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(Hansard)**

**Journal
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Monday 3 November 2014

Lundi 3 novembre 2014

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 3 November 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 3 novembre 2014

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Toby Barrett: It's a pleasure to introduce the family of page captain Noah Bolton. He's here from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. MPP McNaughton couldn't be here; he's asked me to introduce Noah's sister Emma; his parents, Raymond and Melissa Bolton; as well as his grandparents, Bill and Audrey Gough and Richard and Louise Bolton.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It gives me great pleasure today to welcome Terry Yaldo to Queen's Park, the owner of Midway Convenience in my riding of Windsor–Tecumseh. He's here today as part of the Ontario Convenience Stores Association lobby day at Queen's Park, and I look forward to meeting with him and his colleagues later today.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome Nurgul Makhambetova. She is the mother of our page captain today, Erik Webb, who is from the great riding of Ottawa Centre. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to introduce someone from my riding. He's a great champion for the local food movement. He's here with the Ontario Convenience Stores Association. I'd like to welcome Neil Kudrinko from the village of Westport to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: It's with great pleasure that I want to welcome to Queen's Park Claudio Ricci, the honourable mayor of the city of Assisi in the Umbria region in Italy—the city of peace and dialogue—and the official attaché, Mr. Carlo Procacci, and a production company who will be filming in Canada and in Italy a movie on the life of St. Francis of Assisi: Mr. Jack Lenz, Mr. Daniele Procacci and Mr. Walter Simone. Thank you and welcome.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to introduce to you, in the members' gallery, Ms. Arlene Plaxton. She's the president of the Midland and Penetanguishene homebuilders' association. It's good to have you here, Arlene.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome three of my constituents from Kitchener–Waterloo. Vernon Stuart-Dolmage and his parents, Jay and Heather, are here. It's their first-time visit to Queen's Park. Welcome.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Today is Tourism Day at Queen's Park, and joining us in the gallery are members

of the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, including president and CEO Beth Potter and board chair Terry Mundell and many other representatives from the tourism sector.

I also would like to recognize Anthony Alfred, who is sitting in the members' gallery today. He's a former colleague of mine from ABC Life Literacy.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm looking for the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. It's his birthday today. We affectionately refer to him as the duke. There he is. Let's all wish the duke a happy birthday today.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted to welcome John Winston from Tourism London to the House today. This is a man who does not rest until every hotel room in London is filled.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: On behalf of MPP Monte McNaughton of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, I'd like to congratulate page captain Noah Bolton and welcome to the Legislature his mother, Mellissa Bolton; his father, Ray Bolton; his sister Emma Bolton; his grandmother Audry Gough; and his grandfather Bill Gough. They're here in the public gallery this morning. Welcome.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'm pleased to introduce representatives from the Ontario Convenience Stores Association, including CEO Dave Bryans and the chair of the board of directors, Mr. Ron Funk. Dave and Ron are joined in the gallery by many independent and familiar chain convenience store retailers, including my constituents from Mississauga South, the Rabba family of Rabba Fine Foods.

The OCSA will be meeting with various MPPs throughout the day and will host a reception this evening in the legislative dining room.

I welcome you to Queen's Park and wish you all a successful day.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Please join me in welcoming, from Belfountain Public School in the beautiful riding of Dufferin–Caledon, students and class teacher John McKeown.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It gives me great pleasure to welcome my best friend, Hugh Mackenzie, manager of the Kingston 1000 Islands tour company. I was best man at his wedding, and he was there for me.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Today I'd like to introduce members of the Lung Association of Ontario who are joining us for question period: Sherry Zarins, John Chenery, Kait Wallace, Vicki Poullos, Connie Choy and Chris Yaccato.

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

I, too, would like to offer my birthday wishes to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, as a friend.

One other birthday that I'm sure you'll all agree deserves a little recognition: Our Deputy Clerk, Todd Decker, is celebrating a birthday today. I couldn't get it out of him, but—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thirty-nine.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thirty-nine.

Also in the House, in the Speaker's gallery today, are friends of mine on a personal level: Mike and Lynda Woodburn, Patricia Woodburn and John Kocsis. Welcome to Queen's Park to observe today. Thank you for being here.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier.

Premier, last Thursday the Standing Committee on Public Accounts tabled its report on the scandal-plagued Ornge air ambulance service. It was the unanimous finding of the committee that Minister Matthews was not diligent in pursuing red flags pointing to serious problems at Ornge.

Premier, how can you give the minister the position of President of Treasury Board when she has a proven track record of mismanagement and failed oversight?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand, as you've said, that the report was tabled, following up on a motion that was led by our Liberal members. It's a great step. I'm glad that the report has been tabled, Mr. Speaker.

I'm also very glad that there are measures that we believe must be taken that are included in the legislation, that are now in the accountability act; measures that the former Minister of Health was very clear needed to be put in place to make sure that the oversight that's necessary at Ornge is in place.

Given the concern that is being expressed by the Leader of the Opposition, I hope that he and his colleagues will work very quickly with us to get that legislation passed and get those measures in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

1040

Mr. Jim Wilson: Premier, in 2012 your current Minister of Health's director of communications wrote that "staff shortages, delayed responses to save money, poorly designed interiors in brand new helicopters, and a money trail that disappeared in a complex web of for-profit spinoffs were among the litany of problems."

In addition, on May 4, 2011, the Ontario Air Transport Association sent a five-page letter to the current Deputy Premier, Ms. Matthews, detailing major issues at Ornge, such as conflicts of interest and deficiencies with the medical quality-assurance programs.

Premier, maybe you can shed some light: Why did the Deputy Premier take no action at that time?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's actually not the case. The former minister did take action. In fact, it's why there is legislation in front of this House, legislation that would provide greater oversight and deal with many of the outstanding issues. The fact is, there are many changes that have been made at Ornge, and I know the Minister of Health will want to speak to those.

But the other fact is that we have legislation before this House. There is a bill that includes the oversight measures that need to be put in place. That legislation has already received some debate. I hope the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues will work with us to get that piece of legislation passed so that those measures can be put in place.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: As a former Minister of Health, I can tell you that you don't need new legislation to perform your duty and oversight to the people of Ontario. She had all the authority she needed.

Premier, the million-dollar lawsuits against Ornge—there were several—for delay in transport and poor patient care in the years 2007, 2010 and 2011 should also have been red flags for the former health minister. The current Deputy Premier did not take action, as former health minister, until 2012—and that was in December of 2012—by which point patients in Ontario had died or suffered amputations because of Ornge's negligence. I remind you that the minister was first appointed Minister of Health in October of 2009.

Premier, patients have been put at risk because of your minister's failure to do her job on the part of Ontarians. Will you show real leadership, take responsibility for those patients' deaths and demand the Deputy Premier's resignation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I have to say that I welcome the report on Ornge from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. Our government, as well as Ornge, has taken many steps to restore the public's confidence in the province's air ambulance service by ensuring that it's accountable, puts patients first and respects public dollars. Of the 67 concerns mentioned in the report that was tabled last week, 31 require action. Of those 31 that require action, the ministry has acted upon or is acting upon 28 already.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Premier. The Ornge air ambulance fiasco could have been prevented if your former Minister of Health took action. But we all know she did not. Her failure to acknowledge concerns that were brought to her attention numerous times sadly resulted in the deaths of four dedicated crew members. Not only did the minister ignore letters from those con-

cerned; she intentionally chose not to be open and transparent after the crash.

Regarding the OPP investigation into the crash, the all-party committee wrote, “The minister missed an important opportunity to make a public statement regarding the findings in the interests of promoting transparency.”

Premier, we’ve known all along that your government’s openness and transparency is suspect, so here is your opportunity to prove your commitment. Your minister failed in her role to protect Ontarians and then intentionally kept quiet about it. If you really believe in openness and transparency, you’ll do something about it. Premier, will you ask for your Treasury Board minister’s resignation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I reject the premise of the question. The fact is that action was taken as soon as the former Minister of Health had information—

Interjections.

Hon. David Zimmer: Quiet.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I don’t need the help.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite knows full well that there were massive changes made at the Ornge organization. He also knows that there is action that is under way right now. Action has been taken by the Ministry of Health—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order. The member from Leeds–Grenville, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —and furthermore, he knows that there’s a piece of legislation before this House that would make further changes to improve oversight at Ornge. That bill has been before this House, Mr. Speaker, it needs to be passed and I hope that, given the concern emanating from across the floor, they will work with us to get that legislation passed.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Again to the Premier: What you rejected is openness and transparency to the people of Ontario.

Premier, after the fatal crash, a man named Richard Jackson testified before committee. Mr. Jackson is the director of the air ambulance program oversight branch, which obviously failed to do its job. Despite this, he testified to the committee that provincial organizations do not require increased oversight or even the existing level of oversight given to Ornge.

The all-party committee strongly disagreed with Mr. Jackson’s statement. In fact, Premier, the all-party committee wrote that the problems with Ornge “could be attributed primarily to the absence of due diligence and oversight on the part of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.”

It’s obvious that both your former Minister of Health and her senior staff don’t see any issue with what they’ve done or egregiously didn’t do.

Premier, will you show Ontario you are sorry and ask for your Treasury Board minister’s resignation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let’s just check the facts here. There has been a piece of legislation before this House since 2012, in an attempt to make further changes—because as I said, there were already changes. There have already been changes made at Ornge to improve oversight, to change the personnel. There has been a piece of legislation since 2012 before this House. It is once again before us. The opposition has stalled at committee for more than a year, has not allowed the legislation to go forward.

So I say to the members opposite: Given their concern, given the anxiety that is emanating from the other side, I hope that they will change their current trajectory and they will work with us to get that legislation passed and make sure that these final provisions can be put in place.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: Again to the Premier: It’s obvious you won’t make the right decision and ask for your former Minister of Health’s resignation, so let me spell this out for you again.

The report, written by members of all parties, clearly establishes a pattern of serious negligence. Your minister failed time and again to do her job. While you want to talk about trust, openness and transparency, this pattern clearly invokes the exact opposite.

Given the clear pattern of negligence exposed in this report and the 17 charges laid by the federal Ministry of Labour against Ornge, and thus your government, you would have thought the minister would do the honourable thing and step down. Instead, your government has shown that it will not be accountable to the people of Ontario.

Premier, this isn’t just dollars and cents we are talking about today; it is mistakes your minister made that contributed to the deaths of four Ontarians.

Premier, I will ask you again: Will you demand the President of the Treasury Board’s resignation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health.

Interjections.

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

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It’s important to understand that Ornge is well into a new chapter. It’s putting the care of patients first. In fact, it transports almost 18,000 patients in a single year.

These are the changes: We’ve made patient care its number one priority. We have a new performance agreement in place with Ornge; a new conflict-of-interest policy; a patient advocate, Denise Polgar, who works with patients to resolve their concerns. Ornge is now subject to freedom of information.

And of course, as the Premier has mentioned, for two years we've had legislation in front of this House to pass, which will make further positive changes to Ornge. We look forward to the co-operation of the party opposite.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. On August 22, Ed Clark, the Premier, Ministers Matthews and Sousa, and the chiefs of staff to Ministers Chiarelli and Duguid were joined by the Premier's chief of staff, principal secretary and five top deputy ministers. Of this august group, whose idea was it to privatize local hydro utilities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, this exercise of looking at the assets that are owned by the people of Ontario and making sure that they are working for the people of Ontario and that in fact we can invest in the assets that we need now in 2014 and going forward—we ran on this. We made it very clear that optimizing assets and making sure that we could invest in the transit and transportation infrastructure that's needed was a priority for us, and that is exactly what we're following through on. That's the work that Ed Clark has done with his team. He has given us some recommendations.

Guarding the public interest but making sure that we have the ability to invest in infrastructure going forward—that has been a cornerstone of our economic policy. It's what we ran on and it's what we're doing.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, we know that the Premier, along with senior advisers, were meeting with Ed Clark early in 2014. In fact, it looks like the Premier was planning to privatize local hydro utilities a full four months before the budget came down. That sort of privatization will drive up bills across Ontario. Why did the Premier wait until after the budget and after the election to talk publicly, specifically about her real plan to privatize local hydro utilities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let's just be clear: Despite what the NDP are saying, we asked the council to retain the government's long-term ownership of these assets. In fact, what Ed Clark said, on October 17: "We recommend keeping all three companies—OPG, Hydro One and the LCBO." So, in fact, there is not a sell-off of these companies, as the NDP would like people to believe.

But the fact is, the leader of the third party is so trapped in her ideology that she is not able to see the responsible path forward. In fact, she has not supported the investment in transit; she has not supported the investment in infrastructure. All she can do is stand and criticize a path forward that we ran on and we are now implementing.

Interjections.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it's the people of Ontario who are trapped in sky-high hydro bills that come from privatization from both that party and that party; that's who's trapped.

According to records that we've obtained, the Premier began meeting with her privatization adviser a full nine months ago. They were having extensive meetings that involved senior cabinet ministers and deputy ministers. But the Premier kept those plans secret. She still won't say what occurred in those meetings. Is this the sort of openness and transparency that we can expect from this Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the premise of this question is that somehow it would be irresponsible for a Premier or a leader to begin to think about the issues that he or she wanted to run on or the issues that would be contained in a budget sometime before those issues. In fact, the premise of this question says, "Just make it up on the back of a napkin. That's actually the way to do planning."

That's not how we work, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, I have been clear that we were going to look at our assets. It is included in our budget, and the leader of the third party can look it up in the budget on page 20 and in our Liberal plan, page 4. We were very clear in our budget and in the plan that we brought to the people of Ontario that we were going to look at these assets. We were going to have experts look at the assets and make sure that they were operating, that they were optimized so that we could invest in infrastructure. That's what we're doing.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: But she didn't tell the people she was planning to privatize hydro.

My next question, Speaker, is to the Premier. New Democrats have uncovered records showing that the Premier's privatization adviser, Ed Clark, has been hiring a number of consultants.

Our question is a clear one and it's a simple one: Who are those consultants who are telling the government that they should be selling our public assets?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, Ed Clark is working with a team of people; that is absolutely true—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Frances Lankin.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —including Frances Lankin. He is working with people who understand the value of the assets and understand how to make sure that they're optimized. He is speaking to experts; that is exactly true. He is talking to people who understand, in the financial world, how to make sure that we make the best decisions possible. That's the responsible thing to do.

It would be irresponsible for these to be political decisions. These are decisions that need to be made based on the evidence and based on the advice from people who have the expertise. Ed Clark has gathered the people and gathered the advice that he needs in order to advise us in the most responsible way.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, on March 29, 2004, a member stood up in this House and said that “consultants were expensive and of questionable value to the taxpayers of Ontario.” Now that same member, the current Premier, is paying consultants to help sell off our public assets.

How much public money has been paid to consultants to help privatize our local hydro utilities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, take just about any sentence out of context and you can do anything you want with it.

The fact is, we have reduced the number of consultants to government in an ongoing way. That generic statement about consultants—yes, I think it’s very important that we only ask consultants to work with us when we don’t have the expertise in-house. In fact, the previous government had gotten rid of so many people in government that it was necessary to bring that expertise in. We have done that and we have reduced the number of external consultants.

But when there is a specific question that needs to be addressed and when there is a time-limited issue that needs to be dealt with, it is entirely reasonable that there be people who are experts who give advice on that. That’s what’s happening here so that we can have the best advice and make sure that the assets that will continue to be owned by the people of Ontario work for them to the best advantage.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Whether it’s eHealth, IT consulting, paying Don Drummond \$1,500 a day for his austerity plan or paying Metrolinx consultants to create bogus Twitter accounts, this government has a pretty dismal record when it comes to consultants. Now the Premier, who says she wants to lead the most transparent government in all of Canada, is refusing to say who has been hired to privatize hydro and how much they’re being paid.

Why is the Premier more interested in the financial well-being of a few consultants than in being honest with the Ontarians who she works for?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If the leader of the third party were interested in a briefing from Mr. Clark on the work he’s been doing, I’m sure we could arrange that. I think he has provided information to the opposition parties, but we would be happy to set that up again and let the leader of the third party get that information.

But let’s not forget what we’re talking about here. What we’re talking about is making sure that we, as government, can invest in the infrastructure that we know is going to be needed now and in the future, just as people in this Legislature decades ago invested in infrastructure that we needed for today.

We are going to continue this work. We are going to invest in transportation infrastructure, including transit, because if we don’t do that, then our children and grandchildren will not have the infrastructure they need. We must make that investment now.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Premier. For the last several days we’ve heard disturbing stories in the media surrounding CBC Radio host Jian Ghomeshi—in particular that his co-workers raised concerns with their superiors about Mr. Ghomeshi’s alleged behaviour toward them and that those concerns were not acted upon. That media attention is now bringing to light many other instances where complaints of sexual harassment in the workplace have not been taken seriously in Ontario.

Premier, will you agree to striking an all-party select committee to study sexual harassment in the workplace and help women and men to be made to feel safer at work in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the member opposite for the question. This is obviously a very serious and disturbing issue. I have already asked my staff this morning to give me a briefing on exactly what the procedures are. I know that the minister responsible for women’s issues is prepared to speak to this as well.

I just want to say that this is an issue that affects every single one of us. It affects all of us in all our work situations across society, quite frankly, and it affects every single one of us in the sense that we all have to be vigilant and not pretend that, somehow, this issue has been resolved because it’s 2014 and we’ve moved on. It’s very real; what has happened over the last week has made it clear that it’s very real. We have to continue to be vigilant in every way that we can in all parts of our lives.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Back to the Premier: The pervasive problem of sexual harassment in the workplace is not confined to just the CBC. Just this past July, my colleague the member from Dufferin–Caledon and critic for the Attorney General brought to light the issue about an assistant crown attorney in Peel region. Rather than investigate a workplace harassment complaint made against that crown attorney, your Attorney General allowed him to resign and gave him a one-year salary bonus of over \$180,000. The problem is clearly happening in your own government under your watch.

1100

Again, Premier, will you agree to striking the all-party select committee to study sexual harassment in the workplace, to provide effective recommendations to combat this serious issue facing women and men in the workplace?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am open to considering what we collectively can do going forward. As I say, I think this is an issue that is with us. It’s something that’s extremely important. It starts with kids in school. How do we make sure that we educate our children so that they are aware of what’s appropriate, what’s not appropriate? How do we then set up the structures to make sure that people are kept safe?

I’m open to doing whatever it is we need to do going forward. I’m not going to commit to a specific process at this moment. As I said, I’ve already asked my staff to

pull together the information we need to know in terms of what we should be doing going forward, but I'm open to having a conversation with the opposition parties about what we might do collectively.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. On Thursday, New Democrats moved a motion in the gas plants committee so that we would ensure that Peter Faist and Laura Miller could come and testify about the wiping of computers in the Premier's office.

Every Liberal member of the committee voted against hearing from Peter Faist, the man who the police allege used military-grade software to wipe computers in the Premier's office. They also voted against hearing from Laura Miller, the deputy chief of staff who apparently brought him in.

Ontarians looking for answers just had the door slammed in their faces. Why is this government only content to promise accountability and transparency but never actually deliver on it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for asking the question. I remind the member opposite that, in his own question, he talked about a police allegation, which means that the investigation the police are conducting right now should remain the primary focus.

The police have been working on this issue. We should let the OPP conduct an investigation. During the committee hearings, when former OPP Commissioner Chris Lewis came, and the detective who has been working on this case, Mr. André Duval, they both said that the parliamentary committee should not be interfering in a live police investigation. We should respect the OPP's authority and let them finish their work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The Liberals voted on Friday to continue to barricade the truth from coming forward in regard to the gas plant scandals. The members from Durham, Scarborough Southwest, Mississauga–Streetsville, Halton and Beaches East–York voted to protect Laura Miller and Peter Faist. They voted to protect Liberal insiders. They voted to deny Ontarians answers about the veil of secrecy around the \$1.1-billion gas plant scandal. Liberals wiped computers in the Premier's office to whitewash the gas plant scandal. Now Liberal members are protecting the insiders who did the wiping.

Again I ask the question: Why is this government only content to promise accountability and transparency but never actually deliver on it?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Let's examine the facts here. For three years, committees of the last Parliament have been looking into this particular matter. Over 90 witnesses have appeared before the committee and have been examined by the committee. And 145 hours of testimony have been presented, and over 400,000 documents have been considered by committee.

Speaker, it is time to start the report writing. In fact, even the members of the third party—the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton himself, back in April, a few days before the election was called, had put forward a motion in the justice committee that the committee should start the process of report writing.

We are happy to see that the members of the committee have decided to work on the report. It is time that we get recommendations from the committee on the things that they've been able to analyze during the investigation.

TRADE DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Premier in her role as the intergovernmental affairs minister. Welcome back, Premier, I had the chance to sit in your chair last week while you were away and will say that the view is very different down there.

Trade missions are a key part of developing our economy here in Ontario. According to the Conference Board of Canada, about every \$100-million increase in exports creates about 1,000 new jobs. Developing relationships with foreign governments and businesses can certainly help to us to grow our economy, and China is a very key player. Last year, our goods to China increased an astounding 10%. That is \$2.2 billion.

Speaker, can the Premier please inform this House of the success of this trade mission and what it means for jobs and the economy here in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I was very pleased to have the opportunity to travel to China with the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure and the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade—

Mr. Paul Miller: Did you walk down the Great Wall?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —because it's so important that we have a partnership with this huge economy which is China.

We also travelled with 60 businesses and organizations, so this is about government facilitating the connections between businesses here and businesses in China. In order to do that, we needed to make that contact.

What happened was, our mission attracted new investments that will create new jobs. This is a two-way street. This is about investment in Ontario, and it's about partnerships with businesses in China. I'm pleased to tell the House that Ontario attracted about \$1 billion in new investment by Chinese companies, and that will lead to the creation of 1,800 new jobs right here in Ontario.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll jump to warnings, if you want.

Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'd like to thank the Premier for that answer and for all her efforts to bring jobs to the province of Ontario. I was very excited to learn, as many other people were in my riding of Kitchener Centre, that we are going to be getting a new steel nail manufacturing plant in our community. That's about 80 jobs, so that is really great news.

I know that there are other communities that are also going to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek will come to order. In the next voice, I'll probably ask him to get to his seat so I can admonish him even further. The Minister of Energy will come to order as well.

Finish, please.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I mentioned the new plant coming to Kitchener. There are other communities that are also going to benefit from this trade mission.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier offer some other details on other success stories from her trade mission in China?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question. It was really a great trade mission. It was great because it was very, very successful. This successful mission reinforced the strength of Ontario's companies and the Ontario brand globally.

I want to tell the House about some of the trade deals that were signed during the mission.

Huawei announced a major expansion to its Ontario operations, valued at \$210 million, that will create 325 jobs, including 250 positions for engineers and researchers and at least 75 new marketing, sales and support positions.

Yiwu North America announced a \$100-million investment to establish a new trading centre in Stouffville. The first phase of the project is expected to create 800 jobs.

These investments confirmed that China values the skills—

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

New question.

1110

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, I've asked you previously to reverse the Central West CCAC's decision to limit the number of new patients it helps, due to its supposed lack of funds. What I find interesting is that while the Central West CCAC continues to claim they don't have enough money, their CEO was given another \$24,000 increase in her salary in 2013, which brings it up to—wait for it—\$267,333.47 a year.

Minister, why is front-line care consistently prioritized below executive care at the Central West CCAC?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. It gives me an opportunity to talk about the investments that we're making through our LHINs to our CCACs to increase our investments on that important area of home and community care.

This year alone, we've increased our investments in home and community care, including to the South West LHIN, by \$260 million. That number actually is going to increase to \$750 million by 2017.

We understand that it's important—

Interjection.

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

Finish, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know the member opposite understands that we have a formula as well, as we look to our LHINs, that have that local and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Eric Hoskins:—expertise, to make sure that our CCACs are receiving the funding they require, based on need and the services that they provide.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Minister, I think it's time for you to start asking some questions about where those investments are going, because clearly they're not going to the right place at the Central West CCAC.

My office continues to receive regular complaints about the Central West CCAC's failure to provide access to personal support workers. In one example, an 87-year-old man who suffered a severe heart attack has been refused access to a PSW. Instead, his daughter was expected to care for him, but she too has physical ailments that limit her capacity to care for her dad.

You have allowed CEO salaries to continue to increase while ignoring the core services of front-line care. Minister, I asked you this in July, and you ignored me. I'll ask you again today: When will you prioritize front-line services over executive pay at the Central West CCAC?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Actually, I apologize. I meant to say Central West CCAC in my first response.

For this entire government, the issue of executive compensation within the broader public sector, including our CCACs, is an issue of importance and great concern. In fact, we've recently reintroduced legislation that, if passed, will actually address the specific issue that the member opposite has spoken to.

I also expect, Mr. Speaker, for CCACs to recognize that they are spending taxpayer dollars and they need to spend those dollars effectively and efficiently, and that includes issues concerning compensation.

In fact, in terms of looking at our CCACs, I've struck a table to look at home and community care. I expect that, early in the new year, I'm going to have the results and recommendations coming back from that table, to provide further guidance on how to approach this important sector.

PRIVATE CLINICS

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

People in Ontario expect their health care system to help them, not to make them sick, but this government's risky experiment in offloading surgery to private clinics has failed to live up to that standard.

Patients like Anne Levac and Tracey Martin have contracted life-threatening infections at unsafe private clinics, while Ontarians were left in the dark about those infectious outbreaks.

Now, more alarm bells are ringing, because fully one in seven private clinics is failing to comply with safety standards—one in seven. This is completely unacceptable.

How can the minister allow more private clinics to set up shop when so many of them are putting patients' health care in danger?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. My top job is to ensure the protection and the safety and health and well-being of Ontarians. That is a job and a responsibility that I take extremely seriously.

To that end, it's important that Ontarians not only have the confidence they need in all elements of our health care system, but that they also have the information required to make those informed decisions.

When this issue first came up several weeks ago, in fact, I asked for all regulatory colleges, many of which—the CPSO, for example, is the one that currently has oversight over independent health facilities. I've asked all of the regulatory colleges to report back to me on measures that they're going to put in place in terms of increasing transparency and accountability of the services of those entities that they have oversight of. Specifically, I've asked that transparency become a priority objective in each of their business plans, and I've asked them to disclose more information. In fact, I've also asked Health Quality Ontario—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: The facts are that 44 clinics have fallen short of basic standards in the last three years, but under this Liberal government, patient safety takes a back seat to full-throttle expansions of private clinics.

The number of private clinics has skyrocketed—a 31% increase in the last three years, even though Ontario does not presently have the layers of oversight, transparency and reporting needed to safeguard the public and even though at least 20 patients have contracted serious infections at these clinics.

It's time to put a stop to this Liberal failed experiment and put Ontarians' safety first. Will the minister agree to immediately declare a moratorium on new private clinics in Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: In addition to asking our colleges—those that have inspection programs—to proactively and publicly disclose full detailed, useful information with respect to each of the inspections that they

conduct, I've also asked Health Quality Ontario to do a review of our independent health facilities and how we can actually further establish a mechanism of accountability to give confidence to Ontarians on the issue that the member opposite has just mentioned.

I know that the opposition agrees with my approach because, several weeks ago, the member opposite called these actions the government is taking a “huge, huge victory.” She also stated she is very “happy with the step that he”—meaning myself—“has taken.”

With this letter addressed to all of the colleges, I expect movement.

CARBON MONOXIDE

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: My question is for the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

My riding of Halton is one of the fastest-growing areas in the country, and we have a lot of young families living in the region. Keeping Halton residents safe is something that is very important to me.

Lately, the people of my community and people in communities across the province are concerned about the threat of carbon monoxide gas. Carbon monoxide is a threat to our families and loved ones because it is odorless and colourless and is a silent killer. More than 50 people die in Canada from carbon monoxide poisoning each year. On average, 11 of those are in Ontario. But the real tragedy is that each and every one of these deaths is preventable.

As the minister charged with the safety and security of Ontarians, finding this silent killer is part of your responsibility. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you please tell us what steps you have taken to help protect our friends and our families from the threat of carbon monoxide?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member from Halton for raising such an important issue and asking this question today.

As the member mentioned, carbon monoxide gas is a silent killer that continues to claim too many lives in our province. That is why our government is very much committed to working with all MPPs, stakeholders and partners to ensure that no more Ontarians lose their lives to carbon monoxide poisoning.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work done by the MPP from Oxford in bringing forward his Bill 77, which was passed unanimously in this Legislature. That bill came into effect on October 15, making it mandatory for all homes in Ontario to have carbon monoxide alarms.

