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of Debates
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**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 29 March 2012

Jeudi 29 mars 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 29 March 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 29 mars 2012

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ACCEPTING SCHOOLS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 POUR
DES ÉCOLES TOLÉRANTES

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 26, 2012, on the motion for second reading of Bill 13, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to bullying and other matters / Projet de loi 13, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui a trait à l'intimidation et à d'autres questions.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour and a privilege to stand today to speak about Bill 13.

Quite frankly, this is not a partisan issue. There is, of course, sentiment all around the House that what we want to do and what we stand together on, shoulder to shoulder, as it were, is to keep our children safe, to prevent teen suicide, the kind of occurrence that happened with our friend Jamie and others who have killed themselves because of bullying in their schools. We are speaking really together around this issue.

I want to send some particular notes of respect out to a number of groups: first and foremost, the students themselves—I hosted a presser here with a number of them from our separate school system who came, and I'm going to speak about that in a minute; also to the teachers from all the teachers' unions who have stood up for their students, stood up on behalf of their students very bravely and courageously; and for other organizations like Egale that have been outspoken about this; the Falconer report and others who have pressed this government and pressed all of us to actually take action.

I also want to thank those who have crafted bills; we've seen two of them on this issue. We're looking forward to being in committee to deal with clause-by-clause examination of those bills, because all of this is important. Particular kudos go, I think, to the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, who have been unbelievably brave and courageous in their stance for students.

As I said, I want to mention some students in particular: the students who came to Queen's Park. This was in

a presser we just had about a week ago. We had here some incredibly courageous young people. We had Trevor James, who is a straight youth from Peterborough, who "got up at 4:30 a.m. Wednesday and took a two-hour bus ride to Toronto to talk about school clubs for gay students."

He was flanked, and I'm quoting here from the Toronto Star, "by Leanne Iskander, 17, who self-identified as queer, and Christopher McKerracher, 16, a bisexual man, both from Mississauga's St. Joseph Secondary School."

All of them were here speaking with one voice about, if anything, strengthening Bill 13. Here's a quote from James. He said, "I love my school. It's my home away from home.... We are not fighting. We just wanted to be treated equally. If we do not accept racism and nationalism in school, why is it okay to be homophobic?"

"To call these clubs anything but gay-straight alliances is a denial of queer students' existence ... added James, a student at St. Peter's Secondary School."

And kudos to Leanne Iskander, who has organized a group of Catholic students for gay-straight alliances.

I also wanted to cite some of the studies that have been done by a number of groups interested in education. People for Education sent in some information to this government about Bill 13, again trying to strengthen the bill, trying to add to the bill. They talk about the role of principals and that special-needs students at one in three GTA elementary schools are not getting the recommended level of support. They talk, as do others, about the safe schools action team and the Falconer report, again about strengthening this bill in terms of strengthening the schools' ability to deal with the issue.

One of the problems with this initiative is that there's not funding attached to it: funding for special students, funding to help those principals and teachers who want to help their students, funding for special-needs students—oversight, even, because we know that bullying often happens where teachers' eyes and education assistants' eyes are not, so oversight for those playgrounds, those lunchrooms, those places where bullying can take place and nobody is watching. So again, funding is needed to strengthen oversight of those places. All the reports come together and speak about that, and they speak about that in some detail.

Certainly, when we're spending \$150 million on EQAO tests—tests that teachers are loath to administer and really are not fans of—surely some of that money could be redistributed to help children who are victims of bullying, to help the teachers who deal with them and, quite frankly, to help the bullies themselves, because if

the only alternative is to suspend children with problems, i.e., the bullies, then that's not an answer either. All children, even those who are bullies, need an education, and we need to deal with this as adults. We need to deal with it in a loving fashion.

I also want to acknowledge all those across the Christian spectrum, particularly those Catholic parents in our school system who have written to me and to whom I've responded and corresponded with. I speak as a Christian, a United Church clergyperson, and I remind everyone who is Christian, in this debate, that Jesus was very outspoken about how we should treat our neighbour. He said we should love them, pure and simple. We should love our neighbour. Implied in that is that we should not judge them; he also said, "Judge not." He was pretty emphatic about that, and he didn't put caveats around that. He didn't say, "Some neighbours, not other neighbours." He didn't say, "Judge not, but judge some people and not others." He was completely outspoken; neither did he ever say anything about homosexuality. Check your Scripture.

All Christians have a vested interest. All people of all faiths and all people of no faith have a vested interest in the well-being of our students. Sadly, when you look at the suicide statistics, you see that LGBTQ students are the ones most at risk of suicide. Sadly, when you look at the statistics for that group, you see trans students at greatest risk and they grow up to continue to be at great risk. So at the age that they are in school, that's the opportunity we have to intervene. That's the opportunity we have to make a difference in their lives.

0910

I know, because of working on Toby's Law around the transgender issue, that as trans children age and grow into adults they represent a group that has a 50% poverty rate, a 50% depression rate, a 50% attempted suicide rate. Again, as you look through the spectrum of LGBTQ people, you see the same sort of heightened statistics.

Where does it start? It starts in high school. It starts in public school. It starts when children are young. That's where we have a chance to really influence them. I proudly went out, you know, around the Pink Shirt Day—and I know that Pink Shirt Day is coming up—in our schools, and it's a wonderful opportunity for everybody to engage; to add their support to our schools in standing up against bullying.

But I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that critically here, critically, is that we need the input of our students. We need our students to be able to define the supports they need, because what we are about here in this House, presumably around this bill, is supporting our students. We all agree on that. We want to support our students, particularly our vulnerable students, our students that have been bullied like Jamie, who was, by the way, bullied because of his sexual orientation. We want to support these students, and part of supporting these students is to support them in supporting themselves. When they say—and they don't all say, but when they do say—that they want a gay-straight alliance in their schools, we

need to be behind them. We need to be supporting them in that. We need to be standing with them shoulder to shoulder, just like these brave young people that came to Queen's Park, a some two-hour bus ride away, to take a risk, to stand in front of the cameras, to say, "We're queer, we're here and we need your love." Because ultimately that's what we're speaking about as well: We're speaking about this assembly coming together to act out of love for our students.

