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** That's not surprising. So education is a piece of that.

I do want to say, the distracted driving piece, though, for us right now is quite prevalent. The fact of the matter is, the people who are driving in the province of Ontario need to acknowledge that sometimes we think we are

more important than we really are. When you are driving a car, that is essentially, potentially, a weapon, it makes sense to put aside the BlackBerrys, the smartphones, what have you, because you can—and the research is quite predominant—cause a lot of damage.

**1750**

This is a huge bill. We're going to be debating this for quite some time. I just want to say that I do want to acknowledge the work that the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka has done as well. This truly could be nonpartisan. There's a lot in this bill. We're going to have to pull back the layers, and we look forward to the debate on that.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened with great interest to the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London. He mentioned the beautiful part of the province he represents. One of my favourite parts in this province is Port Stanley. It's a cute little town that people should visit.

I just want to say to him that I know he expressed some frustration about demerit points and the minister not doing this quickly enough. When the seat belt legislation was brought in, I think it took about 17 years before demerit points were brought in, after the legislation.

These are very complicated issues in some cases when you change some of these motor vehicle laws. Every lawyer in the province is looking for a way to challenge any new law. Look at the challenges they've made to the breathalyzer act, on every constitutional aspect.

These are complicated things. I think the minister is trying his best to get it right. There are a lot of complexities and a lot of serious issues being dealt with, and I look forward to his continued input. I think he wants to make this a good bill. We have to look at the underlying theme here, and that is that there are certain serious threats to our friends, families and constituents on our roads, whether it be city roads or highways. There are a number of very good recommendations here to make these roads safer.

I just hope that we get to a point where we look at the best way of achieving this goal, through dialogue back and forth, through amendments, so that we do get this right, because we know we're going to be challenged by all these hungry, starving lawyers. It's guaranteed, so we'd better get it right.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** They may be hungry, but they're not starving.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** Exactly. I was going to use another word. But anyway, we've got to get it right for that reason, because they're waiting in the woods. There are no lawyers here; I can say that—oh, no, here's one. Attorney General, I apologize after the fact.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member from Durham.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I want to commend the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London for consuming the entire

hour almost. I would say, the only real interruption was by his good friend from Cambridge, who almost ruled him out of order on a couple of occasions on straying off into talking about the College of Trades.

I was also glad he recognized that I have an opportunity later on to talk on this bill, because I do want to put on the record my concern over the years. I just want to put this on the record. My constituent Dan Boudreau from Newcastle writes just recently on Bill 73—on April 9, actually:

"It's been a while since we spoke on the old car emission fiasco, but I heard that there's a Bill 173 that is being proposed by the government. I'm sure this is being done as another tax grab for us taxpayers when the Drive Clean program gets finally squashed in the near future. I'm sure you are aware that Bill 173 will require us to get our vehicles certified yearly, which would put another financial" tax strain "on us taxpayers. The inconvenience this will impose is another sore spot for me."

This is one more example of the enforcement component that I mentioned, really, in two parts. They have increased the fine for driver distraction from about \$250 to \$1,000. They have increased the fine for dooring up to \$1,000, and for some other infractions they've doubled or tripled the fine. There are arguments about the deterrent factor in that, especially in the vehicle inspection provision, which the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London mentioned.

Those are a couple of points that I think are important. I am suspicious, and I spoke to Minister Murray earlier today about my suspicions about vehicle inspection stations. I think this is another example of Drive Clean gone wild. I think the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London has done enough research on this bill that it has added value to the debate on Bill 173.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments? The very exuberant member from Timmins–James Bay.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** Thank you, Speaker. "Exuberance" is my middle name.

I just want to commend the member. I thought he gave a very good presentation, fairly detailed, where he went through the various parts of the act in order to explain what are some of the good ideas in it but also some of the problems with some of the stuff that has been laid out.

I just want to take these two minutes to go through the medical review part, because I think all of us in this House have had constituents come to our office who have had their licences revoked. Why? Because they happened to go to their doctor's office or some other medical professional, and they had some sort of an incident that, by law, forced the medical practitioner to send a letter to the Ministry of Transportation that resulted in the withdrawal of the licence.

We understand why that's done. There's some logic behind it. But, man, the problem in trying to get a licence back at times is quite difficult. I have to say—I can't remember her name; I think her name is Elaine—you have a person who works in your ministry who has been really, really good. Elaine: Is that her name? Yes,

Elaine—who has been really, really good at least at getting back to our constituency office and others to try to resolve some of these issues, but it shouldn't be up to an MTO staffer to work the magic in trying to get people's licences back. We need to have a quicker period of review in order to figure out: Is there a problem? If not, how do we get that person's licence back?

I have another one where I have a constituent who lost her licence—the same kind of story, but she has to go and do a special vision test which is only available in Sudbury. She lives in Kapuskasing. So what is she to do? She's a senior and doesn't want to drive all the way down to Sudbury. It's essentially about a seven-hour drive. She is without a driver's licence because she doesn't have the means to drive down there on her own, given her particular situation.

The other part of this is, if you're going to require those kinds of tests, we need to bring those tests as close to the person's residence as possible. I'll have a chance later—with exuberance, Speaker—to speak to this at more full length.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** I can't wait.

The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London has two minutes.

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** Thank you very much, Speaker. I'd like to thank the members from Kitchener–Waterloo, Timmins–James Bay, Durham, and Eglinton–Lawrence for their comments on this legislation.

I'd also like to add to the roundabout issue. I met with the Ontario farmers' association recently, and their concern with roundabouts is that the ones being constructed aren't large enough for their large equipment in rural Ontario. To make the turn properly, you have to go up on the side of the road. They'd like to add to that discussion when we bring out some regulations on roundabouts—that they're always considered, because roundabouts aren't just in urban Ontario; they are on the

outskirts and in rural Ontario, so we need to ensure that the farmers are looked after when we're designing that.

The member for Eglinton–Lawrence: I do have to say that Port Stanley is a beautiful village. They're starting their fishing season. The ice is starting to finally melt on Lake Erie.

The theatre there has really grown over the last few years. It has great productions in it. Last year, I won the 50-50 draw. It was quite surprising. I donated it back, just so everybody who's watching—I didn't keep the money. I gave it back. They have some great productions; great local talent.

Of course, I mentioned Mackie's, with the orangeade and their special secret sauce on their french fries. Anybody who does get to Port Stanley: Make sure you go to Mackie's.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** Bring us the sauce.

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** You've got to come and get it—and the orangeade. I digress a bit.

Again, I'd like to see this debate carry on going forward. Speaker, in 26 seconds, can I just talk about the College of Trades a little bit more?

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** No? Okay; I won't try it. Anyway, I do want to bring this forward. As I said, there are some areas where we need to fill in the gaps that we talked about, and hopefully—

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** We need a better ratio of Tory members.

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** Ratios of Tory members: yes, but we won't get into that either.

Anyway, we need to continue this debate, fill in the gaps that are in this bill and carry it forward. Thank you very much, and I look forward to others' debate tonight.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

*The House adjourned at 1759.*

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Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Catherine Fife  
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla  
Catherine Fife, John Fraser  
Monte Kwinter, Jane McKenna  
Rick Nicholls, Peter Tabuns  
Bill Walker  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh  
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh  
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon  
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman  
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek  
Paul Miller  
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**Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial des services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott  
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon  
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott  
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson  
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor  
Soo Wong  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day





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