Installing a carbon monoxide detector in your home is perhaps one of the simplest and most effective ways to alert you and your family to the presence of this lethal gas. I encourage everybody to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Minister, for your action on this important issue. I would also like to

acknowledge the efforts of the member from Oxford on this.

I am certain that making CO alarms mandatory in homes will help save lives in my community and across Ontario. In fact, just recently the Milton Fire Department received a donation from Union Gas to help buy smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors for families who don't have the equipment already.

The work of our government in protecting Ontarians is never complete, and there is always more action to be taken. Minister, my community and all Ontarians need more information about your action on this issue beyond this legislation. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you please provide more details on how you plan to protect Ontarians from the dangers of carbon monoxide?

1120

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The law requires that carbon monoxide alarms be installed in the service rooms and near all sleeping areas in multi-residential buildings. It also introduces annual testing, battery replacement and other requirements to ensure that carbon monoxide alarms in these residences are in good working order.

But Speaker, introducing new rules is just not enough. We need to ensure that each and every Ontarian understands the importance of having a working carbon monoxide alarm in their home. That's why this week is the first-ever Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week in our history as a result of the legislation that was put forward by the MPP from Oxford.

We need to take this week, and every single day, as an opportunity to spread the word about the dangers of carbon monoxide and the necessity of a detector in our home. I encourage each and every member here today and, through the members, their constituents, in encouraging members of our community to purchase a carbon monoxide alarm and install it in their homes today.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Todd Smith: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games.

Minister, six weeks ago you sat in the estimates committee and said this about Tim Hortons stadium in Hamilton: "This is eight or nine months prior to the games and it's operational." But Tim Hortons stadium in Hamilton had to miss a Pan Am test event just this past weekend—it was the university women's soccer championship—because the venue still isn't ready. We're hearing now it may be ready for the Ticats's final home game, a full two months after the Labour Day drop-dead date.

Minister, since this project has never been on time, how about some accountability from that side of the House? Who's being held responsible for yet another deadline missed at Tim Hortons stadium in Hamilton?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to start by saying that the changes to the construction timeline will not have any effect on the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games next year in Hamilton in 2015.

I'd like to remind the member opposite that through our investment, the city of Hamilton is receiving a brand new 22,000-seat stadium. This is a \$146-million investment, and we're happy in this House to be part of that initiative to leverage these games in order to build a strong stadium, strong support in the city of Hamilton.

The Tiger-Cats have actually played, I believe, seven games there, and they're currently undefeated. I want to congratulate the Tiger-Cats and the people of Hamilton for the great work.

Mr. Speaker, I have a bit more to talk about on the infrastructure in the supplemental.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: The fact of the matter is, the minister has said the venue would be ready, and clearly, the venue is not ready. They've had to move events from there time and time again, and no one has been held accountable on that side of the House.

The list of problems at Tim Hortons stadium includes electrical work, elevators, landscaping and the press box. It goes on and on. There's all kinds of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please finish.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you.

Let's move on from Tim Hortons stadium in Hamilton. Let's move on to the velodrome in Milton, because it's not ready either. It had test functions that were cancelled earlier this fall as well. They were supposed to have an event there, and it's behind schedule too.

Minister, you've repeatedly told us the venues will be on time and on budget. Nobody believes that anymore. Now they're missing events that are actually in those schedules that you've been talking about. Who, ultimately, is going to be held responsible?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Thank you for the question. I want to thank the people of Hamilton for their support for the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games. In fact, this morning I found out that out of all of Ontario, Hamilton is volunteering the most people for the Pan Am Games, with 2,200 people who have signed up from Hamilton.

I want to thank the people of Hamilton for their investment in these games. They're excited about a \$146-million investment, they're excited for the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games and they're excited because their team is currently undefeated in that new stadium.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Ms. Sarah Campbell: To the Premier: Fort Frances was devastated when their local mill idled in 2012. Now there is renewed hope, given that a company is looking to purchase the mill. Getting the mill up and running could mean 200 direct and 1,000 spinoff jobs, as well as a \$100-million annual injection into the economy.

But Expera, the company ready to buy the mill and create jobs, keeps running up against major challenges that the town of Fort Frances is confident this government can solve.

In a recent letter to the town of Fort Frances, the Premier wrote that she recognizes “the benefits that such a deal could bring” and that her government is “committed to the forestry industry, and to preserving and creating jobs in northern Ontario.”

My question is, what is the Premier ready to do to help the town of Fort Frances and ensure that we can get this mill up and going?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for the question. Like many in northwestern Ontario, I will say I was very excited when the negotiations began between the owner of the mill and the potential purchaser of the mill. I would say that I allowed myself to get a little bit more optimistic than I might generally in situations like this. We need to remember that the mill is a privately owned facility.

There are multiple components as to whether or not a deal could get done. At the end of the day, at least to this point—and we’re still hopeful that things can get back on track and restart—the two parties have decided that they are not going to move forward with the mill, or to the negotiation and the sale.

I would say, though, to the town of Fort Frances—and I did call Mayor Avis immediately upon finding out about this; I had a great conversation with him. We do understand that Mayor Avis and the town of Fort Frances will continue to work towards a deal and do anything they can, and we’re there to support them very much in that effort in any way that we can.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Back to the Premier: The Crossroute Forest is one of the most productive forests in Ontario, but the forest is in the hands of a company that won’t guarantee the prospective buyer, Expera, the cost-competitive fibre it needs to run the mill.

The town of Fort Frances has asked for a seat at the table to ensure that its local forests can create jobs in Fort Frances as part of an enhanced sustainable forestry licence. But the minister has slammed the door. With the stroke of a pen, this government can ensure that Fort Frances has a role in managing its own forests so that there is enough fibre to keep people working.

Will the Premier listen to the town of Fort Frances and First Nation communities and instruct her Minister of Natural Resources to approve the enhanced sustainable forestry licence for the town of Fort Frances?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I think it’s important to note that the system of forest tenure that we’re operating under currently now in the province of Ontario was a system that was brought in by NDP in 1994. We’ve made a significant commitment to move away from that system with tenure modernization.

There are four priority ESFLs in the province of Ontario currently being worked on right now. But it’s important, Speaker, to say that even if there was tenure modernization in place, even if there was an ESFL in this

particular case, it’s only one piece of the components necessary to get a deal done.

At the end of the day, the mill is still privately owned; it’s not in bankruptcy. So at the end of the day, even if the ESFL discussions had begun some time ago, that is in no way a guarantee that a deal could have been done here.

I will say, Speaker, we’re interested in working with the town in any way we can. We understand the impact of this mill to that community and all of northwestern Ontario. We’ll continue to do whatever we can to try to enhance the opportunities around—

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

CHILD CARE

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Education. Minister, the Ombudsman, in his scathing report, says there are 800,000 children in independent child care in Ontario up to the age of 12. The Ministry of Education reports they have 292,000 licensed spots in Ontario covering children up to 12 years of age as well. These spots are full, and tens of thousands of children are on subsidized wait-lists.

According to a survey by the Child Care Providers Resource Network, 40% of independent child care providers will close their doors if Bill 10 passes with the proposed ratio restrictions. That is 320,000 spaces, Minister. The bill is an even bigger disaster than when we originally calculated it.

Minister, are you really going to push this disastrous bill through this House without proper consultation across this province?

1130

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think I need to comment on the selective use of the Ombudsman because, if you look at the breadth of the Ombudsman’s report, what he’s saying is that we need to make changes to the way child care supervision works in Ontario and we need to make it quickly. In fact, what we need to do is make sure that our inspectors actually have the authority that, when people break the rules, they have the authority to fine and, in particular, that they have the authority to close those child carers down.

Yes, we do think—we agree with the Ombudsman—that it is urgent that we pass Bill 10 and implement his recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Ombudsman clearly, clearly indicated that this Ministry of Education did not do its job.

Minister, the average cost of licensed care is \$140 per month more for independent child care providers than for licensed ones. With the loss of a possible 320,000 spaces, that will cost young families in Ontario an average of \$44.8 million more per month—that’s per month. That’s if there was even a remote chance of a licensed daycare spot that you brag about, and it’s not including the loss of income for roughly 60,000 independent child care pro-

viders who don't mind being regulated or licensed, or have a registry.

If I'm wrong on these numbers, can you enlighten this House with the numbers that you actually have and that you're going to pass this bill on? That's what I'd like to see, the real true numbers given to this House and not passed through some fast committee that's going to be time-allocated and really dumped on all the young people and all the people who are trying—

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

Hon. Liz Sandals: I believe that if you read the Ombudsman's report carefully, what you would find is that he said that there are over 800,000 children who are either not in licensed care or not in the care of their mothers. Included in that 800,000 are the people who don't have child care at all: so all those 11- and 12-year-olds who are home alone, all those kids who go to grandma's house, all those kids who have a nanny, all those kids who have a babysitter. So, in fact, the number that you're using to do your calculations on, which is 800,000 kids in unlicensed child care, is factually incorrect. Your calculations don't work.

But let's go back to the real issue here, Speaker. The real issue is that, regardless of whether children are in a licensed centre, licensed home care or unlicensed home care, it is our responsibility as a government to keep kids safe. That's what—

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

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Joe Cimino: Speaker, through you to the Premier: In my riding of Sudbury, Lasalle Boulevard is a commercial main street used by residents, but it's also the only direct route available for the heavy slurry trucks travelling between the source and the smelter at Falconbridge. The extension of Maley Drive would provide these massive, massive trucks an alternative route, heeding road user safety and taking into account the maintenance of road infrastructure.

The city has attempted to get the federal and provincial governments to pay one third of the project costs. During the election campaign, your government promised \$26.7 million for this project, but this is not even one third of the \$120-million projected cost of the Maley Drive extension. Premier, through you, Speaker: Will your government commit to funding the full one-third total cost of the Maley Drive extension?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of economic development, trade and employment and infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We're working on that, Mr. Speaker; thank you, though.

I appreciate the question. I know this is an issue that the city of Sudbury has identified as a priority. We're going to continue to work with municipalities on their

priorities. We understand the significance of this. It's a fairly significant ask, but we have a number of programs now that we've rolled out with municipalities.

The key is, Mr. Speaker, that we're rolling out these programs, as you would know from our AMO commitment, on the basis of the way municipalities want us to deal with these programs. In other words, we're looking at half of the programs being a formula-based approach and the other half, as we get up in asset management issues, being the other kind of traditional approach. We're going to continue to work with the city of Sudbury and other municipalities to ensure that their needs are met.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Cimino: Thank you, Speaker, and through you, you're right, Minister: The project has been very important to the city of Greater Sudbury for over 20 years and as well to my colleague from Nickel Belt.

Minister, during the election your government promised the people of Sudbury the money was available for the Maley Drive extension, but no money has actually been set aside. The funds your government speaks of are conditional on matching federal funding. If the federal government doesn't pay its share, the province will pay nothing either. Will your government commit to funding the Maley Drive extension unconditional of federal government funding and come through for the people of Greater Sudbury?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member is correct. I mean, the commitment that we made in the 2014 budget was conditional on federal funding and the federal government has got to do their share. The fact of the matter is that when you look at the infrastructure investments we're making—\$130 billion over 10 years—the federal government's commitment across the country, not just in Ontario, and including investments in their own buildings, is \$70 billion. That's a far cry from where their investments should be.

So, yes, we'll be calling on the federal government to pay their share when it comes to projects like this and projects right across the province, whether that's transit, roads, bridges or water and wastewater projects. We need a federal government in this country that's committed to building infrastructure. We don't have that right now.

HEALTHY LIVING

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. I was very pleased last week to hear from the minister that his ministry is promoting sports, recreation and active living in priority neighbourhoods. The minister announced continued support for the after-school program, the program that helps children and youth to remain active, develop healthy and active living, gain confidence and achieve more in school.

Given the current statistics on childhood obesity and as a former member of the Healthy Kids Panel, I believe the recent announcement by the minister of investing

\$13.5 million supports many of the recommendations by the Healthy Kids Panel.

I'm also very pleased that we're partnering with over 130 organizations, including, in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, Agincourt community social services. These organizations will deliver the after-school program to over 400 locations.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please share with the members of the House on the expanded after-school program and how it will help kids in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for her work on promoting healthy choices not only in the Legislature here but as a nurse and as a former school board trustee of the Toronto District School Board.

Her question gives me an opportunity to talk about this incredible program. My ministry announced last week that we'll be investing \$13.5 million into the after-school program. This program will support children and youth who will be making healthy choices through positive activities.

I'd like to thank the service providers who helped deliver this program to over 400 locations across this province, and that includes over 21,000 young people who actively participate in these programs. Program activities include sports, arts and crafts, personal health and wellness education, and nutrition instruction. They are delivered by non-profit organizations throughout the province. We're very proud of the work that these organizations do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Speaker. I thank the minister as well for his comments about this fantastic program.

I know, as a former school board trustee, the importance of these programs to reaching out to students after school but also during the school time. I heard that the after-school program is incorporating the Pan Am Games as well as the Kids 'n Play resource on the ppakids website.

I'm happy that the program will allow kids to learn about the games next summer through interactive activities like the Who is Pachi? activity to learn about the mascot of the games, identifying the flags of participating countries, as well as the creating-your-own Pan Am flag activity.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please share with the House some other plans for this after-school program, but also how to keep our kids healthy and active?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Again, I'd like to thank the member for the question. We've been funding this program, the after-school program, since 2009. We're quite proud of the investment we've been able to do. We know that when young people go to these programs they have a safe place to learn together, do their homework, to learn about great nutritional food and great nutritional food

choices, to take part in physical activity, but most importantly to have some fun.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Yes, please. My colleagues have told me I said this wrong, but I want to correct myself on the supplementary to the minister. What I meant to say was, the average cost of licensed care is \$140 per month per child more than independent child care providers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As all members know, that is a point of order, to correct one's record. I thank the member for bringing it forward properly.

WEARING OF PINS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on a point of order.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Better late than never: I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear Ontario Lung Association pins today in recognition of Lung Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is seeking unanimous consent to wear the ribbon. Do we agree? Agreed.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Associate Minister of Finance on a point of order.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I'd like to welcome to this House Joe Baker, dean, as well as Michelle Caine, chair, of the School of Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary Arts at Centennial College; as well as students from Willow Park Junior Public School who are touring the House today.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton on a point of order.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: In my question, I mentioned that the members for Durham, Scarborough Southwest, Mississauga–Streetsville, Halton and Beaches–East York voted on Friday. I'd like to correct that to say "Thursday." It was actually Thursday that that happened.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Again, correcting the record is a point of order.

There are no further points of order and there are no deferred votes. This House stands adjourned until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to welcome a number of people who are here today in recognition of Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week. In the gallery are John Gignac, founder of the Hawkins-Gignac Foundation for CO Education; Pat Folliott and Mary Ellen Sheppard, who have worked hard to raise awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide; and Doug DeRabbie and Matt Hiraishi from the Insurance Bureau of Canada.

I also want to recognize Matthew Stanton, an intern with the Ontario Legislative Internship Program, who has started his employment in our office this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. Further introductions? Last call for introductions.

My editorial would be that Mr. Gignac is a constituent of mine in the riding of Brant. We're glad you're here, John. Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ARTHUR MURAL

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: On October 25, I had the privilege of attending the dedication of a new mural at the Arthur cenotaph. The mural recognizes the service of veterans and soldiers who have protected, and who are protecting, our freedom.

I would like to recognize and thank all those who have been involved in the mural project, including the muralist, Cliff Smith; the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 226 in Arthur; the Arthur and Area Historical Society; the township of Wellington North; and all of the dedicated volunteers.

Arthur is proudly known as the most patriotic village in Canada, and for good reason: One out of every seven Arthur residents fought in the Second World War. The cenotaph honours the sacrifice of these soldiers, along with those who fought in the First World War.

As the new mural reads: "Remember ... Freedom isn't Free." We are reminded of that as we approach Remembrance Day—one, I'm sure, that will be particularly significant for all Canadians this year.

In Perth–Wellington there will be 10 Remembrance Day ceremonies hosted by our local Royal Canadian Legions. Today I recognize the legion members and volunteers who are organizing ceremonies in Milverton, St. Marys, Atwood, Clifford, Stratford, Mount Forest, Arthur, Palmerston, Harriston, Drayton and Aboyne. I'm hoping to attend as many of your services as I can.

I would encourage everyone to participate in the poppy campaign and attend a Remembrance Day ceremony this year to pay tribute to our heroes.

ABITIBI TRESTLE BRIDGE

Mr. John Vanthof: The Trestle bridge near Iroquois Falls was built in 1922 to cross the mighty Abitibi River,

which separated the Abitibi pulp and paper mill from the forests that were needed to supply it. Although originally a railway bridge, it was converted to vehicle traffic in the 1950s. Over the years, it's become an iconic part of the region and a gateway for residents of the area to enjoy the forests and lakes beyond its span. Hunters, campers and fishermen from all over North America use that bridge as their access point.

On August 10, 2014, Resolute Forest Products closed the bridge because an inspection revealed safety concerns. People of the area were devastated; 1,000 came on the last day to say goodbye, hopefully not for the last time.

A committee has been struck to look at options for opening this vital link. Gilles Forget, the mayor at the time, took the lead, and I'm sure that now that he's retired from his municipal duties, he will continue to pursue all avenues available.

H2O Power, Resolute and the other stakeholders have been actively looking at possible solutions. The Ministry of Transportation sent a team to do their own inspection of the bridge, and we look forward to the results of that work. The Trestle bridge is an integral part of the culture and economy of Iroquois Falls, and I encourage the government to work with Gilles, incoming Mayor Michael Shea and the rest of the townspeople so that they can once again access their own backyard.

We don't have the Blue Jays; we might not even want the Leafs. But we have the Abitibi Eskimos, and we need our Trestle back.

NIRVANA CULTURAL SOCIETY

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: It's a pleasure to rise today and speak about a very special Diwali celebration that I recently attended. This past Sunday I took part in the 40th annual Diwali gala dinner with the Nirvana Cultural Society. It all started 40 years ago when a group of remarkable individuals, people who refused to be defined by apartheid and the labels attached to them by the old South Africa, chose hope and the path forward in a new country.

Ontario's South African community is a strong community with strong values and a strong bond. They have seen what oppression looks like, tasted its reality and fought it with all their might.

Many of the people in the room celebrating the Hindu festival of Diwali had made a difficult choice during their lives. They chose to leave family, friends and a life of oppression and instead head for hope, freedom and respect in Ontario and Canada. From the very beginning, this group felt it had a responsibility to give back to their new country.

For the past 40 years, this group has been fundraising money for various charities through this event, including the Stephen Lewis AIDS fund, the Princess Margaret cancer fund, the aboriginal children's literacy program, and the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, to name a few.

It's a wonderful evening filled with culture, friendship and tradition. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to acknow-

ledge the Nirvana Cultural Society today for once again organizing a terrific Diwali event and for celebrating 40 years of freedom in the place they now call home.

CARBON MONOXIDE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize Ontario's first Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week, and, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for your work on this issue.

Six years ago, the Hawkins family in Woodstock were tragically lost to carbon monoxide poisoning due to a blocked vent in their fireplace. Since then, many people have worked to avoid more tragedies. I want to commend John Gignac, Laurie Hawkins's uncle, who founded the Hawkins-Gignac Foundation for CO Education and shared his family's story to help save others. He has become an advocate for detectors not only here in Ontario, but across Canada.

I also want to recognize the Insurance Bureau of Canada. They have worked with me to raise awareness and donated over 2,000 carbon monoxide detectors to Ontario fire departments. Those will be given to the needy.

Last year, this Legislature passed my private member's bill the Hawkins Gignac Act so all homes in Ontario with a fuel-burning appliance or attached garage are required to have a carbon monoxide detector. You can't see, smell or taste carbon monoxide, so the only way to know your family is safe is to have a detector.

The bill also created Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week, starting November 1 every year, to remind people about the danger. This week, we want to remind everyone to check and make sure their vents and chimneys aren't blocked, to get fuel-burning appliances serviced regularly, and, most importantly, to make sure that you have a working carbon monoxide detector in your home.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France G linas: I want to share with you a few gas prices from north of Toronto. Today the gas in Barrie is at \$1.13 a litre. It's \$1.24 in North Bay, \$1.25 in Sudbury and \$1.18 in Sturgeon Falls.

Right now, my constituents in Nickel Belt are paying seven cents more—sometimes it is up to 10 cents more—than the people in Sturgeon Falls. There is only one road to Sturgeon Falls, Speaker; it either comes from North Bay or from Sudbury. So the delivery cost is not the issue. They have fewer gas stations, fewer people, fewer industries. It defies the laws of economics, Speaker. Back home we call it gouging.

Ontario should enact price controls for gas to protect us from gouging. Most provinces to the east of us, and some American states, have price-control mechanisms. Studies have shown that jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild fluctuations, a shrinking of the price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices.

This is the kind of legislation the people of this province need, especially northern and rural citizens with no public transit. I think the time has come for this government to do more to protect its citizens' pocketbooks and regulate the price of gas.

CENTRE FOR INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE

Ms. Soo Wong: As a former nurse, I am very pleased to rise today to congratulate both the Scarborough Hospital and the University of Toronto for their partnership in opening the Centre for Integrative Medicine in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt.

Some 74% of Canadians, including many of my constituents, receive complementary and alternative medicine as a part of their health regimen. This includes the use of natural products, chiropractic care, acupuncture and meditation, to name just a few.

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I'm proud to say that the new Centre for Integrative Medicine is the first of its kind in Canada and will examine how these treatments interact with conventional medicine. This centre will have a research and a clinical component. Researchers will collaborate with multi-discipline health practitioners to lay a foundation for a future clinical hub that will specialize in disease prevention and health promotion.

I want to thank the following individuals for their contribution to the creation of the Centre for Integrative Medicine: from the Scarborough Hospital, president and CEO Robert Biron, Marla Fryers, Ethel Doyle and Dr. Paul Tam; from the University of Toronto Faculty of Medicine, Dean Heather Boon and Dean Catharine Whiteside; from the Centre for Integrative Medicine, Professor Linda Balneaves and Maurine Kwok; and donors, K.Y. and Betty Ho.

ST. THOMAS TOMCATS

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, I don't think you're going to like this statement; however, I hope you will at the end.

While most of us are talking about hockey and curling, I'm going to remind us about the past baseball season throughout Ontario. I'd like to congratulate the St. Thomas Tomcats on not only winning their fourth consecutive inter-county junior baseball league pennant; they were the playoff champions. How did this occur? Well, this win took place in Brantford on August 14 with a 2-1 win in game 1 and an 8-4 win in game 2, which led the Tomcats to victory.

That night, Tyler Gillies, the pitcher, struck out the side in the second inning, mowing down three of Brantford's top hitters. He was nearly flawless from there, allowing only one hit and three base runners and grabbing 12 more straight strikeouts to close the game. The catcher, Sean Refflinghaus, and the pitcher were in sync all night.

I would like to congratulate the head coach, Matt Gooding, as well as coaches Ben Crossett, Jim Ewart, Jacques Roy and Martin Warner for their hard work and dedication all season. I'd also like to extend my congratulations to each and every one of those players—a hard-fought season, a hard-fought win over Brantford. St. Thomas is proud of you. Enjoy it, and we look forward to doing it again next year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You know I want to say something. Pass.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Mr. John Fraser: Last week there was a serious incident of vandalism that took place at the Dar As Sunnah mosque in Ottawa South. The violence that we witnessed in Ottawa in recent weeks and the vandalism that took place at the mosque have no place in our community. Targeting people because of their values, their beliefs or the colour of their skin is wrong. People from around the world have made Ottawa South a place to raise their family. In fact, there are over 80 languages spoken in our schools. We are a model for the world.

In the last few weeks, we saw our community come together in our churches, our mosques, our synagogues, our temples and our community spaces to pray for and support those who were victims of the violence that took place in downtown Ottawa. In times such as these, it is important to remember that we are all in this together. We live in a beautiful, peaceful and welcoming community, and the actions of a few do not reflect the strength of our community as a whole.

In Ottawa South we are one, and we will continue to work together to keep our community safe, peaceful and welcoming.

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S GRIEF AWARENESS DAY

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Good afternoon, Speaker. On Saturday evening, I had the opportunity to stand in for recently re-elected Barrie Mayor Jeff Lehman—he only got 92% of the vote. I was able to proclaim November 20, 2014, National Children's Grief Awareness Day. I was honoured to do so for two organizations that offer very valuable services to our community.

Seasons Centre for Grieving Children is a registered charitable organization for children who experience grief caused by the death of a parent or sibling or for children who have an immediate family member diagnosed with a terminal illness. They have been doing this since 1995. In the classrooms, my colleagues and I have noticed what a difference it makes to the children they deal with.

The other group is Rainbows for All Children Canada. It has partnered with children's grief awareness day to recognize children who are struggling from loss.

November 20, National Children's Grief Awareness Day, is an opportunity to let grieving children know they're not forgotten in the midst of their grief. Join us by

wearing blue on Thursday, November 20, 2014, as we come together to show our support of these children.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

752458 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2014

Mr. Singh moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr10, An Act to revive 752458 Ontario Ltd.

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 Regulation and Private bills.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

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

“Whereas the Green Energy Act has driven up the cost of electricity in Ontario due to unrealistic subsidies for certain energy sources, including the world's highest subsidies for solar power; and

“Whereas this cost is passed on to ratepayers through the global adjustment, which can account for almost half of a ratepayer's hydro bill; and

“Whereas the high cost of energy is severely impacting the quality of life of Ontario's residents, especially fixed-income seniors; and

“Whereas it is imperative to remedy Liberal mismanagement in the energy sector by implementing immediate reforms detailed in the Ontario PC white paper Paths to Prosperity—Affordable Energy;

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

“To immediately repeal the Green Energy Act, 2009, and all other statutes that artificially inflate the cost of electricity with the aim of bringing down electricity rates and abolishing expensive surcharges such as the global adjustment and debt retirement charges.”

I fully agree with this, will affix my name and send it with page Renée.

HIGH PARK

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

“Whereas High Park was donated to the city with conditions that it be free to use and for the benefit of all the citizens of Toronto and Ontario in perpetuity;

“Whereas development should be considered in the context of protecting High Park’s ecosystems from negative impacts;

“Whereas many people who travel from around the world are able to experience through High Park a unique, peaceful aspect of the city of Toronto, often referred to as the “jewel” of Toronto;

“Whereas the OMB has proven ill-equipped to the task of protecting this precious resource;

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

“That the Ministry of the Environment take the adequate steps necessary to protect this environmentally and historically significant park and its boundary areas.”

I couldn’t agree more. I’m going to sign this, and I’m going to give it to Félix to be delivered to the table.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government is committed to providing the right care, at the right place, at the right time, and by the right health care professional; and

“Whereas patients that are not satisfied with their care deserve the opportunity to voice their concerns and seek resolutions to their complaints; and

“Whereas patients sometimes need a third party to turn to when they have exhausted all local complaint resolution processes; and

“Whereas a patient ombudsman would facilitate the resolution of complaints, investigate health sector organizations, and make recommendations to further strengthen Ontario’s health care sector;

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

“That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 8, and create a patient ombudsman.”

I fully support the petition and I’ll give my petition to page Callum.

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CHILD CARE

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

“Whereas the Liberal government introduced Bill 10—Child Care Modernization Act on July 10, 2014;

“Whereas the passage of the bill will result in the elimination of 140,000 child care spaces in Ontario and increase child care costs by 30-40%, especially in rural and suburban areas;

“Whereas Bill 10 could force licensed daycare providers to close, impacting religious day schools, private schools and Montessori schools as well;

“Whereas the Liberal government has asked for quick passage of the bill but has not properly considered these repercussions for all Ontario parents;

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

“That the Liberal government conduct province-wide consultation during the 2014-2015 legislative winter recess at which time the Minister of Education will travel across the province to Hamilton, Guelph, Ottawa, Kitchener, London, Windsor, Sudbury and Toronto to consult with parents and child care workers to understand how the bill will negatively affect Ontario children, parents and child care workers.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature and send the petition to the table with page Josée.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s youth justice facilities are run by two completely different sets of policy guidelines depending on whether they are part of the Ontario public service (OPS) and funded directly by the provincial government, or the broader public service (BPS) and funded indirectly; and

“Whereas OPS and BPS facilities serve the very same youth, and both receive their funding from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services; and

“Whereas unlike in similar OPS facilities, there is no provincial mandate for youth corrections community agencies to provide WSIB coverage, meaning many agencies have inadequate private insurance coverage; and

“Whereas youth corrections community agencies are struggling with chronic underfunding;

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

“We strongly urge the provision of a provincial mandate for all youth corrections agencies to provide WSIB coverage to their staff. We further urge the assembly to improve systemic inequities by ensuring that all youth corrections facilities receive proper funding.”