I want to just share some quotes, and these quotes are from various groups. First of all, let's look at Egale. Egale Canada says, "GSAs ... demonstrably improve the lives of LGBTQ youth, increasing their safety and improving their self-esteem."

By simply existing, GSAs present "students with the idea that LGBTQ identities have a place in the school, and society at large. Directly engaging LGBTQ youth and their allies within school, as well as those who are ambivalent regarding LGBTQ themes, is an excellent means towards addressing school climate, isolation, promoting social connectedness." They cite a study in California that found gay-straight alliance presence and participation in high school to be highly correlated with decreased depression, substance abuse and lifetime suicide attempts among LGBTQ young adults.

I also want to quote from the Falconer report, where he again—"increase benchmark costs for all components of the funding formula ... to close gap between funding ... and actual costs..."

You know, it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that when I first ran six years ago in a by-election the funding formula was one of the main issues that plagued our community and our schools, our teachers and principals and students, and it's still there. It's still there. Unfortunately, the McGuinty government has done nothing to focus on that, and here we see, yet again, the funding formula impacting a sensitive issue here. So again, Falconer is calling on some action around that.

In 2008, the safe schools action team consultations "overwhelmingly confirmed that the most effective way to enable all students to learn about healthy and respectful relationships is through the school curriculum." So again, curriculum changes; supervision when students are most vulnerable; allowing students to have a say in the kinds of groups that they want to form; what those groups are called; how those groups operate—these are all parts of the answer to the problem. Bill 13 goes part of the way. We want it to go all the way.

Certainly, again, we see that in the Roots of Youth Violence, an executive summary, that was done, again in 2008. A quote here says, "Making headway on issues of safety involves abandoning the failed philosophy of addressing safety through discipline/enforcement mechanisms. It does not work." They couldn't be more emphatic. "While there will always be a place for discipline in identifying standards of behaviour, the reality that has thus far not been accepted in the system is that marginalized youth cannot be punished/suspended into becoming engaged..."

“Hope needs to be restored through programs and initiatives that create prospects for success for youth who are currently on the outside looking in.”

Unfortunately, Bill 13 does nothing to address the inadequacy of staffing and supports for students at risk of bullying.

So again, when you look at the bully and the bullied, you're looking at two students whom the system has failed and continues to fail. We again, I think, are of one mind in trying to address that issue. That's the issue. We want to help the bullied, and we don't want to marginalize the bully so that they continue to move through life using those kinds of behaviours, continuing to move through life to be homophobic or aggressive or violent. That's not what public education should be about. Public education is for all children; it should be for all children.

Certainly, I hearken back to my own school experience and to those of my children. I can tell you that anyone around this room, if they were truly honest with those viewing, with our constituents and with themselves, would know that children who are LGBTQ are still at risk. They were at risk; they have been at risk; they were at risk for my children's generation, for my generation; and they're still at risk. We all have witnessed events in our educational experience where children who have identified as LGBTQ were bullied. We have all seen it happen. We've all intervened, or not. We've all been the bullied or the bully, some of us. We know that this is a reality that touches everyone. There's nobody who has not had an experience of this. There's nobody who hasn't seen it at work.

To confuse the issue and say, “Well, bullying happens for all sorts of reasons”—of course it does. It happens for weight reasons. It happens for ethnic reasons. There are all sorts of reasons. There are as many reasons as there are children to be bullied and to bully. But having said that, when we look at the suicide statistics, the most at-risk children inevitably come down to the LGBTQ community, and they were, in fact, the instigators, those who pushed this government, those who came before this government, who took the risk as they did when they came to Queen's Park that day to stand up and say, “We're here. We're not going away. We're at risk and we're standing with those at risk, and we need to be heard. We need to be heard.”

Again, to come back to those other groups that I think deserve incredible kudos around this: the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association; those who are on the front lines with children; those people of faith who, out of their faith, love their students and work with their students. Those people have been very forthright in their support for this bill, and many support even strengthening this bill.

I know our education critic who did the leadoff speech on this, our member from Toronto–Danforth, has been very forthright about where we think this bill should go, the amendments that we will be bringing forth in committee, the support we have in our own constituencies for it, the support we have around this House and the

necessity to get on with it, the necessity to get something into place—the necessity also, as I've said, to get into place the necessary supports, the necessary funding so that this bill can have some teeth, so that it can actually work, so that it's not just window dressing on a problem, but it actually becomes a solution to a problem.

That's as necessary as anything else. It's necessary in the memory of Jamie. It's necessary in the memory of all of those children who have suffered, and it's certainly necessary to those three who came to Queen's Park, and to all the brave teachers and others who stood with them.

0920

I must mention ETFO and OSSTF, as well as OECTA. I mean, these are teachers who have been on the front lines, who have demanded of this government an action on this front, but also, of course, some follow-up, also some funding to help implement it, which is not part of this, and also have suggested ways of finding that funding. In light of the budget and trying to find money from parcel A to pay for parcel B, might I suggest—respectfully so—that the EQAO, with \$150 million worth, is one of the places that we could look in the educational funding package to fund programs for our vulnerable students, because again, this bill needs teeth; again, this bill needs clout; again, this bill needs backing

To go back to my original points, Mr. Speaker: Do we support Bill 13? Absolutely, we do, in the New Democratic Party. Do we want to see it strengthened? Absolutely, and we will be introducing amendments at committee to do so. Do we support those children who want gay-straight alliances in their schools? Yes, absolutely. We recognize that it's not in every school they want it, but in the schools where they do want it, they should be allowed to have it. We should be standing with our students. That purportedly is what this bill is about. And yes, we stand with the teachers, all the teachers' unions, who day in and day out do just that: stand with their students. We recognize that whether it's separate school teachers in OECTA or those teachers in OSSTF or ETFO, all teachers are together on this one; they support their students and the students' voice in what they call their groups and when and where those groups take place.

I also finally want to thank the students, because without them this never would have happened. I want to thank those brave souls who have stood up against bullying and who stand up against bullying, and I want to send some compassionate messages out to those parents and those children who are the bullies. The answer to them, Mr. Speaker, is not throwing them out of school, kicking them to the curb, taking away their right to public education, but a program that actually deals with the problems that develop into the creation of a bully—and they are myriad.