I couldn’t agree with this more. I’m going to affix my name to it and give it to page Adam to bring to the Clerk.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Chris Ballard: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government is committed to providing the right care, at the right place, at the right time, and by the right health care professional; and

“Whereas patients that are not satisfied with their care deserve the opportunity to voice their concerns and seek resolutions to their complaints; and

“Whereas patients sometimes need a third party to turn to when they have exhausted all local complaint resolution processes; and

“Whereas a patient ombudsman would facilitate the resolution of complaints, investigate health sector organizations, and make recommendations to further strengthen Ontario’s health care sector;

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

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 8, and create a patient ombudsman."

I agree with this and will affix my signature and give it to page Katie.

WIND TURBINES

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

"Whereas residents of Ontario, mayors and councillors from more than 80 municipalities and Ontario's largest farm organizations and rural stakeholders, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, seek an immediate moratorium on wind development projects awaiting approval until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health; and

"Whereas the provincial Liberal government's study back in 2011 failed to conclude anything more than it needed to continue to study the turbine sound impacts; and

"Whereas the federal government is launching, through Health Canada, the first comprehensive study of health impacts of wind turbines;

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

"That the Liberal government follow the federal lead, accept the objective of the federal wind study, agree and accept that until the study is finished it will not approve any new wind turbine projects in Ontario, effective immediately."

I support this petition, will affix my name and send it with page Callum. Thank you.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are an estimated 100,000 to 300,000 unpaid internships in Canada each year; and

"Whereas youth unemployment in Ontario is over 15%; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Labour is not adequately enforcing the laws on unpaid internships;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take the following actions:

"(1) Proactively enforce the law on unpaid internships;

"(2) Engage in an educational campaign to inform students, youth, employers, educational institutions and the general public of the laws surrounding unpaid internships; and

"(3) Undertake a comprehensive review of the current laws surrounding unpaid internships in Ontario."

I strongly support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Adam to take to the table.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mr. Arthur Potts: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas it is absolutely crucial that more is done to provide Ontarians retirement financial security which they can rely on;

"Whereas the federal government has refused to partner with our government to ensure that Ontarians have a secure retirement plan;

"Whereas more than three million Ontarians rely on the Canada Pension Plan alone, that currently does not provide enough to support an adequate standard of living;

"Whereas the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan will provide the safe and stable retirement that Ontarians need;

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

"That all members of the Ontario assembly support a plan to move forward with an Ontario-made pension retirement plan that will provide a financially secure retirement for Ontarians."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition, affix my signature and give it to page Morgan.

AIR QUALITY

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

"Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario's automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

"Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

"Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

"Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks."

I am pleased to affix my signature, Speaker. I'll send the petition to the table with page Renée.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have these petitions that were collected by Keshia Ive Jarrett from Toronto, and it reads as follows:

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

“Whereas there are more and more cases of hospital acquired infections;

“Whereas people with complaints have no independent body to listen to their concerns;

“Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada—including the three territories—where our Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of hospitals and other front line care organizations;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand the Ombudsman’s mandate to include Ontario’s hospitals, long-term-care homes and other front line care organizations.”

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

LEGAL AID

Mr. Granville Anderson: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Mississauga Community Legal Services provides free legal services to legal aid clients within a community of nearly 800,000 population; and

“Whereas legal services in communities like Toronto and Hamilton serve, per capita, fewer people living in poverty, are better staffed and better funded; and

“Whereas Mississauga and Brampton have made progress in having Ontario provide funding for human services on a fair and equitable, population-based model;

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

“That the Ministry of the Attorney General revise the current distribution of allocated funds in the 2012-13 budget, and adopt a population-based model, factoring in population growth rates to ensure Ontario funds are allocated in an efficient, fair and effective manner.”

I support this petition and affix my name to it.

RURAL AND NORTHERN ONTARIO TRANSPORTATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this, will affix my name and send it with page Félix.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. Michael Mantha: “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 fully support this petition and present it to page Faith from Algoma–Manitoulin to bring down to the Clerks.

LEGAL AID

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

“Whereas Mississauga Community Legal Services provides free legal services to legal aid clients within a community of nearly 800,000 population; and

“Whereas legal services in communities like Toronto and Hamilton serve, per capita, fewer people living in poverty, are better staffed and better funded; and

“Whereas Mississauga and Brampton have made progress in having Ontario provide funding for human services on a fair and equitable, population-based model;

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

“That the Ministry of the Attorney General revise the current distribution of allocated funds in the 2012-13 budget, and adopt a population-based model, factoring in population growth rates to ensure Ontario funds are allocated in an efficient, fair and effective manner.”

I sign the petition and send it to the desk with Noah.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have available this afternoon for petitions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CHILD CARE MODERNIZATION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA MODERNISATION DES SERVICES DE GARDE D'ENFANTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 30, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 10, An Act to enact the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, to repeal the Day Nurseries Act, to amend the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007, the Education Act and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 10, Loi édictant la Loi de 2014 sur la garde d'enfants et la petite enfance, abrogeant la Loi sur les garderies, modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les éducatrices et les éducateurs de la petite enfance, la Loi sur l'éducation et la Loi sur le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités et apportant des modifications corrélatives et connexes à d'autres lois.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When this House last debated Bill 10, we had completed questions and comments related to the remarks by the member for Scarborough–Agincourt, so I will call for further debate and recognize the member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak on Bill 10, An Act to enact the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, to repeal the Day Nurseries Act, to amend the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007, the Education Act and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts. I should say at the outset that I will be sharing my time with my colleague the member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

I was eager to speak on Bill 10 because it's an issue of major concern to the people in my riding of Leeds–Grenville. We know that the viability of the child care system in rural parts of Ontario like Leeds–Grenville would be at risk if we allowed Bill 10 to go through as it is, so I wanted to have the opportunity to stand here, on behalf of parents and child care providers I represent, to bring their views to the floor of the Legislature in this very important debate. I wanted to do so before the government inevitably moves to cut debate off on Bill 10, as they have done with other pieces of legislation since we came back here in the chamber.

Off the top, I want to commend our PC education critic, the member for Simcoe North, Mr. Garfield Dunlop. He has done an outstanding job outlining the very serious concerns with aspects of Bill 10. It's important for government members who are here today to listen to the

debate from our side and understand where our concerns are coming from. Our critic has worked tirelessly to go out and meet with stakeholders, particularly those private daycare operators who have been, I suggest, completely ignored by the government. That's who the member for Simcoe North is. When he was our critic for skilled trades, he came to Leeds–Grenville and met with dozens of tradesmen in my riding to hear their concerns about the College of Trades. I suggest he has taken the same approach with this particular piece of legislation. From what he has heard, very clearly, Bill 10 is going to have an absolutely catastrophic result for those that are private operators and for the ability of parents to choose the care that's best for them.

I've heard the minister and other members describing what we're saying as fear mongering by the opposition. Of course that's what they're going to say, Speaker, because the government knows they can't argue with the facts. So we're left to choose between our critic, who has tirelessly toured the province and listened to those affected by Bill 10, or the minister's empty promises that everything is going to be all right. Well, it's a pretty easy choice for me. I'm going to look at the debate from Mr. Dunlop's perspective, and I'm going to keep an open mind to some of the other members.

But it's a very complex piece of legislation. In fact, it amends more than a dozen other acts: everything from the Assessment Act and the Income Tax Act to the Pay Equity Act and even the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. We also need to recognize the incredible number of people who are going to be affected by Bill 10. Our estimate puts the number at about 70,000 child care providers and approximately 350,000 children in care and their parents.

The reality is, if the bill passes as it is written now, we're going to see parents lose child care options. Our estimate is that this legislation will eliminate 140,000 child care spaces in Ontario, many of them in rural parts of the province, like my riding. That's because we will see child care providers forced out of business. We will see parents facing an increase of 30% to 40% in daycare fees to make up for the shortfall of income to providers. As I said earlier, the parts of Ontario that stand to lose most because of this piece of legislation are rural areas.

It's for that reason that I and my colleagues and my caucus, for that matter, are calling for province-wide hearings on Bill 10. We need an all-party committee of the Legislative Assembly to do what Mr. Dunlop does in his role of critic, and that's go out to other parts of Ontario and hold meetings and listen to people. We need to hear from parents and child care providers in the north, in southwestern Ontario, in central Ontario, in eastern Ontario. The government needs to understand that Ontario exists outside of the GTA. The families and the hard-working independent daycare operators out there face dire consequences as a result of this government's desire to create a one-size-fits-all system of child care.

I know the minister is eager to get Bill 10 rammed down our throats because of the Ombudsman's report, which basically shone a light on this government's ter-

rible record on this file. You don't make up for 12 years of—and I'll use the Ombudsman's words—"systematic government ineptitude" by rushing in legislation without fully examining its consequences. I would think a Minister of Education of all people knows that old proverb: "Two wrongs don't make a right." That's exactly what she's doing with Bill 10.

It's a bill in need of serious revision, because what we have in it now won't improve the safety of children in care; it will actually see us spending more on child care and providing less of it. That's why our caucus is saying that we need to take a step back. We need to use the winter break as an opportunity to go out across the province and hear directly from those who will be most affected by the bill. It's a very complex bill, and we can't just have hearings here in Toronto; we need to go closer to these men and women who are providing this care.

I know I only have a few moments, so I wanted to put on the record some of the comments of one of the independent child care providers in my riding who's deeply concerned about this legislation. Cynthia Potschka operates a wonderful home daycare called the Cherished Cherubs Child Care in North Grenville. This is a bit of background about Cynthia from a letter she wrote to me:

"I have worked in the child care industry for a good portion of the last 20 years. I currently provide a very professional child care program from my home that is highly regarded by parents and those who work in the child care field.

"I choose to provide care from my home for a number of reasons, but one of the most important reasons is because my own experience with child care centres as a parent, ECE student and supply teacher led me to the conclusion that the type of care that is provided in a quality home child care environment is beyond compare.

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"And I wanted to be the person providing excellent care to children and their families—not just meeting a minimum standard."

That sets the scene about who Cynthia Potschka is, what kind of child care specialist she is, and what kind of service she provides parents in her riding. She's an experienced, qualified, caring provider who gives parents in a rural area an option to choose an outstanding home child care setting for their kids.

Here's what her assessment of Bill 10 is and what it will do for her business: "It will likely force caregivers, like myself, to shut our doors. It is doubtful that I would be able to continue to operate my program the way I do ... when faced with the financial costs of this legislation."

She notes that neither the restriction limiting her two children under two years of age or contracting with a home daycare licensing agency—and turning over 30% of her income, essentially—is viable.

Here's another quote, Mr. Speaker: "In order to remain open, I will have to consider an increase to my fees to a level which many families will find impossible. I would like to be in the business of caring for children

for many more years to come, but it's clear to me that the implementation of this bill will make this an unlikely long-term option."

She sums it up. Her words that she hopes the minister will heed: "It's a poor piece of legislation that does not address the real child care issues in our community today. It is a piece of legislation that will, by its very nature, create a shortage of child care spaces, remove choices from families who need care, fees will increase and become unreachable, and quality will decline.

"The circumstances of children in care will be worse, not better. Families will be under more pressure, not less. This is not the legislation that is needed to modernize child care in Ontario."

I could go on and on with Cynthia's letter to me. I've received many other letters from other providers. Everyone is of the same mind, at least in my riding, whether they live in North Grenville, Westport, Athens or any of the other rural areas in my riding. I think they need to realize that we can't rush down the path that the minister has put us on with Bill 10.

We need to take a step back. We need to have some meaningful hearings across the province. We need to listen to people on what they would like to see in this bill, and we cannot allow the government House leader to ram this bill down our throats when we have so many Ontarians asking us to hold province-wide hearings and come up with a bill that gets it right.

I've used up my time. I know that the member for Kitchener–Conestoga is very eager to get his comments on the record. Thank you for allowing me to speak, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: The member for Leeds–Grenville is correct. I am eager to get my comments on Bill 10 on the record. I did see the minister come in and I'm thankful for her to be here as we bring the last 10 minutes in remarks on Bill 10.

I look forward to providing some respective on the vital questions surrounding child care here in Ontario, questions surrounding the safety of our children, the availability and affordability of care options and impacts on long-serving child care providers.

It was just a couple of weeks ago that our Ontario Ombudsman had his say on the problems inherent in Ontario's child care, systemic problems, really, that have been allowed to fester over the years of poor oversight and absent enforcement by a government that, until last year, seemed unbothered by the potential for tragedy. Of course, we were all horrified when that potential became a reality, and the government finally woke up to grasp the impact of its unmet responsibilities.

The long-standing concerns, unanswered complaints and the unheard early warning signs are all spelled out very vividly in the Ombudsman's report, *Careless About Child Care*. That really says it all, Speaker. The government has been careless about child care. But beyond the headlines, the stories within tell a tale of a government

sleeping at the wheel, unaware of the hazards jeopardizing the safety of our children here in Ontario.

As Mr. Marin points out in his executive summary, this government finally got its wake-up call when “over a seven-month period in 2013-2014, four young children died ... in the greater Toronto area.” We all know the details of the tragedy that befell two-year-old Eva Ravikovich, who died in Vaughan on July 8, 2013, in an illegal home daycare.

Specifically, Mr. Marin’s investigation centred on the system for responding to complaints and concerns about unlicensed child care operations, the point being that while this government has its eyes on registering and licensing, the fact is that no registration or licensing regime can work to protect the safety of our children if government is not going to respond to the complaints and concerns in the first place.

Speaker, as the Ombudsman report points out, there are “more than 800,000 Ontario children in unlicensed care—from newborns to age 12—more than double the number in licensed settings.” I’m sure we all know examples of families who have benefited from the child care provided by relatives, nannies, friends or babysitters, and we also know the concerning stories of those who are cared for in overcrowded homes, storefronts and offices. These would be in violation of the law, in fact, the current law. So if the law was enforced, perhaps we wouldn’t see the sad stories that confront us today.

Speaker, there’s no doubt that as waiting lists and the costs associated with licensed child care have grown, many Ontarians have turned to more affordable, more readily available informal options, often unaware of the rules and of the risks. Again, it is a government’s job—it was the government’s job before Bill 10 and it will be after Bill 10—to ensure Ontario parents are aware of the rules and know the risks before making crucial decisions on who will be protecting their children when they are at work.

As Mr. Marin indicates, while there are hundreds of complaints every year from parents looking for government to do its job, “Regrettably, the system for receiving and responding to such complaints and concerns has suffered from entrenched organizational malaise for years.” He also points out that, “In the case of Eva Ravikovich, the ministry repeatedly failed to follow proper procedures or follow up on multiple complaints, including from children’s aid society officials. Its ineptitude allowed this brazenly illegal daycare to operate unabated for many months, until Eva’s death incited ministry officials to take action.”

Further to that point, Marin tells us that, far from being an isolated incident, “the system for responding to complaints about unlicensed daycares included careless and inconsistent complaint intake practices. It was also infused with a reactive, passive and conflicted enforcement culture that focused on encouraging and educating illegal operators into compliance—to the detriment of ensuring the health, welfare and safety of the children.” Really, that is what is paramount here, and should be:

ensuring the health, welfare and safety of children. I’m just not sure that Bill 10 is the answer, of course, in its currently written format.

There is a long list of concerns Mr. Marin details in his overview of what is ailing a clearly broken system. He calls out the ministry for a non-existent case management system for tracking complaints about unlicensed operators, a disorganized process for documenting complaints and incomplete records, “dozens of cases where the ministry’s own directives and guidelines for responding to complaints were not followed, and where inspections of unlicensed daycare operations were delayed or skipped altogether.... such poor inspection practices as cursory and careless evidence gathering, inadequate assessment of evidence and failure to properly document inspection results” and absent training “on best practices for conducting investigations.” He adds that “many did not even possess a clear understanding of the legislation they were enforcing or of the ministry’s own policies and procedures.” Unbelievable.

Speaker, there it is: a clearly broken system failing Ontarians in its inability to anticipate problems, register complaints or enforce the current legislation. The big question is, does Bill 10 alleviate these problems or simply build more registering and licensing into a system that continues to be unresponsive to actual violations? Because if we continue down this path, we only stand to repeat the mistakes of the past that have led to the situation where we have had 82 unlicensed caregivers facing multiple complaints, and then 23 still operating illegally on second visits and 15 remaining in violation on subsequent visits. Speaker, it doesn’t matter if we beef up our legislation if the ministry refuses to act to enforce it. That’s the bottom line: Rules and regulations are only as good as the enforcement you put behind them.

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We have so many good, diligent and safe day care providers, both licensed and unlicensed here in the province—there are clearly a few bad apples—and they’re now further impacted by a piece of legislation that has failed to really hear their voices. We call for the minister to perhaps use the winter to allow those folks to come in and have their say. It’s not just them, Speaker; it’s the parents, who you’ve yet to listen to, who are facing a limiting of their options and an associated major hike in fees once this legislation is put into place.

When I spoke to this bill in the previous session, I mentioned my own personal experience with day care decisions. I told you about my young son Murphy, who is at the J.W. Gerth YMCA—and I really can’t say enough about the good work they do down there. It wasn’t an easy decision for us on where to put Murphy; it isn’t for any parent. You’re entrusting others with the care and protection of your child, and that’s a difficult choice to make, but for most of us, it’s a choice that we have to make. When we do so, it’s important that we have the information we need to make that choice, and the assurance from government that it will be responsive and active, should concerns arise or enforcement become

necessary. Again, that hasn't been the case, of course, with the local YMCA. We and Murphy have had a great experience and look forward to his brother Lincoln following him in the coming months. Of course, we do have to send Lincoln in December to a home care provider to bridge that gap between 12 months and 18 months, when the YMCA can take him. The other option, obviously, was to bring him to a smaller in-home day care in the neighbourhood with a family member or friend.

In a way we were lucky to have a number of options when it came to our child's care so that we could weigh the pluses and minuses and come up with a decision that best fits our needs. Of course, that decision, again, was the YMCA, and we've never looked back.

But there is a concern, and we've all seen it in our emails, during constituency meetings and in our local papers. There is a concern that many, specifically in our rural communities, won't have these options if this legislation is passed in its current form. The concern is that many unlicensed day cares would be shut down and parents would be forced to look further afield and at much more expensive options that may be completely unaffordable. What then, Speaker? Well, I'll tell them what then. The parent, now facing limited and unaffordable day care options, seeks out care that this legislation has driven underground, only adding to the problems caused by the current lack of oversight and enforcement, setting the stage for further tragedy.

I think many of the concerns raised by the current writing of the bill could be dealt with if the government was prepared to engage in real consultation with parents, of course, and with the providers to ensure a well-thought-out and workable bill that maintains child care options while ensuring the safety and well-being of our children.

I'll leave it at that, and I hope to finish my remarks in the two minutes subsequent.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm very happy to speak to the member from Leeds–Grenville and the member from Kitchener–Conestoga in their comments about Bill 10 and the changes that the government is planning to bring forward to our child care system.

I've had my time speaking to this bill, and I raised my concerns at that point. I really hope that the government was listening, because when it comes to inspections and when it comes to ensuring our children's safety, I'm not exactly sure that Bill 10 meets those needs.

The member spoke of four children dying within a seven-month period. That was due to the lack of consistency in inspections and making sure that our children were safe. The government heard complaints and the ministry had complaints regarding these providers, and yet they failed to act on those investigations. I believe that by the end of 2013 we had only 54 inspectors. They're planning on adding only six to that list. Yes, they will be specialized inspectors, but the inspectors that were currently there were not able to keep up with the

job. The Ombudsman completely uncovered that, talking about the lack of tools to be able to enforce that, to make sure that we were acting on those complaints. If they had acted on the complaints, we would have saved children's lives.

I think it's absolutely critical that we make sure we get it right when we come to committee for Bill 10. Six inspectors isn't going to cover it. We need to make sure that they're putting proper funds into the enforcement levels of our child care sector.

It's absolutely critical that we get it right. I hope that we can work together right across this House to make sure that we have the proper tools in place to do just that.

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's a pleasure to be able to speak to this bill.

I have many young families in my riding of Etobicoke Centre who are seeking child care options. I know that one of the things that's top of mind for them as they do that is their children's safety. It's also their children's future, ensuring that we have a child care system that's providing a strong foundation for them into their future.

Mr. Speaker, since 2003, child care funding has increased from \$532 million to close to \$1 billion. That's a 90% increase. This is a government that takes child care very seriously. Licensed child care capacity has grown by nearly 90,000 spaces since 2003, and that includes more than 22,000 new licensed, non-profit child care spaces since 2005. When we talk about the availability of child care options, I think this demonstrates that this government is committed to increasing those options and that those options have been increased in the licensed sector. That's why we also introduced the Child Care Modernization Act. If passed, it would modernize child care.

I would like to highlight that the Office of the Ombudsman undertook a comprehensive review into how the ministry responds to complaints about unlicensed child care providers. The recommendations put forth by the Ombudsman are helpful advice and have informed this legislation. That's why we introduced the Child Care Modernization Act. If passed, the legislation would expand the Ministry of Education's powers to support compliance and strengthen oversight of unlicensed child care settings, again in the spirit of making sure that we ensure our children's safety.

The last thing I would say is that the regulatory changes that we are proposing are as a result of extensive consultation with our partners in the child care sector. This is a government that's consulting with the child care sector, and broadly.

This is a bill that will ensure the safety of our children and oversight over unlicensed providers, and we are consulting broadly.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to comment on my colleagues from Leeds–Grenville—Steve Clark—and Kitchener–Conestoga—Michael Harris. I also want to do

a shout-out to my colleague Garfield Dunlop from Simcoe North. He has done a great job.

His biggest concern with this bill overall is that there has not been consultation. It has not been talked about with those independent child care operators. What my colleagues have brought up is, there's an awful lot of opportunity here to do things for the benefit and safety of children. We're concerned that there are going to be very limited options available on behalf of kids, parents and those child care operators—very few affordable options.

The Association of Day Care Operators of Ontario has raised concerns to the Ombudsman with regard to the report that was released. They're urging "further caution from the government and legislators on arbitrary passage of Bill 10 ... without further consultation on its long-term impact." They have very specific concerns about what could be happening. It's not going to prevent illegal day-care centres from operating, but it "could push many licensed child care centres into closing, thus eliminating much-needed, compliant and safe child care spaces."

Their concerns are that it could force the closure of licensed child care centres that have been serving their communities for decades; give government officials the ability to revoke a child care centre's licence without due process and with no real way to appeal the decision; prevent new licensed child care centres from opening; reduce the choices parents have—my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga referenced that with his own children—about what's best for their children; it will do little to address the problems around unlicensed daycares; and could result in 140,000 fewer child care spaces.

The minister has said, "Trust me." Sadly, after gas plant fiascos, wind turbines and Ornge issues that we've faced with this government, "trust me" is a little thin at this point, particularly when we're talking about our greatest asset, our most cherished, prized asset: our children, the future of our great country and our province.

What are they afraid of about going out and talking to the community? Some of the members have suggested that this is a dog-and-pony show, which is totally inaccurate. We need to be out there consulting, listening and doing what's in the best interests of our children.

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

1400

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise today, on behalf of the people I represent in London West, to respond to the comments that were offered on this bill by the member for Leeds–Grenville and the member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

I also, of course, want to acknowledge my colleague the member for Hamilton Mountain for her advocacy and her foresight in writing to the Ombudsman to request an investigation into the adequacy of the protection that is offered by the province of Ontario for children in unlicensed child care operations.

Her triggering this investigation was a result of the tragic deaths of, I think, at least four young children who died in unlicensed daycare centres over a period of just seven months. This is something that, absolutely, as legislators and as a province, we need to act on. We need to address it and make sure no family has to suffer the enormous grief that would happen in those kinds of circumstances.

Our concern with this bill is that it doesn't really address that issue. The bill doesn't address the fact that the ministry has been unable to respond to complaints that are lodged about overcrowded and unlicensed daycares. We know that the ministry did not respond to 25 of the 448 complaints that were launched in the 18-month period before little Eva died. We are very concerned that the bill does not augment the inspection capacity of the ministry to the level that is necessary to respond to these concerns as they are reported by the ministry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Kitchener–Conestoga for his reply.

Mr. Michael Harris: I would like to briefly thank the folks who chimed in on my colleague from Leeds–Grenville's and my remarks: the members for Hamilton Mountain and Etobicoke Centre; of course, my good friend and colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound; and, just recently, the member from London West.

While we do understand that the intention of this bill is to fix a broken system that has so much at stake, there are still so many voices out there that are calling for us to listen. I think of the YMCA proposal that came out of the From Conversations to Action document.

I think too of our Montessori schools that are concerned about the possible changes that will impact advances they've made in early childhood education. I've actually had the opportunity to visit our local Sunshine Montessori School, doing great work in Kitchener. I've heard from many, many of the parents, who are also concerned about this bill.

And I think of the literally hundreds of emails from unlicensed child care providers who are sounding the alarm bell over the impact that blanket licensing legislation will have on their ability to continue servicing the community.

Of course, from the hundreds and hundreds, if not thousands, of parents—I know the great work that my colleague, our critic Garfield Dunlop from Simcoe North, has been doing on this file. He is hearing from those parents who are pleading with us to ask the government to continue to listen, to not ram this through.

Before we consider passing Bill 10 into law, I do think there is a lot we can learn from those on the front lines, from parents facing life-altering decisions and certainly from the Ombudsman, whose report is a vital warning against lack of ministerial oversight, attention—and just simple management of the file they were given to look after.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity. I'll leave it at that.

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

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm pleased to rise and weigh in on Bill 10, the Child Care Modernization Act. I will be sharing my time with my colleague from James Bay.

Child care, as we know, is key to the safety and well-being of children across this province and is a crucial piece to having a strong and robust economy. Child care is one of the most significant pressures facing young families, and parents are often left worrying about having access to care, the high cost of care and, of course, the safety of their children while they are being cared for.

According to the Ontario Ombudsman, there are 1.8 million children in Ontario aged 12 and under. He estimates that 396,000 of them are enrolled in licensed child care and 823,000 are enrolled in unlicensed child care.

He goes on to state that in 2012 there were 274 complaints received by the Ministry of Education about unlicensed child care, and in 2013 that number jumped significantly to 526 reports of concerns.

There are a number of problems with child care and how it's delivered in Ontario. We've all been made aware in this House and across the province of the very unfortunate situation of the deaths that we've had while children have been in care. When we last debated this bill, when it was being debated under the number of Bill 143 this past spring, at that time we had had four kids who had died in unlicensed child care in the past seven months. This, of course, prompted us to contact the Ontario Ombudsman to investigate the delivery of child care in the province. His report was just released on October 22 of this year.

It was really quite a scathing report. In his remarks he made during the release of his report, he stated that presently there is only one rule: Unlicensed operators can't care for more than five unrelated children under the age of 10, not counting their own children. Other than that, anyone can set themselves up as a daycare without requiring a licence or meeting any standards or qualifications.

He went on to state: "As lax as the rules are for unlicensed daycares, they were barely being enforced by a bureaucracy that shied away from inspections and investigations and preferred to use soft tools of encouragement instead...."

"Many of the problems date back years, but were compounded in 2012 by a botched transition of the daycare system from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to the Ministry of Education, which took it on along with the government's full-day kindergarten" initiative.

He went on to talk about some of the other key findings, along with the systemic problems that the Ombudsman identified in his report.

Interjection.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I think the member from Timmins-James Bay is very excited to weigh in on this,

and I understand that. If you could just give me another six minutes, I would certainly appreciate it.

Along with the systemic problems the Ombudsman identifies in this report, he mentions sloppy, inconsistent complaint intake practices and an inadequate complaint tracking system. He mentions that ministry guidelines are not being followed, inspections are delayed or never done, and that staff is untrained in conducting investigations or on the legislation they enforce. Again, this is awful stuff. There are poor inspection practices, careless evidence gathering, and the failure to involve or educate parents about daycare standards and facilities that are not in compliance with them. Again, a very scathing report.