So we in the New Democratic Party, with the leadership of Andrea Horwath, stand on the side of children. We stand there with love; we stand there with compassion; we stand there with people of faith and those who don't have faith. Finally and foremost, we stand there to prevent the deaths of our children—our children; they are our children. And we recognize the impact that this bill

will have if it's done well. That's our common cause here.

Let's get this bill done. Let's get it done well, let's get amendments in that will strengthen this bill and let's never, ever have an instance in this province again where a child commits suicide because of harassment. Let's stand with our LBGQT students. Let's stand with students who want a voice. Let's stand with them because we know, we've experienced it in our own educational experience, our children have, and we stand here to prevent our grandchildren from having to go through the same thing.

On that note, I'll close, and of course I'll look forward to being a part of the consultation process on this matter through our education critic, Mr. Tabuns, from Toronto–Danforth. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: First of all, I'd like to acknowledge the member from Parkdale–High Park for her deep and genuine commitment and compassion to the eradication of bullying. I agree with her completely. We are in this together and on the same page.

As a mother of two young teens, I know first-hand how bullying affects children—my own children and other children in Pickering–Scarborough East. Bullying can and does happen in many ways to children. My son was the tallest child in a primary grade, and the last person people thought would be bullied, but he was, physically. But it takes on many other forms, as we know.

As the chair of a school community council in my community for many, many years, I directly have been involved in many bullying situations, and I know how it can play out and how the process to address bullying can become very difficult for all parties if not managed properly, without proper communications, without support for everyone involved: the victims, the witnesses, the bystanders, the school staff, the parents and, last but not least, the bully himself or herself. I'm also very aware, through my involvement with the Durham District School Board special-ed committee, of the need to be sensitive for children with special needs and disabilities, and how they can be severely affected by bullying. We must make every effort to ensure this most vulnerable population is supported.

I've also seen how empowered children become in our schools when they are in an environment that creates a positive learning place for them, an environment that creates accountability, an environment where everyone adopts zero tolerance to bullying and, most importantly, respect for all. But we need to do more, and that's why I'm supporting Bill 13. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much. The member from Parkdale–High Park, I do respect her views. She's well-informed and very capable, competent commentary on this file.

I do want to read a thing from the Ontario Catholic school trustees, a document called Respecting Differ-

ence. I think it's important. There are some subtle words in here. You need to listen carefully, because I'm quoting it:

“Beliefs across a whole number of areas, including religion and cultural practices and more personal matters such as acceptable sexual conduct, will differ and these different beliefs are an aspect of living in a multicultural and pluralistic society that honours human rights and diversity. While it is an all too human temptation to insist that others share our beliefs and to eradicate the frameworks that make a variety of choices possible, forced acceptance of beliefs about which we may differ is not the hallmark of a free and democratic society but” the complete opposite.

What that's saying is that someone forcing you to accept their interpretation of their world is in itself bullying. That's the philosophical argument that I believe is important. I believe all forms of bullying are irresponsible and unacceptable.

The point we're making here is tolerance. I believe this document from the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, Respecting Difference, summarizes particularly how I feel about the issue. I believe that the secular society forcing views on non-secular society is in fact bullying. So if you look at it, we must respect differences and in fact not be bullies ourselves, on both parties. That way we can live harmoniously, and yet in a democracy, we have freedom of choice and freedom of religion. That's what this is about more fundamentally, not bullying someone to accept my way or the highway.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, I can speak volumes to that one, but I won't respond to those comments.

I would just say, though, to the presentation—

Mr. John O'Toole: I didn't write it.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, no, but I'm just saying—my point is that we can all be accused, as majority governments in this Legislature—Conservatives, Liberals and others—for exactly what you're talking about. That's why I was saying I'll leave that one alone. But anyways, we all have our ideologies.

To my colleague who gave a presentation, I just want to say, as usual, bang on.

I want to put something on the record, though, in regard to bullying itself. Both Bill 13 and Bill 14, which we're going to be discussing later on this afternoon, are obviously good steps towards trying to deal with the issue of bullying. I don't want to argue in any way that we should diminish the value of what these bills bring to this particular issue. But I increasingly get concerned that sometimes, we're looking for legislative solutions when really the solutions are what we do amongst each other as human beings. I have this little bit of a fear that somehow or other, we think that if we only can only come up with the right law, the world's going to be a better place. In some cases that may be true, but we really need to challenge ourselves. We need to do public education. We need to use our school systems. We need to, within the family, instil these kinds of beliefs that say, “Listen,

bullying of any form is not acceptable. Respect and tolerance for others is the order of the day.”

I've got to say, as a young boy growing up in northern Ontario in the late 1950s and 1960s, we've come a long way; I can tell you it was a much more intolerant society back in the 1950s and 1960s as I was growing up in our community. Is our community today very tolerant? I would say it's more tolerant than it was, but quite frankly, we still have a ways to go. I think we need to challenge ourselves. There are all kinds of “isms” out there, and we need to do more in order to educate each other on the tolerance of accepting others for who they are. Accepting and embracing that tolerance makes us better people.

0930

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I greatly appreciate the remarks and examples presented by the member from Parkdale–High Park. I think she was bang on in her examples and remarks about this issue of bullying. Safety is the key to student learning. The proposed legislation is about safety in our schools, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that as a former school board trustee with the Toronto District School Board, I've heard and observed many bullying incidents.

Like my colleagues, I want to acknowledge the many stories from our students, from our teachers, from our parents. It took a lot of courage for these people to come and share with us those stories because, at the end of the day, they didn't have to. Especially some of my diverse community: It takes a lot of courage to come out and say and tell us what are their concerns, what are their recommendations.

The proposed legislation, if passed, will protect all students in our schools. Some of my colleagues have already indicated that it will, first of all, bring tougher consequences for bullying and hate-motivated actions; require all publicly funded school boards to support students who want to lead activities that promote understanding and respect for all; require school boards to have policies.

What's wrong with having policies to support and provide resources to our students? This is what is most important for our schools. It also requires school boards to have Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week, so that it raises awareness about what bullying is and how we prevent bullying.

The proposed legislation is clear, with expectations, and increases accountability for everyone. We, as parliamentarians in this House, have a responsibility to make sure every student is safe, and this legislation is just the first step to protect every student, but together we have to do more—of course we have to do more—so that every student can be safe so they can learn, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for this opportunity to talk.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for High Park, you have two minutes to respond.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to all the members for their input—much appreci-

ated. I want to again reiterate, this is about student choice and student safety.

I want to deal with a little word that sticks in my craw a little bit and that's the word “tolerance.” We do not ask our parents or our teachers to tolerate our students. We ask them to love them. We do not tolerate difference; we embrace it. And this little word and words like it can make all the difference. They can make all the difference to the safety of our students. What we are calling for here in the New Democratic Party is not the tolerance of students. We're asking for the acceptance and the love of our students, and that's what our teachers have shown us, including our teachers from the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association. They have stood up. They're on the front lines. They are working with our students day in, day out, and they say they love them. They want them to be safe. They do not tolerate them.

So truly, if we want to “respect differences,” to use the other catchphrase, truly, if we want to respect differences, we have to—again I go back to the words of Jesus. He did not ask us to tolerate our neighbour; he asked us to love them. He did not ask us to put up with them. He said, “Judge not.” We don't judge them; we love them categorically. That was the call upon all of us who are Christians, and certainly in all faiths that is the call upon people of all faiths. And those of no faith but who have ethics and morals, it's a call upon you, too

So when we go from this place, I hope we go keeping our children in mind, keeping what they want in mind, not what we want for them, what they are asking for, and they are asking for the ability to define and direct their own futures. That's called love, Mr. Speaker. That's our call. Thank you.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I always find these particular conversations in the House extraordinarily personally difficult. I find it very hard not to be emotional about them. Because I think through most of my life this issue has unwantedly and with such great difficulty been at the centre of my life.

First of all, I just want to say some thank yous. I want to thank the member for Toronto–Danforth, if I can call him Peter. I know I'm not supposed to use first names, but I want to tell him I was both moved and inspired by his words and by his conviction.

I also want to thank the member for Parkdale–High Park, as I think she just gave—not just today—a very thoughtful, life-affirming, holistic, humanizing speech. She has dedicated much of her time in this House to the rights of gay and lesbian and transgendered people. I want to thank her publicly for that.

Gilles Bisson, my friend from Timmins–James Bay, thank you for your short, to-the-point, pithy retort. We need friends like you, and I want to thank you for your courage and your conviction.

I also want to thank my friend Laurel Broten, who has worked so darn hard on social justice issues and on leading this bill through.

I want to thank our Premier, who, in spite of what some people say, I think is a darn good Catholic. What many people never know is the kind of personal encouragement he has given me over the years when difficult issues have come up. I want to thank him for his quiet stand-behind-you kind of leadership.

I want to thank Jeff Leal and Maria Van Bommel and many of our rural members, some of whom aren't here. I know that some of them aren't here because of some pretty nasty robocalls that were just pure homophobia the night before the election. They know the courage it took for Maria Van Bommel to go to the Knights of Columbus and stand up for her faith beliefs about the value of human beings, their souls and a higher calling that brings us to this place.

Why is it so difficult? Because I'm tired of being—I thought we finally got past being a gay politician. I remember when we hosted the Pan Am Games in Winnipeg, when I finally no longer had to be the gay mayor, when my partner Rick and I no longer had to be the gay poster couple, when I fought every kind of horrible stereotype by religious extremists like Charles McVety when I tried to become a parent.

The hardest thing—and I mean years of hard work—was to become a parent. My son, Michael, who has fetal alcohol syndrome, is one of the most courageous young people I've ever met. What he has to do to get through life every day, on top of it to have a gay dad and to get bullied at school for having a gay father, to me, was just more than he needed. He kept on saying to me, "But no one else is standing with me. I've only got you." I used to say to him, "I've only got you, Mike."

Why are GSAs so important? I have a wonderful father. He passed away of prostate cancer at 63. He was a small-c conservative, a very prudent businessman. He worked hard his whole life, lost businesses, rebuilt them. He was one of the most incredible entrepreneurs I ever knew. He inspired me. He was one of the most honest people. He was so honest that he would go into a business and the shopkeepers would ask him just to put whatever product he thought, because my father was so honest. He would never put more stuff in the store than he thought he could sell.

You know, I grew up with John Diefenbaker and Tommy Douglas and Lester Pearson. Those are the kinds of people who I want, because my father admired those people, and he got involved in politics because of that. I admired my dad.

It wasn't the opinions of bullies or schoolyard bullies—and when I was growing up, I became a jock. I played football. I figured out the straight guys were the ones who were very athletic, so I became a very good hockey player. I watched my straight friends. I watched my friend who was straight, Jeff, who was tall, six foot two at a far-too-early age. He was a bit effeminate, and everyone thought he was gay and they thought I was straight, so they beat the crap out of him. They tore his underwear. They spit on him. They put excrement in his locker—Jeff, who was a straight kid, who everyone

thought was gay. They treated him—they called him an F-A-G and all kinds of other horrible names and beat the crap out of him, and everybody stood by and watched. All these good Christians stood by and watched, and it happened to kid after kid. It wasn't whether or not you were gay; it was whether people thought you were sissy or effeminate, or whether you're the young girl who was overweight. Kids could be cruel, and parents can stand by and watch it.

0940

I remember going for a walk with my father, who I admired, and he told me that he'd beat queers up. He made some of the most homophobic remarks I'd ever heard. And here, the safe place I thought I had in my house was to go home to my dad and my mom. Those were the people I loved, who I thought loved me.

The reason the GSAs, and not organizations for disabilities or black kids or aboriginal kids, are at the centre of this is because of our social discomfort with sexual orientation. That's what the Hotwire—Charles McVety and a few thousand extremists are going to be out on the front lawn. They're not here talking about kids with disabilities. They have no problem with stopping bullying against young folks who are unfortunately overweight or kids who are a little ungainly or awkward or a bit nerdy or whatever the thing is that brings on that horrible bullying. So it's not just bullying.

I'm going to support Elizabeth Witmer's bill, the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, because I think it's the right thing to do, and I want to commend my friends in the Progressive Conservative Party. I don't have any problem with the bill you're presenting. There's nothing in it I disagree with, and I think and I hope that we'll support it. But what it misses—and I don't mean this in a pejorative or a partisan way, because I think on this we have to be Ontarians first—is it's not just bullying; it's the indifference, the ignorance and the rejection that are more toxic.