This bill is widely regarded as the government's attempt to overhaul child care legislation to both stabilize the sector following the implementation of full-day kindergarten and address concerns over safety and oversight of unlicensed child care.

It repeals the Day Nurseries Act, which was implemented in 1946. I don't think anyone can argue that it's definitely in need of a review. It does a number of other things. I just wanted to quickly mention some of those other changes that it seeks.

It seeks to establish a duty for unlicensed child care providers to disclose to parents that they are unregulated, and to keep a record of this disclosure. Receipts must be provided free of charge to parents.

It creates a duty for employees to report imminent threats to the health and safety of the children in care. It outlines powers for inspectors, but as the member from Hamilton Mountain mentioned, despite the regulation and the clarifying of some of the standards, there aren't enough inspectors to go around the province to actually enforce some of these things.

It goes on to prohibit individuals from providing care if they've been convicted of offences under the act. It allows licensed home child care providers to care for up to six children, two of whom can be under two years of age, or up to 12 kids, including four under age two, if two adults are working together. It goes on to amend the Education Act to require school boards to provide or have a third party provide extended day programming for students up to grade 6 on all regular school days. Those are some of the big changes: again, the larger group sizes, as well as those extended day programs that will have to be offered by schools.

1410

The fact is, though, that, for years this Liberal government has been underfunding child care, leaving municipalities to pick up the tab just to maintain some of their existing services. Some of the key problems are the lack of spaces and the long wait-lists for subsidized spaces. There is a regulated full- or part-time centre-based space for only 20% of children in Ontario under age five. As of 2012, Ontario had 4,922 licensed child care centres with only 276,000 spaces. What's most glaring is the lack of infant spaces, and that's really the greatest challenge. We have at least 98,000 infants competing for just 10,000

licensed infant spaces each year. So we have 10 infants and only one space. That's that ratio, and that's horrible.

The bottom line is that we need to ensure that families have access to affordable, safe, regulated child care, that the enforcement has teeth and is effective. We need increased oversight and regulation. We need to address the fundamental problem of underfunding, and ultimately we need to commit to building a system of licensed, not-for-profit, affordable child care that meets the needs of families. This is an initiative that my federal NDP counterparts have taken up. They propose to deliver a \$15-a-day national child care program that is much needed across the country.

In Ontario, we have an opportunity to take the lead. We are looking at some fairly significant changes here, and these changes don't go far enough. In Ontario, child care can cost families \$70 to \$80 per day, and that's about \$20,000 per year. I know, especially in north-western Ontario, the wages aren't such that we could support that. In Ontario, we pay the highest rates in the country. Again, Ontario should be taking a lead role and use this opportunity to shape something that will help Ontarians now.

My concern in Kenora–Rainy River is that there's already a large and very serious shortage of child care spaces. As I mentioned, Bill 143 is the first broad examination of child care legislation that we've seen in close to 30 years, but despite that, I disagree with the minister's remarks that she made on October 22. When she was doing her lead, she referred to this bill as “comprehensive” and as having woven together “all the strands” relevant to this issue.

I think there are some very important concerns that have been raised that need to be considered, such as an adequate number of inspectors, addressing negligence in care, ensuring that those who provide the bulk of our care, i.e., the unlicensed care, are able to do so in a way that is regulated and safe for children, but also continues to enable and allow home-based child care providers to continue to bring this important source of income home every night.

So rushing through this, especially through a time allocation motion, is a very huge mistake. There are already very real and valid concerns that need to be addressed, including the most serious of all, and those are deaths in our system. We need to take the time to hear those concerns from all across this province, not just here in Toronto, as has been mentioned by other members. We need to bring this to committee, travel with the committee and make sure that we are hearing from people again across the province.

I'm hearing concerns in my riding like from a woman by the name of Helena who thinks that this is just outrageous. She thought it was outrageous that we were going full steam ahead back in the spring, but now I can only imagine how upsetting this is. She said, “They are trying to pass this, and it can't happen. It was hard enough to find child care in Fort Frances and now they want to introduce this bill? Yes, something needs to be

done, but this is not the answer to the problem.” We need to make sure, of course, that these voices are being heard.

If this passes as is, we will likely lose child care spots in the north—and again, we already have a critical shortage.

It is incumbent upon us to recognize that new isn't necessarily better or perfect. We have to take our time and we have to get it right, because families across this province are trusting us with their most precious and valuable assets. We owe it to them to review this legislation carefully and ensure that no other children are lost while being cared for.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is a perfectly good Liberal bill for Liberals, I must say, because Liberals really have got a knack for being able to say one thing in a bill and making it look as if they're doing something great, wonderful, the best in the world, the best in the universe, the best of all time, but not doing anything to really advance the needs of citizens in our communities from one end of this province to the other.

The government purports, by way of this bill, to fix a problem that's in daycare. Agreed. I think there are some regulatory changes that have to be done that are mentioned in the bill in order to deal with some of the tragedies that we've seen at unlicensed, unregulated daycares across this province. But I've just got to say that this bill is not going to do a heck of a lot for creating daycare spaces outside of this place, the Legislature of Ontario. Thank God there are cities like Toronto that are making some investments in daycare in their own municipalities by using provincial dollars—I get it. But the province is not leading when it comes to making sure that across this province there are viable options when it comes to not-for-profit daycare in communities from Kenora to Cornwall and from Sarnia all the way up to Moosonee. We don't have those options.

I just have to say that this is perfect, perfect double-speak on the part of the Liberals when it comes to saying one thing in the title of the bill, making it look as if they're doing something and they're being progressive, but what they're doing is allowing more private daycare in this province and not putting an emphasis on creating not-for-profit daycare spots across this province.

Thank God the federal NDP proposed, as we did here in Ontario some years ago, that we go to a Quebec-based model. At \$15 a day—it was less expensive in Quebec, but those were the days then. The Ontario NDP, under the leadership of Howard Hampton some years ago, suggested that particular idea, put it forward, made it an item going into the Legislature, and unfortunately it was not picked up on. Let's hope that our federal cousins, the federal New Democrats under Thomas Mulcair, have more success.

I can tell you, there's not one person in this Legislature who is not affected by difficulty of access to daycare. I look at my own family. I've got four grand-

children. I've got two who have gone through the not-for-profit daycare services in the city of Timmins and are now in school. The option of going into the not-for-profit was difficult because there are long waiting lists. There's a limited number of spaces. If you don't get a space, and mom and dad have got to work, what are you going to do? You've got to go to a private system or you've got to go to *mémère's* place, or you've got to go to the neighbour down the road or an aunt or an uncle or a good friend.

As for Ellisa, our third granddaughter, she's still in the daycare system, but again in the private. Why? Because the public has not been an option because it has not been available. Our youngest one was just born a month ago, so it will be a while before she gets into daycare.

But I would just say that there are not options for parents to opt in for not-for-profit daycare services across this province. If this province and this government were saying, "We're prepared to move in that direction," I can tell you, my colleague from Hamilton Mountain and my colleagues from across this caucus would say, "Yes, let's do it. Let's look at ways of making the investments that are necessary in a prudent way, within the fiscal realities that we have here in Ontario, to be able to give options to parents to opt in to regulated not-for-profit child care across this province."

Kathleen Wynne—I should say the Premier—and the Liberals love to talk the talk: "We're progressive. We're open. We do all wonderful things for wonderful people." But when it comes to actually doing something, they are really helping their friends in the private sector before helping the people they should be helping, which is families across this province trying to access daycare.

I hearken to a point my colleague from Kenora-Rainy River made, and she's right. The government is time-allocating this bill, which is a real shame, because it would be beneficial to have this bill as a way to have a discussion on daycare in communities across this province. I wouldn't argue, as the House leader for the NDP, that it has to go to every community in Ontario, but certainly we can pick a number of communities and we can say, "Let's find out a snapshot of what is going on in this province, or what's not going on in this province, when it comes to daycare," and then bring that back to this Legislature so that we can decide.

1420

I remember when I first got elected, our government had decided that we would make a pretty massive investment in daycare, so we were investing in and creating not-for-profit daycare centres as options for people across this province. From Cornwall to Kenora, from Sarnia to Moosonee, there was something going on when it came to not-for-profit daycare spots being increased and offered to parents across this province.

At the time there was an ideological difference between the Conservatives and Liberals against the New Democrat not-for-profit model. Both the Liberals—I think they were showing their true colours back then—along with the Conservatives said that we need to make

sure that we create an option in the private sector. My point is this: Dianne Poole, a member of the Liberal caucus at that time, which was the official opposition, had decided that she wanted to put forward, in committee, what was called at that time a standing 123, so that a committee can travel outside of this Legislature to hear from the private sector when it comes to what should happen in the daycare sector. The NDP was not focusing on that at the time because we were focusing our energies and our efforts on making sure that we expanded the not-for-profit sector. We gave her that because we thought it was important to have that discussion. Yes, it was allowed under the standing orders, but the government said: "You know what? This is an important discussion to have across the province, and we should hear from all sides. We should hear from those who want to increase the not-for-profit sector,"—as we did—"but we should also hear from the private sector."

I remember hearing from various daycares in my riding, mostly at that time private because it was mostly private daycare in my particular communities, who were really aghast that we weren't putting money in their pockets and that we were putting it into not-for-profit. We had said, "No, we're not going to do that. Our investments will go in not-for-profit, and we'll look at ideas that you may have when it comes to making your lives a little bit easier."

So yes, this bill should travel. I think this is a crying shame. We see Kathleen Wynne, the Premier of Ontario, following down the same path as Dalton McGuinty, former Liberal Premier of Ontario, and that is, "We're going to time-allocate everything in this place. Why? Because we can." Because it's too darned hard for them to sit down with the opposition and to figure out an agenda about how we're able to have certain bills travel to be able to do what needs to be done as far as the scrutiny that's necessary to make better legislation.

When I first got elected in this place in 1990, there was no time allocation. Members were allowed to speak as long as they wanted on a bill, and there was no time allocation. What that did is, it forced the opposition and the government to work together to figure out how to get the agenda of the House through. A government has the right to govern. The government has the right to pass their agenda. That's why they're a majority government. But a majority government also has to recognize that the responsibility of the opposition is to scrutinize and to give voice to those people out there who may have a different or a similar view of the government when it comes to a particular issue.

For this government to say that they're going to time-allocate this bill, as they're going to be time-allocating every other bill, is a crying shame, because what we've got is essentially no scrutiny on what is an important issue for the province of Ontario. We're not giving, contrary to what the Premier says, voice to the people of this province to come to a legislative committee somewhere in their community, somewhere in Ontario, and speak to the issue of daycare as it relates to them. All a

parent knows is not the regulations of what will or will not happen in the private sector daycare system; all a parent knows is, “I can or I can’t get daycare,” or “I can or I can’t afford the daycare that’s being offered to me.” This bill doesn’t speak to that. If we had an opportunity to travel, you would hear that. Maybe the government would then start practising what it preaches and would actually try to do something progressive for the people of this province, rather than yet again having a title of a bill that says something nice but, at the end of the day, helping your private sector friends and forgetting that the not-for-profit daycare sector needs your help—something that you haven’t done for a while, and something that sorely needs your attention.

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

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I want to thank the members from Leeds–Grenville, Kitchener–Conestoga, Kenora–Rainy River, Timmins–James Bay and the other members who have spoken to this this afternoon.

My wife and I are the parents of a five-year-old. For the last four years, we have experienced all the trials and tribulations of trying to navigate the child care system in this province, seeking out care for an infant, seeking out care before kindergarten and now, before- and after-school programs. To me, this is really landmark legislation. It’s a badly needed overhaul of a system that hasn’t really been properly looked at in decades. It’s going to put some badly needed teeth into the enforcement around unlicensed daycares to prevent some of the horrific tragedies that have occurred. Any parent or grandparent, or human being in this Legislature, will do anything they can to prevent that from happening again.

I’m also very heartened by the fact that there will be tools put in place through this legislation that make it easier for parents to get good information, through an online tool, about the daycare that’s available. That’s something my wife and I had the privilege of using in our community, because that was available. Now it will be available province-wide. It’s very important for parents to be able to find information about the daycare that’s available in their community.

I think it’s also extremely important that before- and after-school programs are now going to be expanded—a key part of the child care services we need in this province—and that this government is responding to the Ombudsman’s recommendations and enacting legislation to give force and effect to the recommendations of the Ombudsman.

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I think we’re hearing some things going round and round here. We are not supportive of the bill in its present form, primarily because—I mean, it’s very simple: About 800,000 children in the province have independent daycare. They have not had a say in what this legislation means. There has been no consultation; absolutely none. The agencies, of course, have all been consulted with. The ministry brags about

their program of consultation. But the people who look after about 75% of the children, from infant to 12 years of age, have not been consulted. A couple of my colleagues today mentioned that they’re not getting any complaints at their constituency offices. Why? Because the people don’t know about it. That’s why.

That’s why I’m completely in support of the comments made by the member from Timmins–James Bay about travelling the bill. We’re not talking about going to every little town, but we are talking about having a couple of weeks in the winter recess and possibly getting to areas like Thunder Bay, possibly Sudbury or Timmins in the north, Windsor, Kitchener—some of those kinds of communities.

We are going to have rallies regardless—we’ve had a couple already and there are others planned—because we’ve got to get the word out to the people. They’ve absolutely got to find out about this, because it’s going to have a negative impact not only on the young people—the daycare spaces that are not there for them—but on the pocketbooks of all those moms out there who are helping babysit a couple of kids. That will have a negative impact. The government seems to ignore that, and what the economic downside of that will be.

So, we won’t stop on this. I can’t believe they would even consider time-allocating this. But believe me: I’ve seen them do a lot of worse things. It was no problem for Kathleen Wynne to travel to China when she already had the deals made before she went over there, but it’s a big deal for this committee to travel around the province. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to remind members that we refer to other members by their riding name or by their ministerial name.

Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I’m very pleased to be able to comment to my caucus members, the member from Kenora–Rainy River and the member from Timmins–James Bay.

This is a really important bill. We’ve heard and we’ve seen, in the last few weeks since we’ve been back, a lot of time allocation, and I’m really concerned that that could quite possibly happen with this bill. I know we’ve definitely heard rumblings that that’s going to happen. I think every member in this House should be standing up and talking about the importance of child care in their areas.

We hear in the north that they’re already struggling to find licensed child care. We know that pretty much close to 80% of child care in this province is in the unlicensed sector. So, we don’t have enough licensed spaces, we don’t have affordable child care, and currently in the old legislation, we don’t have safe child care. We need to ensure that we get this bill right, that we know, when we drop our children off at child care in the morning, that we’re going to pick those children up safe and sound at the end of the day.

1430

There's a lot in this bill, but nothing that's going to ensure that we're getting the inspections done. There's nothing forcing the government and the ministry to make sure that the inspectors are showing up on time. We heard from the Ombudsman that they were sloppy, that they were inconsistent when they were dealing with complaints and issues, and that they didn't have enough work hours to make sure that they were getting out to those child care facilities to act on those complaints.

I think that we definitely need to make sure that the government is working with all members of this House, with the people of this province who are providing this service, to make sure that we get it right.

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

Mr. Arthur Potts: It does give me great pleasure to comment on the remarks from the members from Timmins–James Bay and Kenora–Rainy River.

We would agree, I think, the member from Timmins and I, that this is not an issue in this bill about allocating more money towards a non-profit daycare centre. That may be a further discussion we need to have. This bill is essentially about keeping our children safe. It's a regulatory measure where we're going to put the rules and practices in place to ensure our children are safe. We're expanding the number of spaces in licensed programs and we're giving inspectors the tools they need to ensure that our children are kept safe by putting proper rules and regulations in place.

It's about issuing new administrative penalties—up to \$100,000 per infraction—if the daycare space, licensed or unlicensed, isn't being safe. It's about increasing the maximum penalty for legal offences from \$2,000 to up to \$250,000. This is about keeping children safe. I want us to be very clear about this.

For us to consider taking the bill across—we would love to have the debate at the right time with the right bill, to go across the province and have committee hearings and discussions. I'm glad to hear that the member opposite, the House leader, is going to sit down and negotiate, but it looks like the members opposite want to take every bill across the province, which is totally impractical. On bills where there is such widespread agreement on issues, it's not necessary. I look forward to them sitting down with our House leader to find those bills which are important to take and get the input from the north, from the west, from the south. We respect that input and we look forward to it, but this just isn't one of those bills.

The members have identified numerous areas where the past has been lacking. We are now in a situation to rectify it, and we urge all members opposite: Support these administrative changes to make sure our licensed and unlicensed daycare spaces are safe and our children are kept safe.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments.

I return to the member for Timmins–James Bay for his reply.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just say, yet again: There's no question that there's a need to do something with unregulated daycare centres. That, I think, all of us agree with.

The question becomes: What is it that this government is doing? They're trying to pretend that they're doing something that's really going to be ground-moving when it comes to giving parents the ability and the option to choose a daycare centre somewhere near the spot where they happen to live, that allows them to have some kind of option.

But we all know what has happened with this Liberal government. They have done almost nothing when it comes to supporting—they don't have a not-for-profit daycare strategy in this province. The city of Toronto has done so and has made some investments—why?—because the province has given them some money. But this province, this government, has not put in place a policy of trying to find a way to shore up and expand the not-for-profit sector.

We know that it's an issue because, in communities across Ontario, every member in this House—be it a parent, a grandparent, an aunt, an uncle or the neighbour of a child—knows of somebody who has had a struggle to find access to, first of all, a regulated daycare spot, but, more importantly, a not-for-profit daycare spot, because those spots are used up pretty quickly because there are not a lot of them out there.

Again it's a question of doublespeak on the part of the Premier. The Premier and the Liberals are notorious for saying one thing in the title and doing something completely different in the actual details of the bill. The title is great. You're going to do something in order to fix the lack of regulation in the unregulated daycare sector. Fine; we don't have a problem with that. But this is not going to give parents from Kenora to Cornwall, from Sarnia to Moosonee, the additional options of being able to find a place to get their child or their grandchild to when it comes to a regulated daycare spot somewhere in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and one-half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: No further debate, Mr. Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You should be ashamed of yourself, Naqvi.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Member for Simcoe North, please withdraw that comment. I would ask the member for Simcoe North to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Withdraw, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Stand up.
Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I withdraw, Speaker.
The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you.
 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

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 30, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, 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 8, 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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When this bill was last debated by the House, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo had the floor, and I understand she has 29 minutes and 12 seconds remaining in her presentation. I recognize the member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'll try to get it just down to that last 12 seconds.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to stand in this House once again to debate the value or non-value of Bill 8, the Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, 2014.

I have to be completely honest, just put it right there on the table: I have a really hard time trying to contain my disdain for a piece of legislation like this. It's an omnibus bill which contains 11 schedules, all of which have little tidbits of value but actually don't accomplish the goals for which they've been set out.

Last Thursday, when I had the privilege of standing up in this House, I talked primarily about the pseudo-compensation framework—that's what I'm calling it these days—which pretends to put a hard cap on broader public service executive salaries. We've had so many examples to date, over the last 12 years in particular, where executive salaries have continued to rise. The contracts that are negotiated between government agencies and this government are excessive.

When you have an executive, for instance, of the Pan Am Games who clearly had cost overruns, where there were serious issues of quality control and the integrity of the proceedings for the entire Pan Am/Parapan Am Games was called into question for very good reasons by the opposition parties, for that person to leave with a compensation package deal of almost half a million dollars was crazy. I mean, it was such a slap in the face to

the people of this province who are struggling day in and day out.

Bill 8, under the reflective schedule, does not commit to a hard cap. It does not clearly indicate which executives in the broader public service would fall under the purview of this legislation. It is purely window dressing and public pressure, and yet it's contained within a piece of legislation which has some important pieces around accountability. But it doesn't have the teeth, it doesn't have the mechanisms in place to actually, truly be accountable—in fact, even transparent.

One of the issues that for us is completely and utterly non-negotiable is the integrity of the so-called patient ombudsman. I'm referring to this ombudsman as an imaginary ombudsman because they do not have the powers to actually protect patients.

It's a common theme. Why bring forward a piece of legislation which does not accomplish the goals for which it was set out? Last Thursday—and I'm going to give you a very quick overview. There are 14 very good reasons why the patient ombudsman, as illustrated in this piece of legislation, will be ineffective.

1440

Very quickly, it's appointed by cabinet and not the Legislature. The ombudsman, as portrayed in this legislation, is not an officer of the Legislature; instead, the patient ombudsman will be an employee of the health quality council. I want to interject very quickly, because I saw this great quote from the Ombudsman who said—in fact, the Ombudsman has fired something of a shot across the bow. He welcomed the creation of the patient ombudsman while emphasizing that his office has oversight over the Ontario Health Quality Council who, in turn, have the responsibility for the creation of the patient ombudsman. He would be all over the new ombudsman's mandate “like a dirty shirt,” and we wish him well in that. But it shouldn't come to that. You shouldn't have the Ombudsman having to watch very closely the goings-on of the patient ombudsman when there are so many issues in the health portfolio in the province of Ontario.

Just last week, thank goodness, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, the midwives of Ontario and the Canadian federation of doctors came here and said that medical tourism is a huge issue in this province, and yet there's no plan in place. The Minister of Health stands up and says that it's just not true. You can say anything, I guess, you want in this place and say it's not true, but we have evidence to counter that.

But going back to the patient ombudsman and why the proposal is so weak: As I said, it's appointed by cabinet; not an officer of the Legislature; no set term of office, so that if this patient ombudsman becomes too critical of the government of the day, then that term could be closed down. Cabinet is authorized to revoke the patient ombudsman appointment at any time. So do we really expect the patient ombudsman to be critical of the government? “Boom,” you know, “too critical. Bye. You don't have a job.” It would be great if we didn't have examples of that already happening, but we do.

Not explicitly forbidden from holding other employment: We're actually saying in legislation that the patient ombudsman for the province of Ontario—this doesn't have to be their sole responsibility. They could have other jobs. They can be a newscaster. They can be a librarian. They can be the patient ombudsman on the side—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: A Ministry of Health official.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Not a Ministry of Health official. I hope that's not in here.

The patient ombudsman is also limited in scope to only hospitals, CCACs and long-term-care homes—not allowed to respond to patient concerns from air ambulance services like Ornge. My colleagues have already spoken at length about Ornge, and quite comprehensively—but this is an issue with this new, proposed ombudsman. They can't go into a retirement home. If you've been asleep for the last 10 years, you will have missed the fact that there are huge tensions in the retirement homes in the province of Ontario and that conflict has happened because you have children who have placed their parents at various stages of need and of care into retirement homes. If those retirement homes are driven by a profit agenda, then what they have been promised at the outset is not what is delivered in that for-profit home. You've seen dietary requirements not met. You have seen hygiene requirements not met. They have been promised this compassionate and loving setting, and when the children of the parents who are in that home come into that setting, they see anything but a caring and compassionate place.

These are seniors who have built this province, and yet this patient ombudsman is not able to go into those settings and ensure that there is a level of quality of service, a level of dignity, a level of integrity. It's really quite something.

They also cannot go into homes for special care or out-of-hospital premises like private clinics. We've just heard this morning that there has been a 31% increase in private clinics in the province of Ontario. We just heard this morning that one out of every seven of those clinics falls well below the standards of care that we would expect. So if there was ever a reason to have someone be able to have that oversight to go into those clinics, it would be now, especially with the accelerated privatization agenda of this Liberal government. Now they're not even being sneaky about it. Now, they're just saying, "You know what? We're not going to support public health care anymore in a comprehensive, transparent, accountable way. We're just going to let it come in on the side."

It's like Scopes "R" Us in the parking lot. If you need a colonoscopy and you can't get into a hospital because their hospital budgets have been cut—they've been flat-lined now for three years, which is essentially a cut. Now, if you can't get a colonoscopy—you have a family history and you are scared, and with an aging demographic, this is not an inconceivable situation—you can go to one of these private clinics, where the evidence shows that those colonoscopies are done faster, with less

oversight, without the precautionary medical oversight put in place. And some of those patients end up in public care anyway because the private clinic did such a shoddy job.

This patient ombudsman can't investigate that. But that's okay by the Liberal government. You've put something into place, and you take your chances. It's like Russian roulette in the private health care system for the people of this province.

The patient ombudsman will need to facilitate cooperation amongst patients and health care sectors. In contrast, the provincial Ombudsman compels cooperation from government organizations because the Ombudsman Act has real teeth. This person does not. This person does not have the power to do the job that you are selling to the people of this province.

Finally, the ombudsman is not allowed to make recommendations to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Really; this is actually in the act. The ombudsman cannot make recommendations to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care following the conclusions of any investigation. It can only make recommendations to hospitals and CCACs and long-term-care homes.

So all this person can do is put a band-aid on a little problem. But those little problems become big problems for the broader public health care system because if you try to save money right now by offering a very quick, for-profit medical treatment service and that person develops complications—as the research shows that they will do—then they end up in the public health care system, and it costs us more. Privatization is not good value for the people of this province. In fact, it costs more. It compromises the entire goal of a public health care system.

I think last Thursday I went on at length about how strongly I feel about the lack of oversight for the patient ombudsman. There are advocates in hospitals. They do very good work. They try to mitigate some of the damage that has actually happened because it's a patchwork system of health care in some places. And people need advocates because it's a complicated system; it's actually not very simple for people to use.

Those were the areas that I focused on: the non-existent oversight and public sector pay caps—the no cap, pay cap piece of this legislation; and the lack of power to actually have a patient ombudsman who could actually serve the people of this province. I thought I saw some people listening at the time, but I could be wrong, for sure.

Today, I want to focus on the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. There hasn't been too much mention about this. A lot of people may not know how important the provincial advocate is for children in the province of Ontario.

I had the distinct pleasure of having some dealings with this office when I was president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, particularly on First Nation, Métis and Inuit youth issues, certainly in my role at the school board, when I was fighting for greater re-

sources for students with special needs. School boards are struggling. This is a reality. They're struggling in the north, they're struggling in the rural areas, and they're struggling in the inner cities to deal with special-needs students in the education system.

I first came to actually know the provincial advocate when I was dealing with a brave young woman named Shannon Koostachin. She was fighting for a school in Attawapiskat. The member for that riding, Charlie Angus, read something that I'd written in the *Toronto Star*, and he reached out, and we pulled the Ontario Catholic Teachers Association, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Association, ETFO—we pulled the non-First-Nations education advocates into the fold, into the circle. We raised our voices collectively to fight for a stronger and equal education system for First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students.

We were largely successful in shaming the federal government into doing what they said they were going to do. If you ever have the great misfortune of actually having to deal with what is now—it was INAC; now it's aboriginal and northern affairs—if you ever have the great misfortune of having to deal with that level of government on an issue that's so laden with discrimination and racism on issues of equal rights of education for First Nations children in this country, it's an experience that actually changes you; it really does. So we reached out, of course, to the provincial advocate, because all children fall under the purview of the provincial advocate. Quite honestly, they have done some very good work in moving forward an inclusive agenda to ensure that all voices are heard on this issue.

1450

Some people have said to me, "What are you going to talk about today?" I said, "I really want to talk about the advocate for children." They said, "Well, you're a finance critic; you're a Treasury Board critic. Maybe focus more on the money." You know, there are lots of opportunities to focus on the money and how this piece of legislation, which is not transparent, which is not accountable, will affect the final dollar. But you can also make a really good case, both a social policy case and an economic case, for offering equal opportunity for children in this province, to offer compassionate care, to offer caring opportunities, be they with the CAS, with school boards, with health care or with nutrition. You can make a good financial case for doing the right thing early in the life of a child, so that you actually don't have to spend much more down the line. It's the upstream philosophy. It's not a philosophy this government particularly believes in, but it's something that I feel strongly about.

Bill 8 has, under schedule 10, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth—or lack of powers relative to other provincial children's advocates. This is the issue at play: Other provincial advocates in this country have certain powers where they can protect children; unfortunately, in the province of Ontario, the provincial advo-

cate has done a lot of work with very little resources and very little powers.

Obviously Bill 8 is, as I mentioned, an omnibus bill; it has these 11 schedules contained within it. But prior to Bill 8 coming forward as this somewhat ominous piece of legislation, the provincial advocate weighed in on what was formally Bill 179, Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act. I'm just going to read from their report of what they said at that time about this piece of legislation: "While the proposed amendments are an important first step in enhancing safeguards of children or youth in Ontario, they fall short of the protections available to young people in almost every other Canadian province."