Understanding that my father couldn't get the fact that his son was gay—and a few years later, sadly, he came down with cancer and died. It was only in the last years of his life that we really reconciled. He couldn't speak to me for three years. He said to me—the last time I saw him, we sat in bed. He was very ill with cancer; you couldn't even touch him. He held my hand, which I knew was very hard for him, and said, "Glen, you know, I fear for you, and for all of the kids like you who are gay. I hated gay people. I thought they were sick and perverse. I didn't want to even imagine that. When I realized my son was gay, I was embarrassed and I was humiliated. And if I thought that way, and you're my son and I couldn't reconcile it, how were all of the other people in power—when you go to get a job, when you try to find a life or have a child or do anything like that, how are people who don't love you, who are not your father, going to treat you? I don't see how you can have a future." I told him I admired him. He said, "I admire you, because"—now I was in my early 30s, and I had just gotten elected for the first time to city council in Winnipeg. He said, "I'm not

sure I would have the courage to live and walk in your shoes, knowing how people like me actually feel about you.”

My father was an amazing man. One of the reasons, if you look at my name on the thing—I put his name there, because he never got any recognition in his life. The closest I could get to getting my father’s name up there was to put my whole name up there. Every time I walk down there, I say a little prayer for my father and say, “I got there, Dad. I broke through that. I was able to fully contribute to my life.”

The reason GSAs are so important, and why I would ask my friend from Durham just to rethink this—I am a Christian. My faith is incredibly important to me. The hardest thing about being in this House is that my type of Christianity, the Anglican faith I grew up with—we’re not evangelical. My faith doesn’t stand out in front of Queen’s Park and tell everyone that they’re wrong and who’s going to hell and why Tim Hudak and Dalton McGuinty and Andrea Horwath always have it wrong. My faith is reconciliation at the end of the day, and every day I go to bed, there are things I said in this House where I’ve become intemperate and snapped and said something to one of you, often, that I shouldn’t, and I ask for forgiveness. I’m a great fan of—Julia, I forget your riding, but Julia Munro.

Mrs. Julia Munro: York–Simcoe.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: York–Simcoe. She’s a Quaker. I was out with my friend David Crombie for hours and we were talking about this. Many of us practise a faith, on both sides of this House, that is quiet, reflective, self-judgemental. The hardest moral issue for me is not my sexual orientation; it’s how do I be a loving, gentle, kind person when God gave me such a big mouth? How do I approach everyone with a sense of love and hope and trust, even if we have differences? How do we find what we have in common and put that ahead of ourselves? That’s what this bill is about. It’s about our ability to touch our common humanity.

As my friend Kathleen and I always say, on the unique journey that we’ve had in life—and one of the reasons I came into politics was I had been such an admirer of her and her leadership in understanding education. I really think she’s one of the best education ministers this province has ever had. When you talk to students, there is a texture to our schools that she brought. When she initiated this legislation when she was minister and started the idea of GSAs and a whole celebration of diversity—it is exactly that word. And my friend from Parkdale–High Park said this: It isn’t about tolerance. We want to love and celebrate every child. I wanted to be lifted up, when I was 14 years old, as a Christian. It was important to me. There was a sense of eternity and soul and reconciliation that’s much bigger than a reconciliation with the voters. We can debate every medieval interpretation of the Bible; that’s not what it’s about. Christ asked us very simply to live in the middle of other people’s lives, to accept what we don’t understand and to reach out and touch the humanity of each other without fear, and to find

the courage to do that. I think most of us will know in our lives, at the core of our faith, we’re searching for that courage on a day-to-day basis.

You know, it isn’t bullying. There’s no one here that’s suggesting that we shouldn’t teach a Catholic perspective in our schools. Let me read Charles McVety, who is a person who, if you had to find the philosophical polar opposite to my world—this is what he recently said in a news article editorial he wrote. He said that Catholic teaching is defined in the document, by referring to the document Pastoral Guidelines to Assist Students of Same Sex Orientation in the 2006 CCCB statement, which the member from Durham mentioned before: “Basing itself on sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity” and a tradition that declared—he’s quoting from the bishop’s direction—“homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.”

I have to say to the bishops: “You’re not allowed to do that anymore.” I’m not allowed to say to the Catholics—nor should I—or to other Christians or Muslims or Jews, that because of your faith you’re intrinsically disordered. I would never say to you that anything that goes on in your family with the person you love—can you imagine me describing a husband-and-wife relationship as inherently depraved? Can you imagine how it feels to gay and lesbian families and to our children in schools when people like Charles McVety say we’re unfit to be parents? How much do you love your children? How would you feel, as an Ontarian or as a Canadian? You feel a little less Canadian. I feel a little less welcome in my own country every time someone like that is endorsed.

It’s not that I don’t understand it or that I think that everyone’s a homophobe; I don’t. My father wasn’t intentionally homophobic. He arrived honestly through the culture he grew up in, in the 1930s and 1940s and the war, to an attitude about masculinity and some pretty awful attitudes about the role of women. Every time I see *Mad Men*, it’s not that far a stretch from where women lived, and we think we’ve come a long way.

I’m disappointed when my friend from Markham–Aurora goes on Charles McVety’s show to launch his campaign for elected office, and enthusiastically embraces the endorsement of Charles McVety. So I would ask him not to do that. I would ask him to spend more time together with me and other members, and I would like to have more time to try and reconcile with people like that. Because when you take the support of folks—you will remember, this was circulated in my constituency by people. It was put out by the PC Party. It was done with Charles McVety, and it says some horrible things about gay people.

I would ask the party opposite to stop doing that. You wouldn’t like it if we put out a heterophobia. I don’t believe that most people in this House are homophobic. I don’t believe these kinds of political tactics. It is the impression that young people get, including their MPPs. You know, the only thing in this curriculum—and please read it. None of this is actually even true. Gender-bending? You know what it is? It’s young girls sometimes

playing the words that young boys—in fairy tales, that the princess runs off to save the prince rather than the other way around.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's Robert Munsch.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's Robert Munsch. Thank you, Kathleen. I mean, this is the kind of stuff that most kids read about. If you want to call it gender-bending and make it sound like something offensive—I just think women have a right to be equally treated, like boys.