So, on the broader plan, Ontario, one of the biggest provinces, the province that has the most children, falls short in the grand scheme of things. They go on to say that their concerns about the proposed amendments are threefold. There is a discrepancy between the stated intent of the proposed amendments and the actual powers given to the advocate's office—this confirms our perspective. The new powers only apply to a select group of children within the mandate—this is obviously problematic. And the proposed powers fall short of what is available to the Ombudsman of Ontario and all the other provincial child advocates offices in Canada in exercising their statutory function.

Why bring forward a piece of legislation that is not going to meet the goals of protecting children or advocating for children. I mean, where does that fall in the grand scheme of your priorities? I know what the press release says. I know that you've packaged this up under the guise of accountability and transparency, but if it doesn't work, why put it on the floor? Why bring it to your colleagues in this Legislature? It has to be frustrating for some of you over there to see that this schedule, which had its original flaws under Bill 179, is exactly the way it is now under Bill 8.

Even though the provincial advocate and people from across the province—people with the real lived experiences of not being able to protect children—came forward with amendments, they're not reflected. So you didn't take the opportunity to make this schedule under Bill 8 stronger. And I have to question—

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Can you tell that guy to be quiet?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes. I need to be able to hear the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, so I would ask the members to respect that.

I return to the member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you. It's an important issue.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Be quiet. Go have a coffee or something.

This is a big problem. The advocate is prohibited from investigating various matters, including matters that are eligible for review or have been decided by the Child and Family Services Review Board. The problem is that all

complaints from a person receiving a service from a children's aid society are eligible for review by the Child and Family Services Review Board, while the advocate's office would be allowed to conduct a systemic investigation into a matter that is eligible for review by the Child and Family Services Review Board once the processes under the Child and Family Services Review Board are completed.

"To make it abundantly clear," in the words of the child advocate, "individual complaints about a children's aid society made by children and youth are excluded from investigation by the advocate's office." The very children who have been victimized in many ways in their lives, the children who are most vulnerable, the children who live on the margins, the children whose trust—there has already been a huge breach of trust in their lives. Those voices are not to be listened to by the provincial advocate. It's hard to believe that whoever crafted this piece of legislation would leave out the voices of children.

We have evidence—and I have this quote on my desk; it's from page 4 of the throne speech by the Liberal government—that says that you will put evidence above partisanship. Well, I have the evidence. The evidence from the provincial advocate says that he needs to be able to act on the voices of children who have been abused, whose rights have been violated, whose trust has been broken, and yet the provincial advocate has no right to fully investigate systemically.

You can't talk about the children's aid societies in the province of Ontario and not know that that is a system that is broken. We have known this for a long time, which is why we have called for full oversight, all the powers that the Ombudsman would need to correct, to systemically change and rebuild and strengthen a system of caring for children.

There are good people involved in children's aid societies across this province; there are very good people. They are so frustrated by the bureaucracy, by the red tape, by the priorities that come from this government because the Liberals have fully embraced a top-down and centralized method of correcting or owning or downloading their philosophies onto everybody, from municipalities to school boards to children's aid societies to hospitals, for that matter—although they seem very reluctant to weigh in on the medical tourism that hospitals have embraced. But this is an issue that we're going to continue.

Aside from highlighting the lack of powers relative to other children's advocates, Ontario's advocate remains alone among the country's provincial children's advocates in not having the power to compel information from service providers, institutions, governments, and public bodies that pertain to the advocate's mandate. You might as well just give him a pair of handcuffs and say, "Go out and do your best," because all advocates in all other provinces in this great country have that power. In Alberta, in British Columbia and in Saskatchewan, the children's advocates have the ability to review any information that the advocate deems necessary to exercise

their powers and perform their duties. The Ontario advocate in the great province of Ontario does not. This continues under this schedule, even though the provincial advocate weighed in and gave constructive criticism and meaningful amendments to what was then Bill 179, but this government has made no efforts whatsoever to change or alter or rebuild this piece of legislation.

Under the schedule in Bill 8, the children's advocate is restricted from investigating in any other area of their mandate other than children's aid societies and licensed homes who have service agreements with the CAS. What does this mean? It means that the children's advocate cannot look into unlicensed homes, even though we know that they are a growing phenomenon. In Kitchener–Waterloo, because there have been cutbacks, because budgets have been flatlined, there is a growing and emerging trend in unlicensed homes for children. It's happening in all of your ridings. You could just walk around your neighbourhood and you would likely be able to find one. But this provincial advocate—he or she—cannot go into that home to make sure that those standards are being upheld. What does that say to you about how this government values children? Where do children fall in the grand priority between travelling to China and privatizing and selling off hydro? Where do children fall in the grand scheme of things?

1500

This Ombudsman says he cannot look into the children's mental health system. This is the huge issue. Right? There was a 12-year-old little boy who took his life because the system failed him. The children's advocate should be able to systemically look at every door that was closed in the face of that family. He should be empowered to actually act on behalf of this child who took his own life. Mental health affects every single one of us. The stat is 1 in 5, but when we were advocating for our provincial mental health advocate at the Ontario public school boards, the trickle-out effect of mental health issues in this province—you can argue it from an economic perspective, you can argue it from a financial, an upstream perspective, but really, at the end of the day, we are talking about changing and altering the way that we see well-being: mental health and physical health as one. This culture of well-being that has been talked about for quite some time by this government has been just that—it's just been talk.

Just to recap: The advocate cannot look into the children's mental health system. The youth justice system—I mean, we have been standing in this House and raising these issues about the inequities and the lack of resources when you send youth into an incarcerated justice system. And what happens there? Just as I was elected, one of the first places I went was the jail that Ashley Smith was kept at. The two issues are connected: the justice system and mental health.

I got a tour of the facility and we talked about a lack of resources. We talked about what the justice system is trying to do in the face of a lack of resources. I saw the cell where Ashley Smith took her own life. It will always

be with me. I take it with me everywhere I go because that's the responsibility that I have as a member of provincial Parliament: to not forget, to not turn away, to not ignore the circumstances that are facing the youth in the province of Ontario. The provincial advocate would probably feel the same way. I'm sure that he does. But this piece of legislation won't strengthen his position. It won't empower him to address the systemic issues that face not only the education system but the health care system and the youth justice system. Finally, he's not even able to advocate for those who are in homes, or services for blind or deaf youth.

You have to understand the frustration. The frustration is real, because you had an opportunity—even if you wanted to bury it under the guise of public sector and MPP accountability and transparency, you could have actually made it stronger. You could have done the right thing. You could have made sure that the provincial advocate had the resources to actually do his or her job. And it has to be a calling because it must be an exercise in frustration to be in that position, to have that title, and not to have that power.

I'd just like to summarize: This is a public relations exercise. This essentially is a piece of legislation which the Liberal government is using to squeeze the Conservatives and the NDP and say, "You know what? Look. We're different now. We're different. We are going to put these measures into place so you will forget about the exorbitant salaries and the buyouts to the broader public service at the executive level. You're going to forget about the gas plants, forget about Ornge, forget about the lack of oversight in the health care system."

We now have this piece of legislation that pretends that accountability and transparency are actually a priority, when I've given evidence to the contrary. I've given evidence to the contrary on the broader public sector salaries, on the patient ombudsman and on the provincial children's advocate. You can't dispute it. The legislation is weak. It was designed to be weak. It's designed to be weak with intention, and it doesn't do what probably many of you on that side of the House want to do. Yet it's before us. It's too big a piece of legislation.

There are accountability measures that we support, of course. Our expenses should be posted. I have no issues with that. We live in the public arena, so parts of our lives are open for everyone to see. We live with that and that is fine. But what we can't live with, what is not negotiable, is to put forward a piece of legislation which pretends to protect patients in the face of an accelerated privatization agenda on health care and that pretends to protect children when it does not do so. So we cannot support this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for your time.

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

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I would first of all commend my honourable colleague from the third party on her passion

and I guess you could say dedication to this front, but I must say, my endorsement of her remarks stops there.

I have to just question a number of different things that she said. For example, she's already attempting to discredit and essentially talk down the office of patient ombudsman and his prospective powers before the thing is actually created. This is quite remarkable. As a physician, I can tell you that as it is rolled out to the community and more individuals will have access to a complaints mechanism beyond what is existing—whether it is, for example, through the college of physicians and surgeons or the college of family physicians and their various specialty boards, to actually make physical, live, interactive complaints with an individual assigned with regard to hospitals, long-term-care homes and community care access centres—you would think that would be something that the NDP would support.

I'm not sure if they're not supporting it because of their commitment, which they may or may not follow through on, of the \$600-million further reduction to the budget of Ontario, as was presented not too long ago in the election. But I would say it is a little bit questionable. The NDP seems to have a little bit unusual focus. Either it's a spend or it's a decrease. You might want to unify some of your thinking on that.

I can tell you, though, as well, you were sort of going after the issue of colonoscopy and complaints at individual or supposedly privatized colonoscopy clinics. Let's just back up for a moment. This government has done more to put forward the issue of colon cancer, its screening, mandatory letters and family physician incentivization to deal with colon cancer than any government in the history of this country.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: My pleasure, and just a couple of comments.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo started off by talking a lot about compensation and sweet deals. I just want to remind the listeners out there that are watching today that the NDP, for two consecutive budgets, propped up the Liberal government to allow most of what we're dealing with today. All those negative impacts out there in our province were supported by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and her party. We have to talk with some principle here and ensure that we're always on the same track.

I do agree with her from the perspective that there are a number of acts affected here. It is an omnibus. We have great concern. There are pieces of it that we actually think are good in there. Like most pieces of legislation, if we can have discussion, if we can have proper debate, we can find amendments. We'll bring some positive thought processes to a lot of these types of things and ensure that it is truly a bill that is going to serve the people of Ontario.

One of the key concerns I have in here is that the Treasury Board president has not costed savings or expenditures even for this bill. Again, it's one of those

things that sounds good in a sound bite. You throw it out and the public says, “Oh, they’re really working on this.” Yet a week ago, this very same government, actually, if we’re talking about ethics, would not allow Laura Miller and Peter Faist to be brought in front of the legislative committee to actually hear the true truth about the cost of those gas plants.

This morning, I brought up the concerns from the Ornge report and that the Minister of Health of the day was actually rewarded for taking no action on that file for two years.

So this is the other type of legislation that we’re concerned about. They come out with a sound bite. They make the public believe that they’re doing wonderful things. At the end of the day, what are going to be the ramifications? What are going to be those negative impacts that will negatively impact the great people that we’re given the privilege to serve?

There are a lot of things in here that we need to review. We want to make sure that it goes to committee and has full and proper consultation, not like the bill we previously debated where they’re not taking it to the province of Ontario and listening to the people. Mr. Speaker, there’s lots of work to be done with this bill yet.

1510

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I listened intently to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. What I heard was a very meticulous recap of some of the points of the bill—the fact that the patient ombudsman really isn’t an ombudsman, that the real Ombudsman has concerns, and in fact we’re the only province in Canada that doesn’t have real Ombudsman oversight of our health care or MUSH sector.

She went into the advocate for children and youth and how the advocate himself says that this hasn’t gone far enough and that, in fact, much more needs to be done and that he is not given the powers he needs to do his job efficiently and effectively for the children of our province. Surely, the government would have consulted with him and with the real Ombudsman before drafting this piece of legislation. Clearly, they haven’t.

She talked about the omnibus aspect of this bill—more to the point, as she said, the ominous aspect of this bill, because there is some. It truly is Orwellian when you title a bill one thing and then proceed to do something else with it. I’ll talk more about Orwell in my section later.

She talked about the tragedy of Ashley Smith. I had corrections officers in my office not too long ago. Ontario corrections officers don’t get any mental health training at all. They would like some, thank you very much. They would like some training like their federal counterparts get, and that’s only two days.

This is a government, again, that purports to do one thing, as you’ve heard. As she said many times, this is not a bill to actually achieve transparency or accountability. This is, in fact, a public relations exercise to try to

pretend to actually afford accountability and transparency. I give her great thanks for her meticulous research.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I’m pleased to respond to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. I agree with my colleague about her passion; I have to congratulate her on that. I don’t agree with all of the things that she has said in debate here today.

In particular, I would like to say a few things about the patient ombudsman and the role of the patient ombudsman. She talked about systemic problems and the larger exposure of things that exist in our health care system, which, actually, in question period, we do every day, and in debate we do every day here. We have some role and responsibility in oversight.

There is also a very important part of an ombudsman’s role that has to deal with people’s specific issues and problems inside, in this case, a hospital, a community care access centre or a long-term-care facility. I, myself, believe—and many of us know this from our offices—that the thing we can do most immediately to correct a situation, to help a person, to help an individual with a problem that they have, is the best thing for us to do. There are challenges with everything that we do in government. It’s very difficult to get everything right all the time, and I would argue that I believe that this patient ombudsman will be effective and will be able to address people’s individual problems inside a very large, big, complicated system.

Again, I appreciate the member’s remarks and the ability to respond to her.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. We return to the member for Kitchener–Waterloo for her reply.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. He raised the past around budgets. Of course, I will respectfully remind him that they said no to budgets before they even read the budgets. We came to this House; we tried to make things better, which is what we’re actually trying to do. That’s what this debate is supposed to be about.

I will say to the member from Etobicoke North, who took great exception with the description of the privatization of colonoscopies: The research is out there and the evidence is very clear. Presidents of hospitals are now calling them Scopes “R” Us. There is definitely a lack of quality to those procedures, which I think we should all have a shared concern about.

The member from Ottawa South raises an interesting point. Yes, of course it’s important for a patient to have an avenue to express their frustration and to complain, but imagine how frustrating it would be for that patient to then realize that the person they complained to doesn’t have the power to actually change anything.

That’s the point about this piece of legislation: that it is, by and large, window dressing. It’s not effective. It’s insufficient. In many respects, it’s entirely misguided or, even worse, self-serving. If you’re going to craft a piece

of legislation—and there are 11 different schedules in this bill—at least make an effort to actually try to do some good with it.

The patient ombudsman has great weaknesses, and I've already listed those, but on the children's provincial advocate: This is something that's doable. I realize that there are some costs associated with doing the right thing around this legislation; perhaps this all comes under the guise of page 244 of the budget, which says that this government is going to reduce every ministry except for education, children and social services, health, and justice by 6%. Mike Harris cut those budgets by 5% and he was vilified

So that's the context and that's the issue.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's my pleasure today not only to rise to speak to Bill 8, but I'd also like to make some remarks, as I have not yet made my maiden speech here. Like the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, I've had two elections and haven't had a chance to say a few things about my community. In order to be accountable to them, I would like to say a few words, and I ask for your—

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Indulgence.

Mr. John Fraser: —indulgence to do that. I will stay on topic. I do want to speak about this bill, but I would like to get this out of the way so that I won't be thinking about it anymore.

I would simply like to begin by thanking the people of Ottawa South for giving me their confidence twice in 10 months. I am proud to represent our community. It is an honour and a privilege, and I commit to them to work hard for them in our community and here at Queen's Park.

Ottawa South is a beautiful, diverse and welcoming place. Its people have come from all over the world—over 140 countries—to raise their families; in our 46 schools, there are 80 languages that are spoken. We are a model for the world.

We have a beautiful community, with beautiful green space like Hog's Back Park, Vincent Massey Park and Grasshopper Hill. The historic Rideau River runs through Ottawa South.

Our community is home to world-class health care, like the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, the General and Riverside campuses of the Ottawa Hospital, Ottawa's regional cancer centre, the University of Ottawa med school, CHEO's and Ottawa Hospital's research institutes, Roger's House, Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre, and St. Patrick's Home. There's a wealth of health care in our community, and we're so very fortunate.

It's a very special place, and it's a place I've called home my entire life. In order to be accountable, I'd like to say a few words about my family. I was born in Ottawa South; I went to school there; I got my first job there; and I met my wife, Linda, there. We raised our three children—Kirsten, John and James—there, and

now they are starting their own families in Ottawa South. We're expecting our first grandchild early next year, and just recently discovered that there will be another one to follow after. I consider myself to be very fortunate.

Linda and I met when we were in high school, and we've been together since then. She has always been there for me. She's patient, kind and fiercely partisan—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: And beautiful.

Mr. John Fraser: —much more so than I—and I would not be standing here without her support.

Our three children—Kirsten, John and James—continue to be what I am most proud of in my life. My dad always said that the next generation is an improvement on the one—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Didn't you do your maiden speech in the last round?

Mr. John Fraser: No, I didn't. I never got a chance. The first speech—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm sorry to have to interrupt, because I appreciate what you're saying, but I am compelled to remind the member that we're discussing Bill 8. He has got to bring his comments back to Bill 8.

Interjection: He wants to be transparent about his family, Speaker. Come on.

1520

Mr. John Fraser: Okay, I'm being transparent about my family. If that's how we—

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I am going to speak on the bill. I will ask for unanimous consent to do that, but if we can't get that then we'll have to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa South, I think, is seeking unanimous consent to give, in effect, a maiden speech and provide some personal comments. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. John Fraser: I'll be very short.

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: I'll talk about the bill, thank you very much. I appreciate your comments and your generosity and good spirit.

My dad always said the next generation is an improvement on the one that came before. He was certainly right in their case. My dad, Jack, passed away last April. I was very happy that he was able to see me elected in my first campaign, and it was very hard to be without him in the second campaign. He was a boundless source of grace and kindness who taught me how to think critically and about the importance of communicating clearly and using words with precision, which apparently I'm still working on.

My mother, Mary, a nurse, taught me by example about hard work, perseverance and faith. She's our family's rock.

My sisters—Missy, Stephanie and Cara—I can't thank enough for the friendship and support they have given me, despite incessant teasing. I'm very thankful to their families for allowing them to help me over the last several years.

To my other parents, Lorne and Yvonne, my in-laws, I thank them for their love and support and of course, for Linda—also for tuning in every day to Queen’s Park. It’s good to know that at least somebody back home is listening.

To my nieces and nephews, Alexandra, Alan, Isaac, Rebekka and Maeve: Thanks for all your hard work on both campaigns.

To my campaign managers, Jackie Choquette and Lauren Kennedy: You’re great leaders. I was lucky to have you.

I have wonderful staff—Elise, Jeff, Fadi, Ally, Jason and Emmaline—whose hard work our community is well served by.

I would be here for the rest of the afternoon if I was to name all the people who helped me in both campaigns. Thank you for your trust and confidence.

The Ottawa South seat has been occupied by a number of people with tremendous records in public service, and I would be remiss if I didn’t mention them.

My predecessor, Dalton McGuinty, served the people of Ottawa South with distinction for 23 years. I had the privilege of working with him in our community for 14 years. I learned first-hand what public service is all about, and many other lessons that are invaluable today.

Before him came his father. Although his time was short, his eloquence, passion and wit left his mark here. Before him came Claude Bennett, who served the community for 16 years. Although our politics are very different, his service to our community is to be commended.

Mr. Speaker, I think that was all of seven minutes. Now I’m pleased to speak to Bill 8, the Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act. As members have mentioned, it is a very broad bill. It has 11 schedules, and it goes across government. This bill will make Ontario a leader in open government, and I’m very proud that my first private member’s bill, the Transparency in Members’ Expenses Act, is part of this bill.

I put forward my bill in my third week in this Legislature, and it was a really interesting way to get to meet all of my new colleagues. I felt strongly that, as members, we should be prepared to do those things that we were going to ask others to do; it is about leading by example. I believe that the inclusion of MPP expense disclosure is an important part of this bill.

As I have said, Mr. Speaker, this bill is broad-ranging—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: You lost friends over that.

Mr. John Fraser: I lost a few friends, yes. Well, not really. I think all of us here in the Legislature know that we are accountable to the people who elect us. I truly believe that there is a tremendous amount of good will in here. I’ve had the opportunity to be here for just about a year and have been on different committees and got to work with most members here. I do take to heart and believe all members when they say—I know they don’t agree with all parts of this bill, but they say, “We do want to be more transparent. We want to be more accountable,” because that’s what people expect. I don’t know if

there are any real estate agents or families of real estate agents here, but their mantra is: “disclose, disclose, disclose.” When all things are out there in the open, then I think it’s fair for everybody, and things, I would argue, are much easier.

One of things this bill does is, it strengthens oversight into air ambulance. In the interests of disclosure, I want to say that my name is on that report as a member of the public accounts committee. My contribution was two subs in the last session towards that in report writing, although I have to admit, to be transparent, I really didn’t add anything. It’s a very good report. A lot of hard work went into that report. Being exposed, as a sub, to that was to see the kind of work we do together. We’re talking about transparency and accountability because that’s what we do in here. That’s what we do in committee.

In the interests of disclosing again, my name is on the aggregates report. I, again, came in at report writing time, and I just wanted to make sure that I got that out as well.

As we were talking about earlier, it also creates a patient ombudsman. We have a large—it’s half of what we do in terms of the money that we spend—very complicated system that involves people. I very strongly believe that it is a unique role. As I said in response to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, I really believe in the efforts to help individuals with their challenges with government or inside large, complex organizations; it’s very important work.

As members, we know that we do some of that work right now. We know that we all get calls about things in the health care system, like community care access centres; things that happen in long-term-care facilities. We know that sometimes people don’t know who they can turn to when they have a problem. One of the mantras we have at the office, and I put in all our advertising, is: “We’re here to help. If you have a question, if you have a problem and you don’t know who takes care of it—I don’t care what it is, just call us. We’ll help you figure it out.”

I believe that a patient ombudsman is a very important step to ensuring that people know where they can go. I know that some hospitals have their own patient advocates, and I think they do good work. I think, however, that it’s important, to have consistency across the system, that we have this patient ombudsman.

It also expands the role and powers of the Integrity Commissioner not only of course with regard to MPP expenses but also with cabinet ministers, parliamentary assistants, opposition leaders and their respective staff. Until now, cabinet ministers and parliamentary assistants and opposition leaders—all of that was voluntary. This will put this into legislation.

It will also give the Integrity Commissioner the opportunity to review a greater number of agencies in terms of their expenses. I think this is very important. People want a transparent and open government. Going back to my private member’s bill, I believe we have to lead by example and, again, it’s important that that’s in the bill. It will also give her more registrar-like powers over lobby-

ists. That's very important. That's a very big concern in the public domain, that people aren't seen as having undue influence on the decisions that we make here.

Of course, it expands the powers of the Ombudsman to school boards, municipalities and publicly assisted universities. The Ombudsman has, of course, graciously accepted and wanted those responsibilities, and I'm pleased that we're doing that as well too.

1530

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo was speaking about the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. I heard her comments—and that's why we have debate. I look forward to continued debate on this.

Legislation is something that we all work on together. I know we have differences of opinion, and sometimes when we don't get our way, then it's a process. I think the process here has worked for a great number of years, and I look forward to discussing those parts of the bill as we go further in debate.

Of course, there's also the broader public sector and developing a framework around executive compensation—a significant problem for us, obviously, as a government that's looking at financial restraint; making sure that things are fair and equitable and that we have some control over our expenses, especially when it comes to that. It will also require the broader public service and many more agencies to disclose their business plans and other relevant financial information.

Mr. Speaker, we all come here to represent our communities. I really appreciate all of my colleagues giving me the opportunity to say a few words about my community. It was important, so now I can put that aside, and it's done. I really do very much appreciate that, and I know it is out of the norm.

I would like to finish by saying that I really do believe this is an important piece of legislation. I know it has a lot of schedules. I know it covers a lot of government and will require some debate. I do believe it's more than a public relations exercise, as the member from Kitchener–Waterloo described it. I don't think anyone in here lets anyone forget anything else, at least in my limited experience here. I believe it is a genuine effort to improve the transparency and accountability of our government, to make us a leader.

I look forward to continued debate this afternoon.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for your indulgence.

I'm very proud of where I come from. I'm very fortunate and I'm very lucky, as I'm sure most members here feel about their communities.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise and comment a little bit on Bill 8 today and of course make some comments on the member from Ottawa South. It's always nice to hear a little bit about the members' own ridings and about their election experiences. I'm sure it all ties in with Bill 8; as far as I was concerned, it did, anyway.

It's always interesting to hear a little bit about their perspective—because that's how all of us got here: through friends and family. We wouldn't be able to serve without friends and family in an ongoing business.

As far as the bill, Mr. Speaker, we support this, with recommendations for amendments, of course. We feel that there are always opportunities for improvement. I've been involved in some bills since I've been here, and those that I moved forward were certainly improved through amendments at committee. We see this as the same case, as well.

Our biggest concern with this bill is that it was never costed as far as any savings or expenditures to implement this bill. We have a big fear that the administration, the public service will grow because of this. That's a big concern. We won't see any cost savings if that happens.

Ethics, as we all know, can't be legislated. That's something you either have or you don't. Unfortunately, there have been experiences in the last years with this government—by the public service and by the government itself—where there have been opportunities to make the right decisions, but they didn't make those, so we have had Ornge and eHealth, along with a number of things. Will this transparency bill solve that? I don't think so, not alone. Ethics and integrity are something you do when no one's watching.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a pleasure to stand and make a few comments on words just uttered by my friend from Ottawa South, otherwise known as Linda Fraser's husband, soon to be known as pipi or zedo or grandpa or papi. His life is about to change, and change it will, because the first time the grandbaby gets that smile and the eyes start to twinkle and pipi or papi comes over, bang! The heart bursts with pride, family takes on new meaning, and the stuff that we do here in the House gets relegated to the back burner. So, John, you're in for good times ahead, sir.

It was a pleasure to hear him talk about his riding and about his achievements in Ottawa South. I know he used to work for former Premier McGuinty. It was a pleasure to hear the former Premier's name mentioned in the House, because seldom do we hear it these days. As you know, it's "the former Premier," or "the government formerly led by somebody else," not Mrs. Wynne.

Anyway, I welcome his inaugural address. I had to make mine during debate on the EllisDon bill, which I know we all remember well, here on this side of the House, anyway, which had its ups and downs for the government of the day.

His comments on Bill 8: I know he knows that we will disagree to some extent. I think his heart is in the right place, and he always speaks from his heart. He believes that it is about accountability and transparency. We have some issues with that and hope to bring those to the attention of all those who are listening. So thank you, sir, and thank you, Speaker, for your time today.

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

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak on Bill 8 today. But before I do that, I would like to pay tribute to my colleague from Ottawa South.

I've been following the career of this fine gentleman and he never ceases to amaze me. He's a very generous man. He has a lovely family, and I told him he forgot to say that he has a beautiful wife. Linda was always there for him; she's a big supporter. And he has three lovely kids. I went door to door with him in his riding, and you know what? I was kind of jealous—I don't know if it's the right term, but to see him—

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Envious.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Envious, yes; that's the better word. Envious. Because these two beautiful boys—one of them was his son-in-law and the other one was his own boy—were knocking at doors saying, "I am John's son," or "I am Mr. Fraser's son-in-law." They had this energy that you'd bring to the position. I was amazed. And then the two sisters—he is one boy with two sisters, and the sisters had nothing but praise for and they were so proud of their brother. So I think that Ottawa South is very, very well served, very well represented.

Ottawa South was always well represented, and John said it. It doesn't matter which stripe the MPP was holding. Dalton McGuinty was a great leader and I'm very proud to have served under him.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: I also enjoyed the presentation by the member from Ottawa South. I especially enjoyed the first part, talking about family and his part of Ottawa. I'm going to have to visit—was it Grasshopper Hill? Grasshopper Hill.

1540

I do spend a bit of time in the member's riding. My son is a constituent. I don't know what young people do in Ottawa at night, but I have got two grandchildren who just arrived in the last couple of years. Maybe there's not much else to do in the nation's capital. I don't know whether my son votes for the member or not. He works for the federal government. You never know.

One thing was pointed out to me: The member for Ottawa South, from this distance, has the same tie on as the member for Leeds–Grenville. It must be an eastern Ontario thing. I suppose that so many people work for government in the city of Ottawa that there probably is a tie factory there, and a suit factory, to outfit our civil servants.

The member did get down to business with respect to Bill 8 after he very successfully got our attention, and talked about MPP expenses and cabinet ministers' expenses and parliamentary assistants' expenses. I don't know how much impact that's going to have on a budget of \$130 billion a year. I don't know whether that's going

to help out very much as far as a projected debt four years hence of \$411.4 billion, but I will say: It's a start.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments.

I return to the member for Ottawa South for his reply.

Mr. John Fraser: There is some secret significance behind the shared ties today, but I'm not going to disclose it.

I'd like to thank the members from Sarnia–Lambton and Windsor–Tecumseh, the Attorney General for her kind remarks, and the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. I've already said a few things about the bill. What I simply want to say right now is that, again, I appreciate very much all of your kindness and generosity in letting me say a few words.

I really do love being here. Being born in a minority Parliament, now we're in the majority—there's obviously a difference, but it was interesting to come here. I'd never actually spent a lot of time in here. The one thing I learned that I didn't know coming in: Before you get here, you own your life and your schedule and you can run the show. But when you're here, people like the member directly across from me make sure that your life is organized in a certain way. I would like to thank him, too, for his generosity as a House leader. I know that he wasn't inclined to let me go on, but it was very kind of him to do that.

Again, I support this bill wholeheartedly. Yes, there are some things that we can do as we go forward and debate and go to committee. The great thing about this place is that there are 107 minds here. There are 107 people, multiplied by the people who work for us, multiplied by the people who work in government, who think about the things that are challenges for our province. In here, we try to put that all together, I think successfully. Some people might argue that we don't.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to speak today, Mr. Speaker, and to all of my colleagues for their generosity.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to start off by congratulating the member from Ottawa South. It's always a pleasure to do your maiden speech. Particularly I can refer to this: It's nice to see him doing it before his third year, like I did mine, Mr. Speaker. To the member, I'm glad you learned from me and got that on the record. Your family will be proud of you, and you will be proud of yourself when you go back and look at this later. So thank you very much. I thought you should have taken all of your time to talk about your maiden speech, to be honest.

As I said earlier, in my two-minute reply, Bill 8, the Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act—I think there are pieces of this that I like and I certainly welcome, but I do think there needs to be a lot more discussion and lot more debate and a lot more fulsome thought into what the ramifications of a bill like this are.

I do, though, want to start off by saying how ironic I find it today that we stand here debating the MPP transparency act at the same time that this government is facing a string of scandals like Ornge, the \$1.2-billion gas plant scandal and, most recently, the multi-million-dollar MaRS office tower scandal. How can you talk and bring in a bill about accountability and transparency in the actions that have spoken louder than words in the three years that I have been here?

Last week, we heard the Liberals refusing to allow Peter Faist and Laura Miller to appear before the justice committee in order to allow that committee to complete its work on the gas plants scandal. More importantly, for the people of Ontario to hear the real truth, to hear honestly what happened during that whole process—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to interrupt the member and remind all members of the House that the remarks have to be relevant to Bill 8. I would ask the member to bring his comments back to Bill 8.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do believe they are relevant from the perspective of transparency and accountability. I believe that transparency and accountability first and foremost are something we have to be front and centre with. We have to show action with our words and we have to ensure that when we stand in front of the people of Ontario, who truly are our court and our judge, we need to be doing that.

Today, we heard the Premier refusing to hold her Deputy Premier to ministerial standards and seek her resignation over the serious and fatal mismanagement of Ornge. How can you say, “I’m accountable, I’m transparent and I’m going to speak up and be transparent” when they deny those types of things? It certainly is putting to the test the public tolerance for ethical controversy. We need to ensure that if this act is going to be put in, they’re truly going to be more than hollow words, like many pieces of legislation the Liberals have brought forward in my three years, and ensure that this legislation is going to serve the people of Ontario fully.

I’m going to start off my remarks a little bit by talking about the concern I have that the Treasury Board President has not costed savings or expenditures for this bill. What are the ramifications if this is enacted? What are the impacts going to be for the people of Ontario? What are the fallout ramifications and maybe unintended consequences going to be, as we have so often when these things are rushed out?

It doesn’t surprise me in some ways. There are 16 actual acts that will be affected by this piece of legislation. It is an omnibus bill. When you have that much legislation being discussed in one bill, trying to be rolled through one bill, it really worries me, particularly with the track record of this Liberal government over the last dozen years on transparency and accountability and the things they have been able to sneak through. They try to put a lot of things into a bill, hoping that, maybe, we aren’t paying attention; we’re not going to catch all the nuances. But that is the job of the opposition and, of

course, my colleagues in the third party: to ensure we read every single word of these bills. We think about them and we start to wonder, “What will happen if this is enacted? What are the ramifications? What are the things that are really going to impact the people on the front lines?”

Mr. Speaker, it concerns me because they’ve done other acts similarly to this, where they’ve rammed them through very quickly and they’ve tried to ensure that the headline sounds good to the people of Ontario without really thinking of what the consequences are and what those implications are going to be down the road. Again, they’ve run a deficit. My colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk just referenced that by the end of this term, they will have a deficit and a debt of \$411 billion. I’m very concerned that a bill like this may be adding to that burden. What is going to be the cost to the taxpayers of Ontario who are paying the freight for all of us?

One of the concerns we have on this side that I need to have addressed before I would ever be able to vote in good conscience is that it’s likely that they are going to actually expand the bureaucracy, and another tower is going to be set up in a silo that is going to be unto itself, building another fiefdom. We see that way too often. We have concerns that there are towers being built in isolation that are building more and more jobs to shuffle paper.

The people of Ontario deserve front-line care and services; we’re seeing less and less. In my great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, we’re seeing less and less. Just a week ago, I stood in this House and shared with the people of Ontario that 60 people had their hydro disconnected just before we head into the winter season. That’s deplorable.

Part of that is because of the billions of dollars this government has wasted and continues to waste on scandals and things that are not providing benefit to the people of Ontario. When I see legislation like this talking about creating yet another whole bureaucracy, it worries me—not that there isn’t merit in some of the pieces that they want, but is there not a way we can do it with the existing public service? Is there not a way we can do it without creating yet another whole office of this magnitude that may, at the end of the day, truly force more paper shuffling and more accountability from the report writing? Businesses out there are telling me every day that the Liberal government has put in tremendous amounts of bureaucracy—unintended, uncontrollable legislation that is really preventing them from doing their jobs.

I want to make sure I stress in all of this that ethics cannot be legislated. Just because someone says, “I have a piece of paper and a document” does not mean that people are going to do the right thing, or do what is in the best interests of the people of Ontario. So I’m a little concerned that by just saying we’re going to put in this act—which again, from what I said earlier, is actually going to have an effect on 16 different pieces of existing legislation—that our world is going to be solved. I think what we want to see is action from this side of the House. We

want to ensure that the government actually stands up and walks the talk, truly, to do that. The Liberals have put accountability measures in place before and still, just as recently as the last couple of weeks again—we've experienced eHealth, Ornge, gas plants, and now the MaRS scandal. Putting a document in place isn't necessarily going to do that.

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I will give them credit for trying to bring pieces of legislation through, if they're going to actually start to address some of those concerns. But we need to ensure that the actual legislation, at the end of the day, is full-some, has had good debate and had a lot of input.

My colleague Garfield Dunlop from Simcoe North appeared earlier about Bill 10, the Child Care Modernization Act, for which they've actually taken the ability to debate away from us. They're not going to go out and tour the province, they're not going to ensure that the people of Ontario have a say, yet they're talking transparency. I'm a little conflicted. A little bit of hypocrisy, I believe, comes into my mind when I hear them talking about transparency and accountability, and they won't do those types of things.

There are 16 acts, which they're trying to put into one, that are going to be impacted. How do we make sure that those acts are not going to have unintended consequences? There is a schedule within the act, amendments to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. It says that the bill will ensure that there are measures in place to preserve the records in their institution in accordance with applicable laws, rules and policies. The second point of that schedule says that concealing, destroying or altering a record with the intention of denying the right under the act will be an offence.

I laud the intent, but it's a little challenging for me to really take it to heart when this government destroyed records under the gas plants scandal.

I have to put it on the record one more time: We, as the opposition, tried to bring Peter Faist and Laura Miller to the committee to be able to bring the true facts to the people of Ontario so we could truly get to the bottom of that. That is something we should still be debating in this House, as opposed to bringing in new legislation to try to address what they have not addressed, and that truly is their own backyard, their own accountability and transparency.

It saddens me that we would actually—I've sat through, seen that there were documents destroyed. That's unprecedented in the history of our great province. Again, a piece of legislation isn't going to stop that. Doing the right thing, having leadership that actually admonishes that and actually takes action to ensure that that will not happen and that if it does, takes action to ensure that the people who were involved actually have punishment provided to them—that is a way to deter this happening in the future.

A piece of legislation is only that. It's only a piece of paper that people can read and choose whether they're going to actually abide by. You shouldn't need legislation for things like that. It's a sad day in Ontario that—again, we tried to push that on behalf of the opposition. That is our role, on behalf of the people of Ontario: to get to the truth to ensure that the people who are going to be impacted most by that billion-dollar boondoggle—that billion dollars that was wasted that's not going to the front line of health care, that's not going to the front line of education, that's not going to the front line of the social services sector that I represent as a critic.

Almost on a weekly basis, I have people in to my office who are concerned with the programs and services that they're not getting. Just last week in the riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, I was advised that our victims services are going to be cut a significant amount, and yet they're mandated to provide that service. They've actually increased the fees to the victim services fund, yet there's less money coming to ridings like Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and a lot of my colleagues' across the province.

So it's a little bit hard, when I see legislation, to really, truly believe they're doing it with all of the best intent. The words ring hollow because of the actions that I've lived through in my three years here in this great Legislature.

Another schedule in there is the amendments to the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act, 2007. It says in here, "The Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act, 2007, is amended to add new investigative powers to the advocate. The advocate would be able to appoint a director of investigations.

"After the investigation, the advocate would make a report, provide the report to the person or organization it makes recommendations to, make the report public and, in some cases, send a copy to the Premier and make a report to the Legislative Assembly."

I'm concerned why that would be "in some cases." The Premier is the leader. That person should be getting every report—they should—so that they can't say, "Oh, I didn't know. It didn't come through my office." I can't understand why that would be put in there, this "in some cases."

I certainly would want to hear a lot more dialogue on what that means. I can't believe that a report of that nature, that is talking about children and youth, the vulnerability and the lack of things they may be receiving if we are not doing our jobs as well as we can, would not come to this Legislature. That is what we're here for. We are elected to represent the people, to ensure that we're looking at legislation that is going to benefit all the great people of Ontario, particularly our children and youth.

Those pages who sit in front of you and across this great Legislature and have the opportunity to come and serve—it's been great to have them here, by the way; I'm sad that it's their last week. I'm going to miss all of them. They've done a wonderful job here in the Legislature, as have all the pages in my time of three years, providing

great service. I think it's a great experience for them to witness and be part of democracy. And who knows? Many of them may be sitting in these seats a few short years away.

I really have a question. I can't understand why you would put in "and in some cases." That says to me that you're not truly wanting to be fully open and transparent, because perhaps you're going to choose which ones actually get to the Premier and perhaps to the Legislature and perhaps, by that very virtue, to the public. It hearkens back again to why the gas plants have been covered up, why that information has not been truly delivered in front of us. Things in the Ornge report: Again, I'm concerned that we're just trying to move on from there and pretend it didn't happen. We've put a lot of actions in place and the world is rosy now. Well, it's not, Mr. Speaker. Four people lost their lives.

My former colleague Frank Klees and I spoke on the weekend in regard to the Ornge report. Again, we talked about transparency and accountability, and the concern we share is that if the government does not take that report and truly put actions in place, they are absolving themselves from the true concern that is there—every transfer agency there. If we don't implement the reports that were, by the way, all-committee reports—that's where that report came from. All the committee unanimously supported that. If this government does not step up and do the honourable thing, do the right thing and implement those recommendations, there's nothing stopping Ornges from happening continuously across this great province, again to the detriment of our society and to those front-line services I hold near and dear.

I hope the folks at home and here in the Legislature, particularly the Liberals, are listening, to understand that we do have some concerns with parts of this legislation from that perspective. We need open and transparent communication so we can actually understand what that truly means. It really baffles me that you would say, "In some cases, we'll need to bring it to the Premier, and in some cases, we'll need to bring it to the Legislature." All of those types of things, particularly work that's done on behalf of children and youth by the provincial advocate—I believe, in my former critic role, I had a great opportunity to learn more about the role of the provincial advocate and what they do in their mandate to serve the children and youth of our province. It's great to see them able to have that ability and be even more hands on, if you will, in protecting our children and youth. But I think we need to understand why it would not be that every single incident should be going to—so the Premier cannot say, "It never got to me. I didn't know about it." We've heard that on the gas plants: "Well, it didn't personally get to me." Well, you were in cabinet. "It didn't get to me, personally, as Premier." Well, it came through your office.

In the Ornge concerns that I raised this morning, a number of things were brought to the Minister of Health and her senior bureaucrats, to her ministry, and again turned a blind eye to, and they hide behind that by

saying, "Well, I didn't see that letter. I didn't read that report." That's your job. As a cabinet minister, you have to be responsible. Whether you saw it or not, it's your ministry that has to be responsible.

Speaker, I'm going to move on to another one, the amendments to the public sector expense review. The bill is a compilation of amendments aimed at broadly increasing transparency. It increases the ability of the government to investigate the broader public service. The bill addresses the production of government records and documents to address the deletion of emails in the former Premier's office. There is an indictment that at least they've acknowledged what we've been saying all along, as the opposition, that this gas plant scandal, the worst in our province's history, unless MaRS becomes even worse—it's in a long line. We had eHealth, we had Ornge, we've got the gas plants. But what we're concerned with is that there were deletions.

The OPP, I believe, are still investigating that. I think that at some point what we, as the opposition, will be doing is asking for a status update from the OPP to see just where that—again, we don't want that to just kind of get swept under the rug. I believe many people on the opposite side are hoping this thing just goes away; they need to move on. They're trying to bring other bills in to take that off the forefront, Mr. Speaker, and we're not going to allow that. Because the people in my riding certainly ask me continually, "Whatever happened with that? Did we ever get to the truth? Did we really find out how that happened?" And equally importantly—not more importantly, but equally importantly—what are we doing to address that that can never happen again?

People in my riding, regardless of their political stripe, have said to me, "Bill, I can't believe that the government would actually delete information of such critical importance and there have been no repercussions." I don't believe anyone has lost a job over it. I don't believe anyone has even really been called on the carpet. I certainly do not believe, from anything I have been able to see in the House, that there has even been anything put in to ensure that that's prevented. Really, no one on that side of the House has truly stepped up and even said, "Sorry," to the people of Ontario. "We made an error—someone in our employ did."

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Again, we have been trying to get Laura Miller and Peter Faist, the two people we believe have the most hands-on, pertinent knowledge of that whole issue, to come forward and, under oath, tell us truly what happened. The only way we can put measures in place to ensure those types of things and that we truly have accountability and transparency is to bring those people in who have the knowledge, those people who were part of that process, those people who can tell us the absolute, undivided truth with no spin involved, no political machinations, to tell us what happened so that we can put measures in place. That's the job that we, as opposition and the third party, I believe, are entrusted by the people of Ontario to do.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, on behalf of my colleagues in the PC caucus, that we will not let this go. We will not let it be swept under the rug, because \$1 billion was wasted that is not going to front-line care, to those people who need social services. As I said earlier, because of the energy rates that are the highest in North America under this government—they've allowed our rates to escalate—they're driving manufacturing out of our province. We've lost 300,000 jobs. We're losing more and more businesses. The rates just went up again, increased on the Saturday of this past weekend, making them the highest rates in this great continent of North America.

When we're talking about accountability and transparency, we need to really be able to believe that the party opposite is truly going to make a change. Right now, they're still going down the same path. They're not acknowledging the Green Energy Act. Transparency and accountability come up there. They've taken away the ability for local municipalities, like those in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and across most of rural Ontario, to say, "We want a say. We don't want those turbines in our area." They have no right or ability, and the government just keeps snowplowing right past them and expediting to ensure that there's more of that.

When I hear the words "transparency and accountability act" from members opposite, I really have to challenge whether they're truly going to make a change, whether they're truly going to make a difference. I say it over and over again: A piece of legislation and a piece of paper do not change how people act; the principles they abide by—standing up under their leadership and saying, "We will address this. We will make people accountable. We will make sure that everything that happens is transparent and we can see it."

It's troubling for me when I see a piece of legislation like this brought out. When I've asked directly to the Premier and to cabinet ministers for very specific pieces of information, asking them a question here in this House, in front of the people of Ontario, I don't get anything other than a shuffle of the question and saying, "Let's move on. That's history."

As I've said before, I have very big concerns with a lot of this. One thing I do like in there is that the bill would provide whistleblower protection for persons who disclose information to an inspector, investigator, special investigator or the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. I really like that it's in there. It rings a bit hollow because we had whistleblowers come out within the Ornge concern. They brought things directly to our former member, Frank Klees, from Newmarket-Aurora, and nothing was done with that by this government opposite. They again just sloughed it off under the carpet, just tried to move on and said, "We've made changes. We've changed the board." You might have changed the people in the chairs; you didn't change the culture. You didn't change the ability for those people to step up and truly do the right thing. At the end of the day, what I still have not heard is one single acknowledgment of any

wrongdoing by that government, and we know there is, Mr. Speaker.

If you're going to bring a piece of legislation forward with transparency and accountability, stand behind it. Actions speak, as the old saying goes, much louder than words. Show us that you truly mean it, show us that you're going to be a different government and then we'll sit with you and we'll try to work on a piece of legislation that truly will serve all the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? The member for Windsor-Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. If I could, with your indulgence at this time, thank the great member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, not only for what he just said, but last Friday, he drove—or was it Thursday? It was Thursday. He drove down to Windsor—he talks so fast; he's an auctioneer on the side. He helped a fundraising group in Windsor, the Do Good Divas, raise \$65,000 at a charity auction, where they were auctioning off handbags and purses. They had a silent auction.

This Conservative member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound drove down to Windsor, did his auctioneering, and we raised a ton of money. I have to say, I don't know if it was because he left late or he got stuck on the highway—maybe he got a speeding ticket; I don't know. But he got there a little bit late so I had to stand in, if you will, and take my time to drag things out, and I had to auction off some of the purses myself until he got there. But he did an excellent job—so good a job, in fact, they told me not to come back next year, but they want the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound back next year. So I want to thank him for that.

I must say, I agree with a lot of what he had to say about Bill 8, because when we stand in this House and we hear "transparency and accountability," we expect that's what we're going to see.

Interruption.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I know that is not my phone ringing. I don't know where it's ringing, but it must be on the other side of the House, a certain cabinet minister in the back row, perhaps. Oh, too bad. Too bad for that member from Peterborough, not to mention any names. The ringtone was very accountable in that case, very transparent about where it came from.

Thank you, Speaker, for your time and your indulgence.

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to take a couple of minutes to talk about Bill 8 in regards to the comments from the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I'm not going to talk about anything specific in what he said, but just a general theme.

The theme is that this is an omnibus bill and we're rushing it through. It's amazing, because the House leader from the opposition was in municipal government when the previous Conservative government did omnibus bills every day. That happened all the time.

They talk about consultation and the lack of consultation. I remember when municipalities ran to hide from the fact because they were imposed amalgamations and imposed downloading. They talk about how we're not transparent and we're trying to rush things through. They were the godfather of those kinds of things. I was in municipal government when that happened.

They talk about making decisions that cost Ontarians money. Let's talk about the 407, a fire sale that nobody knew about until it happened. I know what it costs me the odd time I take it.

So they talk about things that this government is doing. Well, you know, we talk about lack of consultation. That's why we're here as members, 107 members that reach out to our communities and bring that input here. So the fact of landing in different communities, yes, is very important, but for every single item, I'm not sure that—if we have to go there, then we're not doing our job here, because I know I meet with constituents every week.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I just want to thank the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for his comments. I listened to his entire speech. I liked the tone, quite frankly. He spoke about the fact that we need more discussion and more debate.

Again, with this government, they say one thing and then they do something completely different. I appreciate the fact that the member brought up things like eHealth, Ornge, the gas plants, and the MaRS issue as well, because time after time, the government says that they're going to do something and then they do something completely different. That's what they've done with this bill.

Talking about openness and transparency always gets them the headline. You look into the throne speech, and time after time they use those words. They make people think that they are actually going to make good on their words. In the throne speech, they talked about letting the justice committee write its report and do its work, but yet when we agreed before the election to have two final witnesses, the minute this government gets back in the chamber, they forget about that. When you're in a committee and you talk about the MaRS lease agreements and the committee even goes so far as to say that because of commercial sensitivity they would deal with them in camera, the government members vote against that. Time after time after time, they say one thing and do something else.

When we talk about being fair and reasonable, I think having committee hearings is part of what's been going on in this Legislature since it began. With all due respect to the previous speaker, when he wasn't in this place for the last four years, he held committee meetings throughout all of his riding. That's all we're talking about. There are some bills that need some more debate. The government should make do and allow us to do that.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I listened intently to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. I didn't hear whether they were going to support it or not. There are some unpalatable parts of this legislation that I know must make them cringe—but they, in turn, also like the title. The title has some appeal for them.

What I did hear, though—and I will agree with one thing that the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound mentioned—was that there is some concern around the costing out from the Treasury Board side of the ledger. I would reference this piece of legislation. The context for me is that it falls within page 244 of the budget, which indicates that there's going to be a 6% reduction in every ministry, aside from four, going forward. So perhaps that's why—I've already shared my disdain for this piece of legislation. If you're going to write a piece of legislation, at least have it be effective, at least let it actually accomplish something and not just wrap it up in a bow that says “transparency and accountability” on top of it.

The member also, though, did mention that he lauds the intent around data protection. This obviously is an outstanding issue. It's a hangover, if you will, from the last Legislature.

We shouldn't forget that this government has moved into a privatization mode, especially around data protection. That's why you have the Guelph storage centre—\$350 million. The taxpayers of the province paid for it. It's only being used to 20% of its capacity. Instead, the government has opted to move to some consultants who are uploading data to the cloud. The cloud is less accessible, as opposed to being in a secure, government-run facility. So we are going to be watching that very carefully, as I'm sure the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound will.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnett): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: A pleasure—particularly, my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh, thank you for the kind words. I want to pay tribute to him and his wife, Gale, and the whole team who put on the stellar event down there. They raised \$65,000 last night. That's over \$400,000 now for health care and local charities in their communities. Kudos to you, Percy. The reason I went there is because Percy is a good guy who I do trust, who I do care about, and I know that when we work together, we can accomplish great things.

It's interesting; the member from Northumberland–Quinte West—I think he has a bit of Groundhog Day. He's going back to the last time he was here, talking about the PCs. But what he doesn't ever talk about is the \$10 billion in interest that government over there is paying, which isn't going to front-line health care, isn't going to front-line education, isn't going to front-line community services. That government over there is going to have a \$411-billion accumulated debt.

I'm going to ask you for transparency and accountability. If you do not slay that debt by the time the next election comes, will every single one of you resign your seat, that day?

Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Leeds–Grenville stepped up, and what he said, I think, really resonates in here. What he said is that we continually hear, in a number of pieces of legislation in the last few days we've been debating—and it's a trend that I've seen throughout my three years—the Liberals, sadly, come out and say one thing, and then do the exact opposite. They say they want accountability and transparency, but they bring in the Green Energy Act, which takes away every democratic right of local municipalities and residents, the voters, to have a say on whether they want wind turbines in their area.

We just had Bill 10, the Child Care Modernization Act. Again, they've now used time allocation to zip that through, ram it down our throats. They don't want to have consultation or a dog-and-pony show across the province.

What he's saying is absolutely true: You can't bring out a transparency and accountability act, a piece of paper that says those two words, and then do those types of things: not allow witnesses to come forward and actually be brought in front of a committee to have their say. They cannot do that.

Again, back to Ornge: They cannot come out and have a report and then not implement the actions for the benefit of people.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: As always, it's an honour to stand here and represent the constituents in the town of Tecumseh, in the city of Windsor, and bring their voices to this Legislature—one of 107 voices representing 13 million people.

Today, I guess, it's almost like a treat, not long past Halloween, to be able to stand here to make sure that the Liberals don't trick us by the wording of the bill that we're talking about here today.

Let me tell you a quick story. When I was elected August 1, a year ago, in the by-election, I was going door-to-door on the night of that election, pulling the vote. One of the last doors I knocked on was a woman who was a former Liberal, she told me. But she said because of all the gas plant scandals and all the mess that was going on, she thought the Liberals had lost their credibility, that they had lost their integrity, and she couldn't vote for them, but she would vote for me on one condition: that I would go down to Queen's Park and not forget where I came from and always maintain my integrity. That's what I'm trying to do. When I come here, I want to speak with integrity. I want to raise issues of credibility. I believe in transparency, and I believe that what we see in front of us today has very little to do with transparency or integrity or much of anything else.

I can understand the need for the Liberals to want to change the channel, to put a different spin on things,

because—with all due respect to the previous government—they went through a lot. They had the Ornge scandal. They had the gas plant scandal. They had the eHealth. Now this new government is having the MaRS scandal. There's a lot on the plate. When you don't want people talking about that which does not bring you respect, you try to change the channel, you put a different spin on it. With all due respect, I think we're seeing some smoke and mirrors here.

But, before I get into it, let me say right off the top, New Democrats on this side of the House firmly believe in accountability. We firmly believe in transparency. This omnibus bill lumps parts of 13 other bills or schedules together. I think I've got a list here somewhere:

- schedule 1, the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act;

- number 2, amendments to the Ambulance Act;

- amendments to the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act;

- schedule 4, amendments to the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability Act;

- the Excellent Care for All Act;

- schedule 6, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act;

- schedule 7, amendments to the Legislative Assembly Act;

- the Lobbyists Registration Act is 8;

- schedule 9 is amendments to the Ombudsman Act;

- schedule 10, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act; and

- finally, schedule 11 is amendments to the Public Sector Expenses Review Act.

Now, if you look at them—and just look at parts of them and parts of the wording. For example, if you look at number 1, the wording isn't "all executives" in the broader public sector; it's "certain executives" in the broader public sector.

The Ambulance Act: If you've done any bargaining, Speaker, you know the words "may," "shall" and "will" mean quite a bit of difference at the bargaining table. So if you will do something, shall do something or you may do something—and they may appoint investigators under number 2.

Number 5—why not just let the Ontario Ombudsman jump into the investigations on health care? I mean, the office is there. The experience is there. The need is there. Why are we coming up with a pretend, a phantom investigator or ombudsman with limited power? It doesn't make a lot of sense.

Number 6 is a real doozy, Speaker. I've got to tell you: add the wording, "the wilful concealment, alteration or destruction of records as an offence." Well, Speaker—seriously. That's a little like closing the barn door after the paper shredders and the document destroyers or the drive-by hard-drive deleters have all left the Premier's office. They're all out of the building. So now we'll put the wording in there.

1620

You talk about a gas plant scandal, and two witnesses—only two left to go, right? I see it as we've had 90 witnesses. I keep hearing the government House leader say, "We've had 90 witnesses; that's enough. Sit down and shut up." What I'm saying is, you've had 90 warm-up acts. I want the two headliners. I want to hear what they have to say. That's what I'm paying my money for. I'm here for the main act, not the warm-up act. God help us.

These are the two who know where the bodies are buried, Speaker. They can help us follow the paper trail. These are the two we've been waiting for. There are skeletons in the closets; they know whose closets. They know whose skeletons.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I need to once again remind the House of the importance of relevance with respect to the debate. I would ask the member to bring his comments back to Bill 8.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I thought the wording "add the wilful concealment, alteration and destruction of records as an offence" would somehow tie into: Let's get back to the offence of what happened when they destroyed the documents. Let's get the people in front of us to say, "I'm sorry"—somebody should apologize—"I'm sorry, but this is what we did. And these are the reasons we did it. And these are the people who told us to do it. And this is how we did it. And boy, did we pull one over on the people and the taxpayers of Ontario." That's what I thought this bill was about: changing the channel. Switching gears. Trying to take us back to wipe the slate clean to say, "It's all better now. We're different. We're kinder and gentler." And it does sadden me somewhat to know that new members of the Legislature have voted not to call those witnesses.

When I go door to door, when I go back to Mrs. Wilhelm's door, she'll say to me, "You've retained your integrity, but I'm a little bit worried about some of those new folks up there, who won't bring those witnesses forward. What do you think about that?" I'll have to agree with her, Speaker. I'll have to agree with her.

The title of the bill, An Act to promote public sector and MPP accountability and transparency—otherwise known as smoke and mirrors—or, if the government members would like, let me say it: a Trojan Horse title; not what it seems to be at all.