When I was a teenager the woman who ran to my rescue was a counsellor named Sue Baker, who was the only gay-positive person in my entire school, who came and told me I was okay. As a matter of fact, she said, "I think good things are coming up for you." There was a point in my life when I had no support at home. None of the family-life education when I was in school meant gay people. Everything was negative. There were no role models. The only role model I ever had was Harvey Milk, and he was shot dead in San Francisco 11 months after he was elected. That was the first person.

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You've got to remember, I was elected in the 1980s in the prairies. I represented fundamentalist Muslims, Christians, Filipinos. I used to go and pray on Sundays with 80 evangelical pastors who had said some of the most horrible things about me because my faith demands reconciliation and listening and not being afraid. So why don't we try to do that? Why don't we actually try to make this Legislature, in a motion in this session, a GSA? Why don't we make this a gay-straight alliance? I think that would be a powerful, powerful tool.

I want to celebrate every child. The hardest issue I've had to deal with since I was there was in a school, one of the high schools. There was a young Pakistani boy who, unlike this—we saw these ads in the National Post, and I give the National Post credit for apologizing for them and withdrawing them. Because this also got large circulation in my constituency, given that a lot of the families in my constituency have two moms or two dads. This family, when they found out that their son came home one day and thought he was a girl when he was going through puberty—which is a way transgender kids are—and his parents had no context to do this, I got a call because the school counsellor didn't know how to deal with this properly and was afraid. The local police officer from the district came to my office very upset, saying, "We can't stop this. They're going to take this young child back to Pakistan for an honour killing." That's what goes on in some communities. Were these terrible parents? If you want to murder your own child, it's pretty terrible. But when people come from a faith culture where they have no context for this, the school can be the only rescue place. So yes, sometimes the school has to stand up to parents to protect the child. That's where I would disagree with the person from Durham: It's not just a matter of freedom of expression; it's a matter of the sanctity of the child's life.

So we were able to intervene with one of the groups, and I want to thank Susan Gapka and the many people in

the trans groups, and Davina Hader and these wonderful women who got together with me.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Bring it in. Bring it in.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Absolutely. You and I are there, sister.

That's important, because this child's life was saved. We got a judge. We got a young lawyer who helped us out. We stopped the child from being taken away and killed, and that child is alive.

You can imagine if this happened in my friend Jeff Leal's community of Peterborough. There are some communities that have less capacity to understand this, and that child would have lost their life.

It is about celebrating diversity. It isn't about taking Catholic teaching out of Catholic schools; it's about putting life-affirming, positive images and stories around gay and lesbian children, Muslim children, kids and women of all shapes—that not all girls have to look like Barbie dolls. It is about having a truthful celebration of that. It's about valuing and holding all our children up.

I think it would be wonderful, really wonderful, if both Bills 13 and 14 passed, because I think they both are good; they both have their strengths. I think this would be a good time for some forgiveness on both sides. It would be a good time for those people who have associated themselves, hopefully wrongly, maybe out of some pressure, with the folks like Mr. McVety—wouldn't it be wonderful if there wasn't a single member of this Legislature out there present when he does his normal thing, "Gays and lesbians aren't fit to be parents. They shouldn't have children," and his whole—his web page is now called "Corrupting children."

It's hard for me, as a parent who struggled so hard to raise my child, and having to fight to get the right to do that; to take a child who was street-involved, who was sexually abused, who got involved in some pretty horrible things and some even more horrible things that adults did to him—I can't imagine—when someone talks about corrupting children, I can give you a long list of how people are corrupting a child. Loving, positive gay and lesbian and transgendered parents aren't part of the corrupting; they're part of the loving and caring.

I want to thank all of you today—and I want to particularly thank those of you who come from communities where this is hard; people like Maria Van Bommel, my friend Jeff, many of you who come from strong faith traditions where it's hard for people to understand why you would stand with people who have faced discrimination as so many people in our community have—for your courage.

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

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I stand here today to speak about Bill 13.

Minister from Training, Colleges and Universities, as a mother, my heart goes out to you. But everything that you said today echoes what my son has said—you know, fears for all kids to be accepted.

The other night, my son and I and my family were sitting down, and we were speaking about Bill 13 and

Bill 14. My son was born with a vision problem, and he was out of school. Every one of us has situations with our children, people who we know. We were sitting there talking because I had to take him out of the school that he was at because he was beaten up so many times. I said to him, "Son, I'm going to take you out and I'm going to take you to another school, but at the end of the day, you're going to have to learn the tools to deal with people who treat you the way they treat you," because I didn't want him to become a victim.

But as I sit here today, I'm saddened because we all are God's children. When my son sits there and says to me, "Mom, why are you just talking about one thing when we're all discriminated? That's discrimination, when all of us feel the way we feel." I know for him, he's said many, many things that the minister spoke about, how he felt going to school and how he felt getting up every day going to school.

When I went to school one day to pick him up as he was coming out, a couple of the kids called him a few names that I won't speak of in here. I wondered to myself, how does he get up every day? I didn't have that situation growing up when I was a child. I was heartbroken because I thought, every day children get up, and every day as adults, we're bullied as well in certain circumstances. How do we function, and how does he function getting up?

I want everybody to be accepted. I want everybody to feel that they're okay and not to be in situations where they can't get out of bed. They feel that they need to be respected and loved and cared. Every single person deserves that.

I know for my son, my children and every person sitting in here, every one of us deserves to feel that we are somebody and that we are cared about. I know it goes on, and that's accepted, but it's not acceptable.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to follow the member from Toronto Centre, the minister, with a friendly amendment. He did not describe himself as an evangelical. I do, because evangelism means sharing the Good News. I wrote a book called Que(e)rying Evangelism that won the Lambda in Washington, DC. Charles McVety does not have proprietary onus on the word "evangelism." Evangelism means sharing the Good News. The Good News of Jesus was love. It was not judgment and it was not hatred. Christians do not hate.

When our church performed the first legalized marriage—we followed Brent in that regard—it was vetted by Thunder Bay, unlike his. But we were subjected to unbelievable torment from people from the States. I won't mention names and I won't say what they said. Our members were targeted. When our music director, who was a transperson, died, the outcry from the so-called Christian right was outrageous.

Forty years ago, when I was obviously only about four years old, I stood on Parliament Hill on We Demand. From those days to this day, some things didn't change

enough, and the member from Toronto Centre pointed to those things.

We need to do so much more. It's just not enough anymore to condone any of the actions of those who pretend to be Christian—because they're not. That's what I'll say: They're not Christian. That's not the Jesus Christ whom we read about in scripture and that's not the Jesus who those of us who proudly carry that banner feel we follow. Again, he called us to love our neighbour. He did not define who that neighbour is. What Charles McVety and his crew do is not loving. He called us to judge not. What they are doing is judging, by any definition.

We need to finally move beyond that, to show them for who they are. It's not just a sect. It is not Christian, it is not evangelical, it is not right.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member from Scarborough—Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to thank the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities for his remarks this morning, and sharing his personal challenges and journey with all of us. That took a lot of courage, Minister, and I want to say thank you. Not only are you passionate about this issue, but the fact that you have the courage, the leadership and the vision—because this is what this is all about. Leadership takes courage, and that was courageous this morning. So thank you for that.

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Bill 13 is the first step in what our government is trying to do to address the issue of protecting and supporting every student in our schools. As the first Chinese Canadian woman in this House, I could share with you too many challenges that the minister went through—the racist remarks and the phobic remarks attacking my own family in the 1970s, the 1980s, even the 1990s. So I certainly know that this proposed legislation is to prevent more bullying and to protect our students in our schools.

The proposed Accepting Schools Act is a key component of our government, to make all Ontario schools safe, healthy and inclusive learning environments so every student not only feels accepted but also feels safe—I cannot stress enough.

I don't know how many times, as a former school trustee, young people came to my office, and their parents, crying, begging me to do something. But there wasn't legislation. There weren't guidelines and policies. Yes, we have a very progressive school board in Toronto District School Board, but of course more can be done.

Our government and this province is recognized nationally and internationally, around the world, as having the best English-speaking schools in the world. We need to make sure every child is given an opportunity to learn, Mr. Speaker, and this is what the legislation is about.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from York—Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: On the one hand, I feel I have a very short time to make any comments, and at the other end of that is the fact that it's difficult for people to—so I almost feel that this is too much time.

I want to talk for just a moment about the fact that we regard ourselves as a civil society. I know there's been a

great deal of discussion about our faith, and I'll deal with that in my case in a moment. I think as members of a Parliament, as members of a civil society, what we're really talking about is the question of tolerance. When you listen to those who are able to share individual stories, it's the fact that other people have not been able to tolerate and understand whatever kind of difference it is. As we can think back, as children we were probably bullied at some point. Actually, I dealt with mine in a way that today would have had me expelled. The point is that it's got to be the question—the mark of a civil society is its tolerance.

I listened very carefully and with a great deal of emotion to the minister's speech. I recall, as a teacher, a young student of mine who came in wearing a button that said "Gay and proud," and you can't imagine how much that took for him to be able to do that. It was like a beacon or a magnet. It certainly meant that he recognized his position and the importance of dealing with others. I was fortunate enough to be a confidante of his, actually, after he finished high school, and I can assure you that those issues that he had to deal with as a young gay man didn't go away, and—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Mrs. Julia Munro: It's very important.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister, you have two minutes to reply.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank my friend for York-Simcoe. I just want to pick up on something you said. Tolerance is the foundation of this. It has to be there; otherwise, people aren't safe. But we need to move, quite frankly, past acceptance to celebration, because we have differences. To me, it's not just about being gay; it's the fact that the suicide rate is higher amongst gay and lesbian and transgendered youth than amongst any other subgroup. It's just the group that is most impacted.

When I was mayor of Winnipeg, I represented a heck of a lot of Mennonites, Sikhs. I was just talking to some of my colleagues who are going around in gurdwaras right now saying that the Liberal government is bringing forward a bill to teach people how to be homosexuals in school. Well, you couldn't get a more toxic kind of response about dividing one group of people, especially a community for whom maybe English is not their first language, who create these misconceptions—because it's hard to do that. That's what actually puts their children—because a lot of those Sikh kids have gay kids, and a lot of those Sikh kids are getting beaten up for wearing turbans or being marginalized in their own schools, and facing racism and religious intolerance.

My journey was a different one than my friend from York-Simcoe, but I just wanted to say that this has to be a respectful place for everybody. I never chose to make being gay the issue. When I went to be a parent, I didn't want to have a fight over being gay; someone else made it the issue. When I ran for office, I didn't make a big deal about being gay; someone else made it the issue.

I would have been quite happy—and what we're fighting for is nothing. I look forward to the day when it is completely inconsequential, boring, and people yawn when they find out you're gay. We're still not there yet.

I think anyone who has any kind of difference—a religion they believe in passionately, whatever it is—just wants to have a comfortable place and be able to contribute to society the way everyone else does.

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

Mr. Rob Leone: I want to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities for that very thoughtful and emotional response in furthering the debate on this issue.

I think I share with most people who listen to that the fact that you actually had to endure that. I don't think you actually can really understand what you had to go through unless you walk a mile in someone else's shoes. I think the minister today in his comments went a long way in telling members of this House and those who are watching this debate in these proceedings exactly what he has gone through in his life. I would share with him and I share with many members who commented on that discussion, Minister, that what you faced was deplorable. I want to say to you and to members of this House that I want to stand shoulder to shoulder with you with respect to fighting the kind of intolerance, to fighting the kind of hate that we have been seeing going on, particularly with this issue, but in society in general.

I think we have to make sure we're talking about this issue when we're talking about Bill 13, that we have to stay mission-focused. This bill is about our kids. It's about our kids being safe in our schools. It's about our kids going to school knowing full well that when they're there, they're going to be in an environment that's safe, that allows them to be the bright minds that we expect them to be: the future of this great province.

So I want to stand here today in my place as a member of the PC caucus to demonstrate my solidarity with that position, Mr. Speaker.