If you're talking about accountability and transparency—you know, Speaker, if you repeat a phrase enough times, maybe some people will actually believe it. As you know, you can fool some of the people some of the time. So the more you say "accountability and transparency," some people will actually believe they mean it. Mind you, most of the people—all of the people—on this side of the room wouldn't take it to the bank.

My friend the President of the Treasury Board, who's bringing forth this motion, in her opening statement said that they were going to build on the Premier's commitment to lead the most open and transparent government in the country—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Sometimes.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Sometimes. When the timing is right. Yes. That wasn't there. I'm reading between the lines, Speaker.

Then she went on to say that "the people of Ontario have a right to know how their dollars are being spent." Well, yes. We would like to know how the dollars were spent on the cover-up of the gas plant scandal, but yet we can't get there. We can't get the final two speakers, the final two witnesses, the main act to come to the concert. They want to prevent that, Speaker. Yet they say they're accountable and it's a transparent process.

They have this funny little thing called time allocation, where they want to limit the time that we can actually stand in the House and do our job, which is to hold the government to account. They want to limit the time we can do that. Yet they say they're being accountable and they're being transparent.

I don't know. I don't get it. There are only two of them left, Speaker. Never mind four more years; how about one more day? One more day of testimony in front of a government committee made up of members from all sides of the House to ask questions and get answers from the final two witnesses. One more day. It doesn't sound like a lot to ask for. One more day. But no, if they did that, they would be accountable. They would be transparent. But no, they don't want to do it.

We know that this bill was debated previously—parts of it, anyway—as Bill 179 in the last Parliament. My colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo said in her lead statement, "This is quite an interesting piece of legislation that the other side of the House brings forward, trying to address some of the long-standing issues that the Liberal government has had and still continues to deal with." So we're not all switching the channel.

If you start to read the bill more closely, you start to consider it a little bit crafty, with a title that's somewhat deceptive in its nature, somewhat suspect, somewhat circumspect—when you put it out there that you're going to be accountable and transparent, but you're really not.

On the face of it, of course, it's difficult to argue against what seem like major reforms which would make government more accountable and transparent. I've said it before, I'll say it again: I'm all about transparency. I'm all about accountability. There are 21 of us here in the NDP caucus, and we all agree with accountability and transparency. But there's much here to be wary of, and we're taking our cues from others who say the reforms here don't go far enough, or they work as barriers to true oversight. You can't help but stand with us and say, "Yes, there's something to this smoke-and-mirrors act." We've seen it before; I'm sure we'll see it again. That's why people in Ontario voted 21 of us in, in our caucus: to hold the government to account and to expose to the taxpayers of Ontario the actions when we feel they're not doing what they said they would do; they're not being as transparent or accountable as they said they would be. They want us to believe it, but it just doesn't seem to be helping.

Let me remind the House, as I'm sure others have done, that a lot that has been proposed in this bill started out, at one time or another, on this side of the House with New Democrats. New Democrats put forth a lot of these good ideas in one way, shape or form. The Liberals are taking many of our ideas, and good luck to them. If we come up with a good idea and they run with it, more power to them—particularly where it involves long-held NDP positions on capping salaries in the broader public service and greater oversight of parts of the MUSH sector by the Ombudsman. Of course, the “H” is out of the MUSH at the moment.

The current measures to achieve these objectives within Bill 8 are not effective. They're insufficient. We need more details. Some are entirely misguided, and some need more direction—or even worse, they're self-serving. There's lots of committee work to be done, that's for sure—miles and miles to go before we sleep, if you will. There's a lot of work in front of us here.

The prospect is that the substance of the act—the real meat and potatoes, as some would say—will reside in the regulations developed after passage. We certainly look forward to that, Speaker. If you take, for example, the capping of the CEO salaries, if the province was serious about controlling costs at the executive level, it would go all-in. It would double down and adopt the NDP's call for limiting annual executive salaries to \$418,000, twice what the Premier makes. Twice what the Premier of Ontario brings in seems to me to be sufficient for somebody in a public service job. Why not? Instead of that, senior public servants, senior executives of agencies are making millions, and on top of that, they get millions more in severance if they leave. That's money that could be better spent on health care and education, on hiring more people to look after the elderly and the sick.

Some people in this province are doing well, some are doing really, really well, and then some not so well at all. When a public sector CEO takes home more in a year than an average family earns in a decade or two, people feel like their money just isn't being respected. No one likes being disrespected. No one likes an arrogant CEO. No one likes an arrogant government. It's long overdue that we bring some respect to the taxpayer, especially when costs like hydro rates are escalating out of control.

1630

Stop blowing the horn, “We're putting in caps on senior executives,” because you're not. There's nothing in this bill—absolutely nothing in this bill—that talks about caps. There's nothing, nada, zilch. It's just not there. Just saying there will be at some point in the future doesn't make it so. It doesn't make it so. I don't know how many times you want to announce it, but it isn't so. It's not in here. As it stands, Bill 8 doesn't set hard caps, and the government should stop trying to convince the people of Ontario that it does.

It really boggles my mind. You're either accountable and transparent, or you're not. You either have integrity, or you don't. You either have ethics, or you don't. Let's stop the game. Let's put it in there.

I'm not entirely sold on the definition of accountability and transparency of this government or this bill. The definitions are out there, but the title of this bill just doesn't live up to it. I think it has a certain lack of substance, Speaker. It can be improved—it will be improved—at committee, I certainly hope. I believe the government has a lot of work to do when it comes to transparency and accountability. We keep seeing it all the time.

I think today in the House, it's convenience store operators day, or some wording to that effect. I met with three operators of convenience stores earlier today in my office, and they were telling me about some of the issues that they have to deal with. These are things that could be put in an omnibus bill and protected, but it hasn't happened. They represent 7,500 convenience store owners across the province.

When I met with them earlier today, they told me, for example, more enforcement of those who make and sell illegal tobacco would help. But they also talked about a more universal approach to enforcement on store clerks who are caught selling tobacco to minors. What this brings in is that some health units, which we will see will be dealt with in a certain fashion in this bill, go out of their way—if, for example, you own a convenience store and you train your staff, but two of your staff make a mistake and sell to minors over a five-year period, as the owner, you will lose your licence. You won't be able to sell tobacco anymore, and tobacco may make up 41% of your profit, sometimes more than 50%. Speaker, this bill does not address that.

But if you're the landlord of that building, after the convenience store owner leaves town because he's lost his tobacco licence, you can't even rent out that store, that space, to another convenience store owner because, for five years, there's a ban put on by the health unit. Some health units do that. That has to change. Those are some of the things that should be in an omnibus bill if we're going to correct legislation that truly needs some changes to be brought about.

I know it's hard for the people at home to keep following what goes on because we spread our debates over a number of hours and a number of days. I know others have talked about this bill; I know my colleague from Kenora–Rainy River is spot on when she said that “this bill is an attempt by this government to tilt the public perception away from that which the public presently has of” this government. That's right. There is a perception about the government that they're trying to change the channel on and switch gears to try to get people thinking they're really being transparent and accountable. In my opinion, they're not. I want to see them prove it at committee. I think it can be supported once improvements are made.

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

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I think this House always enjoys the slow, methodical, meandering fireside chat kind of presentation of the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

I think you've certainly earned your keep at the 5 p.m. reception of the Ontario convenience stores folks who are visiting us today. I think their issues perhaps are best dealt with elsewhere. Their main issue, it seems, incidentally, as I recall from my meeting with them, is to in fact sell alcohol and beer etc., in the local convenience store. That's a separate issue entirely, but I appreciate you—you seem to want to fold that into this omnibus bill as well.

Speaker, I have to say that this bill, named, as it is, the Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, with all of its various different components—you would think that various of my honourable colleagues opposite would support it. For example, my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh said that 21 of their members were elected to hold this government to account.

Well, I would respectfully, first of all, just remind you that the Premier was asked point-blank: If she were to return to a majority government, would we move on, for example, with the justice policy committee—by the way, which I chair—to move to report writing and recommendations so that infrastructure siting would be done in a more appropriate, efficient and professional manner, or would we continue the 90-plus hearings with, by the way, more than a million documents? She was asked point-blank.

Secondly, your own honourable colleagues who lost this election in Trinity–Spadina and Beaches–East York and Davenport, I think, were really on the wrong side of that particular issue. So when you say that you've been—we always, I guess, have to cede the moral high ground to the NDP, but I have to say that this government was elected and is doing what it said it would do.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to comment on my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh, Percy Hatfield. I think he brought a lot of very valid, good and well-thought-out thoughts to the table. You know what? I see this member not as someone who's holding fireside chats and ambling along. I see him as a member who actually holds the government to account, and they don't like it.

He used examples of destruction of evidence, and he reinforced that 90 witnesses were called, and that's a good thing, but they were the warm-up act. Where were the two lead acts? Where are the two people, Peter Faist and Laura Miller, that we, as well as the NDP, have called to come before that committee and truly get to the truth?

He used the term “smoke and mirrors,” which I think aptly describes accountability and transparency when it comes to the Liberal record that I've certainly seen here. It kind of reminds me—and I'm going to paraphrase a little bit from Abe Lincoln and the very credible Percy Hatfield. You can fool some of the people some of the time, some of the people all of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time. I think that's coming to fruition here when we look at these types of things.

When the government brings in a bill on transparency and accountability—and again, I go back to this morning, which was a prime example. I called on the Premier to ask the former health minister for her resignation over the way she didn't handle well the Ornge fiasco, debacle, and she turned a blind eye to that. She did not even acknowledge, really, the question. In fact, the reality is that the former Minister of Health is now Treasury Board cabinet minister. In essence, that's a reward. So you've taken a file like that and you've made a complete debacle of something that is about health care, is about the fundamental thing that most people watching and listening today care about, and that's their health care—and there was nothing there. There was no accountability on that file whatsoever to change, other than again saying we've changed some of the people in the lawn chairs around the table.

Mr. Speaker, that's not accountability and transparency. They haven't allowed that report to be implemented. What they've done is said, “We've tabled it. Thank you very much.”

We also had a Drummond report a number of years ago which they commissioned and didn't do many of the actions in.

So it's a little bit hollow. We need to see more, and until we do, we'll continue to debate it.

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

Mr. Joe Cimino: Thank you, Speaker, and through you, I appreciate the comments from my colleague and from others on this topic.

I'm new to the House, obviously, but what I've learned real quick is that you can't always judge a book by its cover. For example, we just went through a debate on fighting fraud and lowering auto insurance rates, something that the NDP have been pushing for years. What a great title, and the Liberal government saw fit to push that through limited debate. When you go through—unfortunately, a lot of people in this province won't go through the actual bill, but when you went through that, you saw that it was more about saving insurance companies money, and whether they're going to transfer those saved dollars to the policyholders, we don't know. But we saw that there was an elimination of the courts, for example, as an appeal process. There was a reduction in interest rates that insurance companies pay for claims that are won.

1640

This bill, again, sounds great. Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act: Who does not want that? We've been fighting for that forever. I fought for that at the council table. But again, the proof is in the pudding. Through debate, through public consultation, through this going through committee and not being rushed through, we, as a House, all three parties, can come up with a better bill, I believe. Hopefully, we have that full opportunity.

It's a complicated bill. I looked at it today and it's 11 schedules. I was reading each one and I got through four

or five; there was so much there. I think time has to be given to look at each schedule individually. For example, when I took a look at the compensation framework, that's a very important one. What does compensation include? Is it just salary or are we going to look at bonuses? Are we going to look at severance packages? The youth and child advocacy, that's huge.

So let's take the time. Let's look at this bill schedule by schedule and do it right. Do the people of this province proud.

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: I was proud to be able to speak after the minister in moving this bill and I'm proud to stand again here today. I'm proud to stand behind this bill because I think it's more than just a bill with a fancy title. I think it's a bill with a title that reflects what it aims to do, which is to increase accountability and transparency of government.

When I was knocking on doors—and I shared this story the other day and I will share it again—I heard from many of my constituents in Etobicoke Centre how important it is that government be accountable and that it be transparent. I think this bill aims to achieve just that.

The people of Etobicoke Centre and the people of all our ridings wanted that because they wanted to know how our dollars were spent. They wanted to know that we were getting value for our dollars. That's why I'm honored to be working with the President of the Treasury Board on this, who I think is committed to increasing accountability and transparency in government.

This is a signature bill. It's a broad-ranging bill, and it does a number of things to increase accountability and transparency. It enables the government to control compensation of senior executives in the broader public sector. What it allows the government to do is, it allows us to impose hard caps after obtaining the information required to determine what those hard caps should be. That's the responsible approach to instituting controlled compensation.

It expands the Ontario Ombudsman role. It requires expense information to be posted online for cabinet ministers, parliamentary assistants, opposition leaders and MPPs. It requires all institutions covered by the freedom-of-information legislation to securely preserve, and prohibit, the wilful destruction of records. It gives the government greater oversight of air ambulance and service providers. It allows the government to appoint a patient ombudsman. It gives the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth ombudsman-like powers. It expands the scope of the Integrity Commissioner's review of executive expenses to all 197 classified agencies and four hydro organizations. And it provides the Integrity Commissioner with investigative powers and the ability to prohibit individuals from lobbying.

This is broad-ranging legislation. It's powerful legislation. It will increase accountability and transparency. That's what the people of Etobicoke Centre and Ontario

asked for. That's what they deserve and that's what they're going to get.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for his reply.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: If I could start with the member from Etobicoke North, the Chair of the justice committee who took a shot at the voters in Toronto and took a dig at them over—he was talking about the gas plants, and then somehow he turned it on the voters in Toronto. I don't get it. I know he's a published author. I would hope his focus on his works of mystery would be more straightforward than whatever he was meandering.

But he did mention beer and wine in corner stores. Speaker, I love it. I used to be a reporter. I went around the province with David Peterson in 1985 when he became Premier, and one of the biggest promises in his election platform was beer and wine in corner stores. Thank you for bringing that up—another broken Liberal promise. No matter where we go in this province, no matter the year, no matter the time, no matter the Premier, another broken Liberal promise. Beer and wine in corner stores: Thank you.

I'm not a Chair of a committee, but I am on the public accounts committee, and we finally released the Ornge air ambulance report. Thank you to the previous committee which did all the work on it. But it finally got out there. You know what? It's almost gone; the news cycle is almost gone. So if they would only give us two more witnesses, one more day to close out the gas plant scandal, that cycle of accountability and transparency might be gone in one more day—a couple of days after that.

But let's get serious about it. We're all in here to work together. But let's not try to pull the wool over anybody's eyes. The title of this bill is not what this bill is all about. Thank you, Speaker.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: I think that listening to the debate this afternoon kind of reconfirmed in my mind that Bill 8 is a bit of a start. There's much more that could be done, certainly, when I reflect back on 11 years of lack of transparency and accountability in this particular government. So we do have a bit of a road to travel if we are to return governance in the province of Ontario to one of transparency and accountability—governance with measures in place to support oversight and to support management that the people expect to see within this system of democratic, responsible government.

We're debating Bill 8. It's titled the Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act. As I mentioned, it's the result of 11 years of many instances of a lack of transparency and a lack of accountability. I think of eHealth, OLG, Caledonia, Ornge air ambulance—just mentioned by the previous speaker—the gas plant scandals, and now we're trying to inject some transparency into what's going on with respect to the gigantic MaRS building that you can see just out the front door of this Legislative Assembly. The scandals have all been

obviously very, very costly in terms of dollars spent and certainly very costly in terms of the credibility of this government.

I think of so many transgressions by cabinet ministers over the years when they did not step down, as is customary in the system of responsible government that has served this province going back to the 1850s. I recall, in question period, there were several calls and several requests for the then Minister of Health, during the Ornge era, during the two years that many of us spent on the Ornge committee, to step down—for the minister to resign—which is a normal thing to do in the province of Ontario system of responsible government.

Addressing the bill more specifically, if you take a look at both schedule 1 and schedule 3 of the act, it puts a spotlight on the broader public sector, on accountability but also on compensation. It seems to focus primarily on cash wages. It doesn't seem to focus on other indicators of compensation—pensions, vacation time, sick time, hours of work and many other perks that draw on the taxpayers' dollar, like dental, early retirement. Even job security has a cost for those that are employed by the Ontario government.

Let's take a look at that; that's my suggestion. Transparency is important. It's important for accountability of the public sector, especially if you want to compare those who work in the public sector to those who work in the private sector. If you add up the perks, you're 30% worse off in a private sector job. I don't think that's fair. That, to me, does not suggest any concept of pay equity, for example. It's also expensive for the provincial budget.

It does become disappointing. Bill 8 only looks at those who make \$100,000 or more. This may have come from some of the NDP debate. This kind of leans more to tax-the-rich or perhaps looking at the 1%, but there are many, many people that make \$98,000 a year or \$90,000 a year—many, many people—a significant draw on the public purse.

1650

Don Drummond reported that half of all government spending is on public sector compensation. That's something like well over \$64 billion a year if we're looking at a budget—and again, this is a bit of a transparency issue. I think our budget is coming in at about \$130 billion this year. Those are dollars paid by people in the public sector, but by and large by people in the private sector. I think of private sector workers; many of them don't have pensions. They are footing the bill for public sector workers who do have pensions, who do have expense accounts. I know this is mentioned in the legislation. Bill 8 seems to ignore public sector expense accounts, other than PAs, cabinet ministers and MPPs.

I think the data is in. Again, if things were more transparent, we would know, but people who don't work in the public sector don't make nearly what people make on average in the public sector, the people they support in the public sector. I feel that people who are getting paid by taxpayers shouldn't be getting a better deal than the people who are essentially paying the freight themselves.

This Bill 8 proposed legislation in many ways doesn't have much in the way of teeth. I don't know how much of an impact it's going to have on that \$130-billion budget this year. It's a bit of tinkering around the edges. I would ask this government to give us some amendments, give us some legislation that would shine some sunshine so we can compare public sector and private sector. We need a bill that would help us to cut back on spending. I would favour cutting back on taxes. Obviously, everyone here talks about cutting back on the deficit, eventually cutting back on the debt, a debt that is projected to come in four years hence at something like—well, Don Drummond indicated \$411.4 billion. I ask people here: Consider your legacy. Consider where we're going to be even four years from now.

I'm in the baby boom crowd. I think our generation has had a good run. There has always been work if you wanted to do it. By and large, people were willing to work. We inherited a great system from the generation before us, something we think about during this time of remembrance. But I'm concerned. What are we handing to the generation following? Not only the economy but with respect to the fiscal accountability and transparency of this particular government. What kind of a debt are we handing down to those who are following us?

Bill 8: I consider it a start. Oversight, obviously, saves money. We can't bring in layer and layer of new staff and bureaucrats who do nothing but serve as overseers. Oversight is the job of management. We have management already. They're paid to do this job.

What really concerns me, though, is that it's so hard to get the figures, to open up the books just to determine how unfair the system is if you compare public sector and private sector. The public sector in Ontario, on average, is making something like 30% more than the private sector, if you include job security, vacations and various perks. If you look at a \$130-billion budget, that indicates that there's an inequitable allocation of something like \$19 billion a year over and above what public sector workers would normally be making at regular market rates. If we're going to talk about transparency, I feel we should be documenting and addressing some of this.

It raises the issue, going into the accountability side, of who is minding the store? Who's responsible? Who do we hold accountable for some of these inequities? Just how rigorous is the oversight of the public payroll? There is the perception that public sector workers work shorter hours. There's the perception that they have a myriad of other top-ups and perks. This has to be documented, and that can be done through a more transparent system.

There's a bit of research, Speaker. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has done some work on this. It's frustrating for them to try and pull the data. They have come up with a figure, and I quote: "... benefits and shorter work weeks, the public sector total compensation advantage balloons past 30%."

The Fraser Institute has done research on this and pulled together some data. But again, expert think tanks and groups have the wherewithal to pull this out. I think a

lot of this stuff could be made much more public than it is.

We know that salaries over 100 grand are published in the media. I have seen the direction really going the wrong way over the years. I was in a job a number of years ago—I taught high school. Every year, my salary would be published in the local daily paper. When I first started teaching high school, I recall, because I remember reading it in the paper, I was making \$6,800 a year. Every teacher in the province of Ontario had their salary published in the paper. We're debating transparency here. We don't publish the salaries under \$100,000.

We've been hearing this afternoon, and certainly in question period this morning, discussions about Ornge. I think that anybody taking a program in management or business in the future would probably have a professor who would use the Ornge air ambulance debacle as a bit of a case study. I spent two years on that committee. Frank Klees raised so many questions, meeting after meeting during the deliberations, and there's a wealth of information there. The OPP have been working on this stuff, I guess, for close to two years now. There's still no report back from the OPP—criminal charges—so stay tuned for that one.

We know that Bill 8 addresses the Ornge scandal. I'll quote part of the legislation: "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may appoint one or more provincial representatives to ... the board of directors of a designated air ambulance service," in other words, Ornge—appoint special investigators and appoint supervisors. My concern, and I know we called for much of this during committee deliberations—more investigators, more supervisors—can we afford this? Can we afford the expense? It's not only Ornge, but other agencies, ministry by ministry, other sectors that we should be overseeing. Can we afford to hire all these people? Isn't oversight, isn't transparency and accountability a function of management? We have managers within the public service. Do we necessarily need to hire so many other people to supervise and oversee what's going on? I'm very concerned about the potential for more bureaucracy, and by extension more expense for the taxpayer.

We also know that the bill will provide whistle-blower protection for people who disclose information "to an inspector ... special investigator" or the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Ornge has been in the coffee shops and in the headlines for several years now. I've had a chance to look at it up close. We all started with that report from Auditor General Jim McCarter and day after day of testimony before the committee. It has painted a picture that's about as hard to understand now as it was two years ago of a complex, convoluted network known as Ornge, and it includes a list. Much of this really hasn't been published yet. I don't think much of this is in the report. There's a list of spin-off private sector companies as long as your arm.

The Auditor General can't look at these companies. They're kind of like Tarion. The AG cannot look at these

organizations and private sector companies. Were they spun off using public sector money? Should we have the power to take a look at that? Should we have the power to take a look at Tarion, for that matter?

1700

Take a look at that report. I've had it on my desk, I guess, since four days before the election—a number of days before the election. It's really unfortunate that it wasn't released after we published it, but that was politics. Again, it's a read—a lack of oversight, a lack of control, going back to the inception of Ornge. It didn't seem like anybody was being held to account, certainly not the Minister of Health.

The Auditor General's report identified something like \$700 million in government funding going out the door, with no follow-up. There was no oversight from the get-go. It's an organization that was set up a number of years ago to ensure the safety and the timely transport of patients needing air ambulance services. They had agreements with the ministry.

In 2006, they were to set and to monitor standards: The "end result will be improved care, improved access to service, increasing effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of service, and the assurance of greater fiscal and medical accountability." But the report really does paint a different picture. For example, we discovered that while funding to Ornge had increased something like 20% in 2006-07, the number of patients had actually decreased by 6%.

Land ambulance: Ornge received \$65 million to perform what are called inter-facility land ambulance transfers, projected to number 20,000 annually. However, Ornge was only providing 15% of that number of projected transfers. We saw the ministry continue to dole out the cash, really oblivious to where the money was going, and we saw the board.

This legislation does put a bit more control over the board, and I think that's a good idea. The board, the management at the time, created that network of for-profit and not-for-profit subsidiaries, other companies and all kinds of financial, convoluted arrangements. It was very difficult to figure out what was going on out there.

The corporate head office: Here's a good example of a convoluted arrangement. As the auditor pointed out, Ornge used \$15 million, borrowed through a bond issue, to purchase the building that presently houses the corporate head office. Then they entered into a complex arrangement with other entities. They sold the building and then leased it back to themselves. That didn't go over very well, in the auditor's view. He calculated: "Over the first five years of the 25-year lease, this amounts to Ornge paying \$2 million more" than it should pay—again, a lack of oversight.

They borrowed \$300 million to finance, amongst other things, 12 new helicopters, 10 new airplanes and 11 used helicopters—twice as many helicopters as they could use. Again, where does the responsibility lie? Where is the accountability? We heard this again and again over the

last several years. It lies with the Minister of Health, who didn't resign over any of this.

When we talked about Ornge—and I'll spell Ornge: it's O-R-N-G-E. The A is missing. In our view, that A stands for accountability. Accountability was missing. To spend two years on this committee, you had to come up with something to keep going.

Something else that came up—and maybe I'll just fast-forward quickly. We know that the OPP investigation is outstanding. Those of us on that committee have become a little cynical. I've become cynical about politicians and about bureaucrats when we see that government control and accountability and oversight were absent—not only on the money, but with respect to the health and safety of the patients—so many red flags that add up to a tremendous list of mismanagement, really.

Again, it all lies with management, in my view. Evaluation, control, oversight and accountability are all functions of management. If management isn't doing the job, I feel someone should be found who does do the job.

But I question—and perhaps I could question, our own Ornge report: Do we necessarily need to hire layer after layer of people to oversee management? Let's let management do their job.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I listened intently to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. I think there may be some room for us to work together on a couple of issues, and I'm a little surprised, but maybe I'm just hearing what I want to hear, which actually sometimes does happen.

He did mention that public employees in the broader public sector make too much money. This is really surprising to me because if he looks at the research and the evidence and how this government has accelerated the privatization agenda—and that's what it is. It's happening in almost every ministry. I know this because I'm the critic for the Treasury Board, so my job is to follow the money. When you follow the money, you see very, very clearly that public services are being contracted out at very poor value to the people of this province. It's happening in IT, on road maintenance. There's even talk now of privatizing jails because that's working so well for the United States, don't you agree?

So when the member from Haldimand–Norfolk says that the red flag has been raised on these layers of bureaucrats who are from the private sector who are being paid twice as much—two to three times as much as in-house management is—in fact, in some instances, it's just beyond—it's like a Monty Python skit. There are private sector managers who are dictating to people who actually know how to do the work, and they're getting paid twice as much. I mean, only in Ontario, apparently.

Perhaps there's some common ground. Perhaps the Progressive Conservatives who really started the privatization agenda way back in the 1990s—maybe the light has gone on and perhaps we can fight the waste and scandal with the privatization agenda in this government.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's my pleasure to respond to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. I want to say that I am proud to represent his son. When he comes to Ottawa South next time, I'll show him where Grasshopper Hill is.

I was encouraged by his comments. It was a bit of a start, this bill. I am disappointed that he's become cynical. I don't know how that could happen. But I do want to talk about salary disclosure because he did raise salary disclosure and maybe reducing the amount that we set as a bar to disclose. If you take a look at salary disclosure, sometimes there are unintended consequences when you do things. What salary disclosure became for the broader public service, the MUSH sector, was actually a pay scale, a grade that people would check and, I would argue, had a serious impact on those salaries. That's why we need to have some restrictions around executive compensation. I know of a lot of examples where people just went there and looked and boards of directors made decisions based on that as something like a salary grid.

I also want to talk about salary disclosure because I want to talk about another bill about accountability brought forth in the 39th Parliament by the member from Nepean–Carleton with the member from Niagara West–Glanbrook that was called the Truth in Government Act. Now the Truth in Government Act had a lot of pieces like we have in this piece of legislation—not as broad, but a good piece of work that talked about members' expenses. It used the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act—it used the schedule in there to say that this is who it applies to. So it applies to everybody in that schedule except for section (j). What is section (j)? The Legislative Assembly—so truth in government does not apply here. The one thing I learned from that is, be careful what you name your bill.

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

1710

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to provide a couple of minutes of comments on the wonderful speech by the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. I want to join my colleagues in wishing him a happy birthday. The one thing that I have learned about the member is that Toby Barrett, the member for Haldimand–Folk, when he says something, is a man of his word. You know what? When he tells you something, he really means it.

When I look at this bill and this government's words on accountability and transparency—I've done this a couple of times since we've come back; I've quoted from the throne speech. The throne speech says, "Your government knows that trust is hard-earned, but easily lost."

Earlier today, we were speaking about Bill 10, and I think we were pretty clear. I think both opposition parties were pretty clear—maybe for different reasons, but we wanted the bill to go for hearings. Again, just a few moments ago, as House leader of the official opposition,

I get the time allocation motion from this government on Bill 10.

So, again with this bill, Bill 8, they're going to time-allocate it. They are not going to have hearings like we want. They are not going to want to get this bill right, just like they didn't want to get Bill 10 right when day after day after day we asked for a very reasonable request: that we get out of this place and actually go and see Ontarians and listen to them. That's what we're saying about Bill 8. That's what we're saying about Bill 10. But yet over and over again, this government says one thing and it does something else. For them to table a motion like this a couple of hours after we have debate on a bill—you should be ashamed of yourselves.

The Premier gets really worked up when we talk about the rural-urban divide. She gets really offended. But you know what? Her actions and her government's actions on these bills keep that discussion alive. I really feel the government needs to smarten up, start travelling around the province and get out of the bubble that is this building.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to be able to stand up in this House and talk about Bill 8 and follow the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. I did listen intently to his remarks, and he really researched and he brought up a lot of good subjects.

But I'd like to focus on something the member from Ottawa South said, along with something the member from Leeds–Grenville said. The member from Ottawa South said something about becoming cynical in this House. The member from Leeds–Grenville talked about the rural and urban divide.

I'll give you an example of why I have become cynical sometimes in this House. That government cancelled our train service to northeastern Ontario. They cancelled the Northlander. At that point, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines said, "But we will replace it with an enhanced bus service," because when they cancelled the train, people with disabilities and seniors had no way to get to medical appointments—nothing.

You know what happened with that promise, Speaker? Nothing. That's what happened, until a couple of extremely brave, extremely dedicated residents in my riding—Brad Bondar, who has now since passed, and Lisa Dawn Buck—took this government to the Human Rights Commission. In a settlement with those two individuals, five wheelchair-accessible buses were put, or are now being put, on the road.

Now, that is why people in northern Ontario, people in rural Ontario, get cynical when we see omnibus bills with "amending various acts" on the bottom like that, when we—not me, as an MPP, but disabled people—have to take your government to the Human Rights Commission to get basic services in this province. That makes us cynical.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: The member from Kitchener–Waterloo made mention of the NDP and the opposition working together, and gave a few examples. I will mention, on that, the public accounts committee. I mentioned Frank Klees. Certainly France and Jagmeet did a tremendous amount of work, as did all members of the committee on all sides. I know on the government side, membership changed a bit over the time that we were holding our deliberations.

Before that public accounts committee took on Ornge, there was a working together—the NDP and the PCs—both before and after, a call and a demonstration of bipartisanship. Both PC and NDP members called on the government to appoint an all-party select committee, again, to investigate Ornge, to try to help restore confidence in that very, very important service and to recommend structural changes, changes required in tandem with primary oversight.

The member for Ottawa South made mention that—I guess repeated what I said: Bill 8 is a start; there's a lot more—in fact, in many ways this bill could be a much larger bill.

Just to refer to the member for Leeds–Grenville talking about trust: Again, when a Minister of Health is on duty and this lack of oversight occurs, it is incumbent on that minister to step down.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: As always, it's such an honor—one has to say it when one stands in this House—to represent the incredible people of Parkdale–High Park and, in fact, de facto, all those in Ontario as the opposition. It's incumbent, I think sometimes, upon the opposition to say that there is a role for opposition in this government. The role of opposition is to be critical of the government and critical of their bills, because sometimes when we listen to folk on the government side, it seems as if they don't understand that.

I want to take you way, way back. I heard the member from Haldimand–Norfolk talk about being a baby boomer. I am a proud baby boomer, too. Some of the baby boomers in this place will remember, during the Cuban missile crisis—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Oh.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Yes, that's way back.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: It was 1962.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Exactly.

When I was a very, very young child in elementary school, seeing a cartoon called Duck and Cover—do you remember that? I remember the cartoon. I remember it was hilarious. Basically, they showed it in our schools as the response—and I was at Jesse Ketchum Public School, so I was right on Bay Street, I was right in the epicentre of Toronto. If you were going to drop a nuclear bomb on Toronto, you would drop it on my public school. There's no question about it.

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Exactly.

The duck-and-cover response of the government of the day to the educational system, to our classes—I remember seeing the cartoon. We did drills, Mr. Speaker, where we crouched down and hid under our desks. That was the government of the day's response to a possible nuclear attack on my school in downtown Toronto.

When I was looking at this bill, Bill 8, with its title, the accountability and transparency act, I couldn't help but think it should be retitled the duck-and-cover bill, because it will have about as much effect on transparency and accountability in government in the province of Ontario as the process of hiding under your desk would have had in keeping us safe during a nuclear attack in the Cuban missile crisis.

Let us speak more, because it was a pretty funny cartoon. Truly, if you want to see government in action, go back, look at it and think of it.

What are some of the problems? The incredibly eloquent member from Windsor–Tecumseh, who did his research and spoke about the constituent he spoke to when he knocked on the door, reminded me of a constituent I spoke to when I knocked on the door during the last election. She was a single parent. She was on social assistance, looking after two children, for a variety of reasons unimportant to the story. She explained to me that she couldn't afford to go to work. I mean, that in itself is a lesson for all of us, but particularly for this government. She couldn't afford to go to work. She actually kept more of her money and could keep her children better if she was on social assistance than if she worked on minimum wage. There's something wrong with that economy, I'll tell you. She really wanted to work and was making every effort to try to get programs so that she could earn more than minimum wage if she did go back.

1720

This is the woman who raised the issue to me—the only time it happened, actually, interestingly, in my riding—about the gas plant expenses, and how many billions this government has spent over the last 11 years, wasted on various enterprises. Lest we forget: eHealth, Ornge, the gas plants. Billions. For the single mother who used a food bank at the end of the month because her cheque didn't reach that far, that seemed to her to be such an immense amount of money that she couldn't even envision how much it was. But she felt that somebody should be held accountable for that. Truly, Mr. Speaker, who can blame her—that somebody should be accountable?

To go even further back, before eHealth, Ornge or the gas plants: When I was first elected here, back in 2006, I remember the days when we had a surplus in this government. The government of the day ended with a surplus. It was about a \$35-million surplus. It seems like utopia now, when you look at the deficit, but \$35 million was the surplus back then.

I remember that the minister of the day—now the member for Eglinton–Lawrence; it cost him his cabinet seat—spent that \$35 million very, very quickly, without a lot of oversight or transparency or accountability. I really don't think it was all his doing. A million dollars to a cricket club: Does anybody remember that? There are a couple of members here who were around that long ago. They gave \$1 million to a cricket club that didn't even ask for it. This is hilarious, actually. It's as funny as the duck-and-cover cartoon. Some \$1 million to a cricket club, among the rest of that money we could go into.

That was my first introduction to how this government operates—\$35 million. It was called Colle-gate, after the poor member, who has paid the price ever since. He was kind of sent to the corner by the government and has never been allowed to come back into the party and serve in cabinet again because of that. That was the first. So it actually has always been the *métier* of this government to operate that way, ever since day one, even when they had a surplus, even before the huge numbers that we got used to with the other scandals.

The eloquent member from Kitchener–Waterloo went through the bill itself and talked about why it isn't what it says it is—accountable or transparent—and why this government isn't what it says it is—accountable and transparent.

The patient ombudsman: the classic case here. It's interesting to hear Liberal members get up and read petitions from their communities in support of the patient ombudsman. I think, “These poor folk; were they to know what a real Ombudsman looks like versus the patient ombudsman in this bill.” What's the difference? We've often used, in this House, the example of the fox looking after the henhouse. This isn't really the fox looking after the henhouse. This is: The fox hires another fox who's a friend of his to look after the henhouse. That's this patient ombudsman.

How can anybody be impartial, Mr. Speaker—which is the very bottom line for an ombudsman—at arm's length from the government and impartial? One of the things we ask ombudsmen to do all the time is to criticize the government. That's one of their jobs, right? How can this patient ombudsman be critical of the cabinet who hires him or her, number one, and can fire him or her at any time? How safe is that person in being critical of this government and the way it operates its health care system? How can that be? Anybody can see that that's impossible.

How can this ombudsman be impartial—able to be fired by the government at any time because there's no set term, and has no oversight of Ornge? You heard many members speaking about it this afternoon—one of the greatest scandals of this government's tenure here. This ombudsman can't look into Ornge—okay; can't look into private clinics. We heard today, in question period, about the 44 clinics who have completely dropped the ball in terms of patient safety. By the way, there's nothing new about this either. My uncle actually came here—well, actually, he came here when he was ailing but his niece

came here after his demise because he died of C. difficile. Does anybody here remember C. difficile in the hospitals and how difficult it was—again, accountability and transparency—to find the statistics on C. diff in our hospitals and our health care system? How difficult it was because we are the only province in Canada—let me repeat that: the only province in Canada—that does not have real ombudsman oversight over its hospital and health care system?

This patient ombudsman will not be that person. If you're listening and you're watching and you're signing those petitions, know this: This patient ombudsman will not be that person. Here's a scenario; it's probably not an unusual one: You have a loved one, a relative in a hospital or a health care centre, that relative dies and you have questions about their care. You want to investigate whether they got the care they deserved or not. You can't do it with this patient ombudsman. You can't do it, unless the patient has, before their untimely death, let's say, actually put you as the executor, given you the legal responsibility to look into their affairs; you can't investigate. It has to be the patient that does the investigating. What kind of structure is that? The patient who is ill or possibly dead has to do the investigating of their own care? Again, as you heard outlined, this ombudsman can't look at private clinics, can't look at retirement homes—again, a problem.

You heard again about the children and youth advocate. By the way, the children and youth advocate says it does not go far enough. It does not give him the powers he needs to look into children's aid and what they're doing. We've long called for that, of course, oversight over them. He can't compel evidence, can't look into mental health or the justice system. Again, not that long ago, I remember a group of parents coming to Queen's Park and holding a press conference, called Tragically NOHIP. Anybody remember that? It was a great slogan. Why? Because their children who suffered from mental health issues, many of them serious ones, many of them suicidal, could not find care in the province of Ontario. They had to mortgage their homes, had to dig into their savings to send them out of province to find care. Tragically NOHIP—I remember that group very well. Again, it's within the memory of someone who has served here eight years—not transparent, not accountable and not ever addressed.

The Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions: I think it was 23 recommendations, of which only three have been put into place. Again, transparency and accountability are not there either, not for those children.

What else? We heard about the executive so-called cap. To go back to my friend from Etobicoke Centre—congratulations on his election—who tried to argue that there is a cap in this legislation, there is no cap in this legislation. There is the promise to look at a cap in this legislation. My friends around the chamber, legislation is not a campaign promise. It shouldn't be. It shouldn't be yet another promise to look into something. The legislation is supposed to be the promise enacted. That's the

point of policy. That's the difference between actual policy and campaign promises. But what we see here about caps for compensation for those in the public sector is yet again another promise to look into it, not a hard cap, not any of that. You don't need a piece of policy, you don't need a bill to say you're going to look into what the cap should be. You just do it. You look into what the cap should be, and then you write the policy. That's not transparent or accountable either.

That would leave my single parent trying to raise two children on social assistance with some very big questions because she would say—she's not a lawyer and she's not a legislator—"I read this and there's no cap in here. What is the cap?" she would say. "Where is the cap?" I would have to say, "Well, we called for \$418,000, twice the Premier's salary, but unfortunately this legislation does not deliver on that."

1730

We heard again today in question period, not that long ago, about consultants hired, really with the ostensible duty to privatize our electrical system—at least part of it, so they say—but we don't know who they are, and we asked, and we don't know how much they make. That's not accountable; that's not transparent.

That was asked today in question period. As you heard, the member from Leeds–Grenville got up and just said, "Five minutes ago, I was given this piece of paper by the House leader saying they're going to invoke closure." They're going to stop debate and stop hearings on the Child Care Modernization Act. I can tell you that there are folk in my riding who would very much like to come to those hearings. I hope they get a chance, and I suspect they won't, because again, they're shutting down debate on an important bill that came out of children's deaths and an absolutely scathing report from the real Ombudsman on child care in this province—absolutely scathing. Read that report. If you read nothing else this year, read that report. That's about our children. Children's deaths led to that report that led, presumably, to this piece of legislation. This piece of legislation ain't going to save any children. I can tell you that right now: It won't save any children.

So we still have the same problem, yet we can't talk about it because the debate has been shut down. That's not transparent and that's not accountable. That's not what a government that wants to be transparent or accountable does.

You heard another member talking about MaRS. Again, we're not talking about the ex-Premier, who will not be named—Dalton McGuinty—we're talking about the current Premier, Kathleen Wynne. We're talking about her. This is under her watch. This is under this government's, this administrator's and this administration's watch. It's still not accountable and not transparent.

So we heard about MaRS, and we heard that wonderful quote—oh, it's a doozy; it's fabulous; I mean, come on, it's quotable—from the member from Trinity–Spadina, who said, "We believe in transparency and accountability—at the right time." That's not accountable

and that's not anywhere close to transparent, but that is actually how they think.

He was just being honest, and I applaud him for that; I applaud him for his honesty. He will very quickly learn the political game of not saying quite what you think—because he said what he thought and he said what they all think. That's exactly what they think and that's what this bill shows.

Really, this bill, if it's not the duck-and-cover bill, it should be the transparency and accountability at the right time bill, because that's what it's really about. That's what this policy shows—and the right time, by the way, is never now, because if it was now, then, as you've heard other members say, we would have Mr. Faist and Ms. Miller coming to the committee and telling us why, with military-grade software, they wiped the computers clean—presumably, we don't know—in the Premier's office, not the last Premier, who will not be named—Dalton McGuinty—but the current Premier, the current administration, this government.

I just have a couple of minutes left and so much more to say. Oh, by the way, hats off to David Lepofsky and the act for the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act Alliance, because they were forced to pay \$200—finally that was dropped after much screaming and yelling, and the Star got on their side—for FOI requests to find out why industries are not accessible yet to those with disabilities—

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Sorry, the Speaker is not acknowledging you, member from Etobicoke—

Mr. Yvan Baker: I rise on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I heard you say you're rising on a point of order. I recognize you on a point of order, the member for Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Standing order 23(i) prohibits a member from imputing false or unavowed motives to another member. The member for Parkdale–High Park indicated that I had suggested in my remarks that this bill imposes caps on executive compensation. I did not suggest that. What I did indicate was that the bill provides the government with the ability to impose those caps.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I don't find that there's a valid point of order, and I return to the member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What the member didn't hear me say was that the government already has that ability. They don't have to pass a bill for that ability. That's what I said. They don't have to write into policy the ability to investigate caps on public service sector salaries. They don't have to. This is a bill; it's called policy. That is something government already has the power to do. That's what I said.

Anyway, to go back to those with disabilities who are looking for transparency and accountability as to what's happening with that act that's supposed to be put into place by 2025, they were denied, and they are still denied. They have still not received their freedom of information

act request as to which organizations and businesses have complied with that act and which plan to do so. That's not accountable, and that's not transparent either.

Anyway, I have very few seconds left, but I just want to send a shout-out to the wonderful woman whose door I knocked on, who's trying to raise two children on social assistance, who would love to know where the money went and wonders why the money, in part, hasn't gone to help her raise her two children.

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

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Speaking after the honourable member opposite is a little bit like dancing after Baryshnikov. That having been said, I'm always entranced with what she has to say. She says it so well and has raised a number of very significant points. I think on that score, we're one in terms of looking at some potential challenges to this bill.

That having been said, the government isn't out to boil the ocean here. We're out to make some pragmatic and important changes to the way this place does business—everything from recording expenses to the broader public sector to enhanced accountability in the municipal sector and the university sector; also the enhanced and very practical expression of accountability with respect to the patient advocate and concerns around children and youth.

I would note, in passing, that the current Ombudsman, who I think is doing a pretty good job most days, was effusive in his praise of this legislation when we first introduced it. We, of course, as a government, worked closely with the Ombudsman to ensure that he was in sync with our thinking and, to a very large extent, that was the case. We're trying to move forward on a number of fronts. We're doing it in a very pragmatic way. Could we do more? Perhaps, but this is a good start. It gets us on the right track, and that's why we introduced the legislation.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to commend the member from Parkdale–High Park on her remarks. I remember Duck and Cover. I'd forgotten about it until she started speaking about it.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Well, you have a patent on it.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I do go back that far. I do remember that. I'm kind of dating myself by admitting that. I notice a number of members over there don't even know what we're speaking about when we mention that.

There are a lot of areas to cover, but as I was thinking about the title of this and thinking about accountability and transparency, I was thinking about the Green Energy Act and the lack of accountability in rural Ontario, especially in my area of the province and the riding next door to me and a number of others where they imposed wind turbines against the wishes of the people. That's not transparent. It's indicative again today, with the admission by our House leader that they're going to have time allocation—that's certainly no way to operate if you really want to make this Legislature work. It's going to

be a long three and a half years. If the government's going to continue to have these time allocation motions and trying to railroad and ramrod these things through, we're going to do our bit, with the third party and ourselves, to bring up good points like the member from Parkdale–High Park did today, along with many of our members from all three parties.

1740

Anyway, we need to get this bill to committee and we need to try and get some improvements to it. It affects over 16 different acts. I don't think it's going to be the transparency that the government is trying to hold it out to be. As our members and the different members have said as we went on this afternoon, I think integrity is the way you do things. Why do we have to have acts of the Legislature to impose integrity and accountability? I thought that was something that most people in this province were raised with. If you're a member in here and you're a member of the executive council, you should know about integrity and you should know about accountability. If you had any decency, you'd resign when you don't.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you to the member from Parkdale–High Park for allowing us to take that trip down memory lane this afternoon. I too recall the duck-and-cover drills because I grew up on our military bases. We were always told that we'd be one of the first targets.

I really want to thank the member for bringing to our attention—I hope the government was listening—the story about a constituent of hers who's living on social assistance trying to raise two children, not having enough money for food or to keep her children warm because of the money wasted on the Liberal scandals. It's a million here, a million there, a billion here, a billion there. The money is wasted. It could have been spent on the needy, the really vulnerable in our province, and it wasn't.

We talk about accountability. Again, the member spoke about the need for the justice committee. What a good name, “justice committee,” because the lady that she spoke about with the two kids that are hungry and cold wants justice. They want justice. They want to know why they didn't get the money and the money was wasted on the scandals. They want answers. We want answers. The people of Ontario want answers from the final two witnesses to go before the justice committee. Like I say, we can talk about three and a half or four more years, but what about one more day? One more day of questions, one more day of testimony under oath—what's the problem? That would show the people of Ontario that there's meat to the bone. There are people there that say, “Yes, okay, accountability and transparency.” Finally, they're going to put us on the table. Finally, we'll get some of that, and we don't have it so far.

What you see is what you get, folks. There are no caps in the bill. The member finally mentioned it. There is nothing in this bill about caps. Thank you to the member for Parkdale–High Park for dragging that out of him.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One last question and comment?

Mr. John Fraser: It's my pleasure to respond to the member from Parkdale–High Park. As always, she was very creative and expressed herself exceptionally well. It is hard to follow her. There was definitely an animal theme to it: ducks and foxes. I don't want to say that there was anything fishy about her remarks, but I will try to respond just for the halibut.

I do disagree with her on the patient ombudsman. I see some of the things that she's saying. I just want to go back to what I believe is important in terms of people's individual needs. As members, we respond to those, and I think having a patient ombudsman will address that need.

If you look at the larger challenges around our health care system, we have a number of colleges. We have public health authorities that are separate from us. I think we have to give them an opportunity to do their job as well, too. But I take her comments to heart and I appreciate them very much.

I do want to add about the salary cap: We do have one in place for hospital executive compensation. I understand that there's still a lot more work to do. We're serious about doing that, and I want to let the member know that as well.

I want to thank the member from Windsor–Essex for his kind remarks on our expectant grandchildren in the new year. I am very excited about it. And I want to congratulate him on his earlier passion on another issue. He rivalled the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane for his passion. I want to let the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane know that I wasn't being glib about cynicism. I really do believe there's a difference between criticism and cynicism. I firmly believe—although you may not feel that way about us on this side of the House—that there is always hope. I always feel there's hope over there. I appreciate your comments very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Parkdale–High Park has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I have to say that, as a New Democrat, of course we live in hope over here. That's all we have, some days.

I want to thank the former Minister of Community and Social Services—a friend and, by the way, the other United Church minister in here; not everybody knows that we're the only two clergy in the House—and the members from Sarnia–Lambton, Ottawa South and, of course, Windsor–Tecumseh as well.

We were talking, of course, about the accountability and transparency act, which I dubbed the duck-and-cover act. I hadn't actually thought about “duck” as an animal. It was more “duck under.” But anyway, it doesn't matter.

Here's the thing: It will be truly rich indeed—and, mark my words; this is in Hansard—if this government invokes closure on the accountability and transparency act, because—come on. You have got to laugh at that. You have got to laugh at shutting down debate on an accountability and transparency act and limiting the number of hearings about it too. Please, friends across the

aisle: Come on. This is rich irony indeed. As we suspect, that is what they're going to do.

For those of you watching, for those of you listening, for those of you who will be reading the Hansard: Just mark this. This government may very well invoke closure, shut down debate, stop debate on a transparency and accountability bill. Got to love it.

Anyway, to the legitimate question about the patient ombudsman: The good news is, the real Ombudsman is going to be following the patient ombudsman and making sure they do their job.

With that, we look forward to the closure motion on the accountability and transparency act and have to laugh.

Mr. John Fraser: Point of order.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I referred to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh as the member from Windsor–Essex. I guess we're even now, because I'm reciprocating for what happened the previous week. I apologize.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Apology accepted, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That doesn't always happen around here. Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have the opportunity in the last few minutes this afternoon to add some comments to Bill 8, 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.

Mr. Speaker, this bill—schedule 2 deals with amendments to the Ambulance Act. I had the pleasure, for the last two years, of being quite involved with the Ornge air ambulance report, chairing the public accounts committee for the past two years. I was really pleased to see that the report was just tabled recently in the Legislature. It's a substantial report. I'm hoping that the government learns and uses that report. There was a lot of work put into it over two years by members of all parties, and I certainly want to thank some of the members who spent an awful lot of time working on it, in particular Frank Klees, who was the member from Newmarket–Aurora; France Gélinas, the member from Nickel Belt; Helena Jaczek, who's now a minister, of course, the member for Oak Ridges; Jagmeet Singh; and education minister Liz Sandals, who I think was there before Helena Jaczek. Those members in particular spent an awful lot of time on the report.

The reason I'm happy to see it, besides all the work, and I think there are a lot of good recommendations that come out of the report—it was actually the Wednesday before the election was called on the Friday that the committee, at its regular meeting, signed off on it. It was going to the printer to be printed. It was going to be tabled in this Legislature on the Monday following that. We were in the midst of a provincial election at that stage, so I was quite concerned that it may never see the light of day, so I'm pleased that it has actually been tabled in the Legislature. This bill, Bill 8, in a small part

addresses some things that come out of the report, but there's still far more that can be done.

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On the topic of ambulances, I do want to raise an issue that's directly connected with ambulances in my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, and that is the situation that's occurring in the northern part of the riding, in Port Loring–Argyle. Mr. Speaker, you may be familiar with that area, as I know you do spend some time in the summer at your family's cottage up there, enjoying beautiful Parry Sound–Muskoka.

It's an issue of real concern to me right now. Essentially, at this present moment, if you were in Port Loring, Mr. Speaker, at your family's cottage, and you had some serious medical emergency, you might wait two hours for an ambulance, because there is not an ambulance station there anymore. There was until this summer, but it was a unique area in that it was the only area in the whole province that had volunteer paramedics. They had two volunteer paramedics who did a great job. That was getting hard to sustain because of all the training and qualifications required. Unfortunately, one of the paramedics passed away this summer, so that ended. Now we have a situation where there isn't an ambulance station there.

It's actually administered by the town of Parry Sound, which makes the final decisions on the whole district of Parry Sound's ambulance services. They have an emergency services advisory committee. I attended a public meeting—I think it was in late August, early September—up in Port Loring, which was at the Legion hall. The building was full of people and they were very passionate about the fact that they don't have proper coverage right now. One of their complaints was that the advisory committee that advises the town of Parry Sound doesn't have any representation from the unorganized territories. I have since learned that to get representation, they need to apply to the town of Parry Sound to try to get representation.

The town of Parry Sound in the summertime—I believe it was in July—made the decision to try to provide coverage, and they were going to take a 12-hour shift from the village of South River, the night shift, and move it to Port Loring, move an ambulance and crew there for a 12-hour shift, and then it would be on call for the other 12 hours.

Unfortunately, there was a lot of pushback from all east Parry Sound, all the municipalities that didn't want to lose existing ambulance service that they already have, and I could see their point of view as well. Then the committee again met in August and they came up with what is the situation currently, and that is that there's basically an SUV station in the Port Loring–Argyle area and there is a fully qualified paramedic who is there for a 12-hour shift and on call for another 12-hour shift. The problem is that there's no actual ambulance.

You, of course, Mr. Speaker, are very familiar with the area, so you know it's not close to any hospital. It's probably at least an hour drive, one way, for an ambu-

lance to get to the area and then another hour back, so you're probably two hours to get to a hospital. And it's huge, so that could go up by a significant amount as well. I think it's a real concern that there's not actually an ambulance station there. It's something that I would like to see changed.

They are consulting right now. The town of Parry Sound and the advisory committee have hired a consultant to look at coverage for the entire Parry Sound district, I assume, to see if they can maybe shuffle things around a bit. The only problem with that is that other areas of this district, if they feel they're losing services, are not going to be happy about it.

I think we need to look at possible solutions. Certainly dollars and cents are a consideration. I think the number I heard was \$1.2 million if you want to station an ambulance there full time with paramedics etc. Perhaps creative solutions—they've had volunteer paramedics in the past. What about volunteer drivers? They've already got a vehicle there. Station an ambulance there, and perhaps have volunteer drivers; maybe you could use volunteer firefighters and train them to be the drivers for an ambulance that was stationed there. Use the paramedic who is already assigned, and then you would at least have transportation. I think that's one possibility at least, and I certainly will look forward to seeing what comes out of the report.

I absolutely feel that the distance and location of Port Loring-Argyle is such that there absolutely needs to be an ambulance station there. Currently, at this time, the area is not being properly served and is at risk. Seeing as we were talking about ambulances today, and there's a whole section in Bill 8 to do with ambulances, I wanted to get that on the record.

I'll now go on to speak about other sections of the bill. I see that Schedule 1 deals with the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act. Today in question period, the member from Dufferin-Caledon asked a question specifically about community care access centres. I don't know the name of their particular CCAC, but she pointed out that their executive director is making some \$260,000 and just received some sort of \$24,000 bonus or increase.

I have problems with that. I have problems with that because as MPPs, we've all, on a daily basis, had people coming to our office who are trying to get coverage for someone. The hours that are meted out for home care or personal support workers—I think it's 12 hours maximum per week. The government's intended aging-at-home policy is to keep people in their homes, but then they don't provide enough home care to actually keep people in their homes.

I know I met with a son in the last month or so; his two parents are aging, and they have various complications, and it was exactly about that issue. I have a problem that the personal support workers don't make a lot of money, and there seems to be so much in the administration part of it, including the executive directors. I just simply feel that you could hire people for less money than that to do that job, and the savings should be passed on to provide more services for the front-line care.

I know that I recently had an inquiry in the Parry Sound area from a person who, just in the past year, had an accident and is now a paraplegic. They're trying to figure out how to cope, and they're being told by the CCAC, "Well, we can only provide this much care," and it's not enough. So when you see that scenario and then look at the huge salaries being paid out, I think there should be some controls.

I come back to Ornge. The trigger for the government finally digging deeper into Ornge air ambulance—really, one of the big red flags was Dr. Chris Mazza's pay. Only through a long, long time and the committee doing an awful lot of digging did it come out that he was making more than \$1 million a year yet wasn't showing up on the sunshine list. I think it's certainly an issue that needs to be dealt with.

We've heard from other members saying that this legislation doesn't really adequately deal with the issue, but I think, in principle, it is something that a government with limited dollars needs to look at.

I can see that it's almost time to stop talking. I'll talk a bit about one other section, and let me just see which section it is. It's the section to do with the Lobbyists Registration Act. I'm not sure which schedule that is—here it is; it's schedule 8. We have pretty weak lobbyist legislation in Ontario. It did come up in the Ornge air ambulance situation that somebody was lobbying, and they were found to be lobbying despite not being registered. Basically, there's nothing at this time that the lobbyist registrar, who is Ontario's Integrity Commissioner, can do about it. This legislation purports to strengthen that and give some enforcement powers to the Ontario Integrity Commissioner. I certainly think that needs to happen because right now, when they do find that someone is breaking the rules, really there's no penalty. So that is something that needs to be improved.

I see my time is out, so I will end my comments now.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Robert Bailey, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Christine Elliott, France Gélinas
Marie-France Lalonde, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Kathryn McGarry
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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