A few people, in the comments that we've seen over the last little while—one of the comments that I've heard on this issue has to do with, "Well, don't we have policies in place in our schools already that deal with bullying?" I think that the comment is an interesting one and one I think that deserves further elaboration.

You see, Mr. Speaker, I know that particularly when I was going to school, which wasn't too long ago—I was in high school during the 1990s; I'm sure they would like to elaborate on that a bit more. We on this side of the House came forth with a safe schools act. We talked about violence in our schools, something that we feel very strongly about.

Let me perhaps provide you with a definition of violence that comes from the World Health Organization: Violence is defined as "the intentional use of physical"—and psychological—"force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likeli-

hood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation.”

I think, Mr. Speaker, a lot of people who have talked to this issue already have listed a number of examples where people have faced violence. I think it's very important for us to understand that we are dealing with violence, whether it's physical violence or whether it is violence of an indirect nature, whether it's by words or defacing property and so on and so forth.

One of the things that came out of the Safe Schools Act was a code of conduct. I want to point out three points. There were multiple points, but the three that I'd like to talk about today are sections 3, 4 and 5 in that code of conduct.

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Section 3 of that Safe Schools Act code of conduct is, “To maintain an environment where conflict and difference can be addressed in a manner characterized by respect and civility.” I think if we live by those words, Mr. Speaker, it goes a long way in sort of alleviating some of the concerns that we've been raising in this House. This is already in legislation. Section 4 says, “To encourage the use of non-violent means to resolve conflict.” Again, I think this is something that we like to talk about in both Bill 13 and Bill 14. Point number 5 of this code of conduct is, “To promote the safety of people in the schools.” I think that is ultimately what we're tasked with, Mr. Speaker. We're here to try and come up with a robust, best-in-North-America anti-bullying bill. I think that's our goal, a goal we share on all sides of this House.

I think it speaks to a long-standing Conservative principle, which is that governments should intervene when something is happening that harms: where a person is harming another individual, a group is harming another individual, a group is harming another group or a group is marginalizing another group—the harm principle. The harm principle was first discussed by John Stuart Mill, who articulated the harm principle in his volume *On Liberty*. He states that “the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others.”

Mr. Speaker, we stand committed to helping our kids go to school in a safe and nurturing environment. We produced policies when we were in government that effectively did that, and we're certainly very interested in seeing that discussion proceed.

So what is that difference between violence and bullying? What produces a reason for us to debate this issue in this Legislature today? Let me perhaps provide a few definitions of what bullying actually is. According to Peter Smith, who prepared this definition in a report to the OECD on bullying, it is “generally agreed that bullying is a subset of aggression: namely aggression that involves (i) repetition and (ii) imbalance of power.” So you see, Mr. Speaker, it's a subset of violence, some of the things that we've talked about in previous legislation. It's talking about violence that's recurring, that's repetitive, and it speaks to an imbalance of power.

A few more definitions: In 1993, Farrington wrote, in volume 17 of *Crime and Justice*, “Bullying is repeated oppression, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person.”

A 1994 book, *School Bullying*, by Smith and Sharp suggests that bullying is “the systematic abuse of power.” Systematic abuse of power—it's not isolated; it's systematic and it's all-encompassing to that degree, Mr. Speaker.

A 2002 book by Rigby that tried to apply new perspectives on bullying said that bullying involves six criteria. It involves a desire to hurt. It involves a harmful action. It involves a power imbalance. It typically involves repetition. It involves an unjust use of power. It involves evident enjoyment—this is I think one of the most unfortunate parts of bullying—by the aggressor and generally a sense of being oppressed on the part of the victim. If there's anything that speaks to a call to action on this file, it is very much related to those words, of trying to eliminate, if we can, this enjoyment by the aggressor when they are victimizing people. I think this is something that's very important to suggest.

Now, the OECD report that I referenced talked about several different types of violence and bullying. There are six types. The first is a direct physical attack. The second is an indirect physical attack on belongings and property; we're talking about vandalism. The third is a direct verbal attack, so that's oral, or it might be a letter, might be a text message, might be an email or something you post online. There's an indirect verbal attack, which is the spreading of rumours. The fifth is a social exclusion from normal group activities; and finally, institutional aggression/manipulation, which is setting unrealistic goals by groups.

I realize I'm out of time, Mr. Speaker. I hope to resume this debate when we do that. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'd like to introduce and welcome Judy Nuttall to question period today. Judy's a great community activist and a huge children's advocate in Barrie. Welcome, Judy.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Today I want to welcome Golf Road Junior Public School from the great riding of Scarborough–Guildwood to the Ontario Legislature. They are in the Legislature. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I'd like to introduce my wife, Janet MacLaren. She's here in the gallery. I brought her here today to prove I have a job here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll provide a Speaker's note to that effect.

Introduction of guests?

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: I have the privilege of introducing Kashtin Fitzsimmons and Holly Easton to the House today, who are here to watch the proceedings during question period. Welcome.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to introduce to the Legislature this morning Mr. Jonathan Bosman. Jonathan is a regional facilitator for Gideons International in Canada.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It gives me great pleasure to introduce and welcome Fátima Mesquita from Brazil to the Legislature today. She's been a new Canadian for over nine years. Thank you for being here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests? The member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I'm waiting for yet another guest, but his father is here: Jeryl Jaque from Mississauga South–Lakeview. His son will be arriving in short order. His name is Charles-Etienne Jaque. Welcome to the Legislature. I look forward to having lunch with you today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's try that again: The member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker. I have some very special guests to introduce today on behalf of page Alexander Ruddy, who is also the page captain today. I would like to introduce members of his family: Belva Cousens, John Cousens, Jane Cousens, Laura Cousens, Ethan Kerr, Jake Eadie, David Eadie, and of course I have a special guest, Don Cousens, a former assistant Speaker of the House and MPP from Markham from 1981 to 1994. Please welcome them all.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Mississauga–Streetsville did steal the Speaker's thunder, but let's make sure that this is official. The former member from Markham and York Centre in the 32nd, 33rd, 34th and 35th Parliaments is in the west gallery: Don Cousens. Welcome.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On Monday, March 26, 2012, the member from Cambridge, Mr. Leone, rose on a question of privilege concerning statements made by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in the course of her responses to oral questions in last Thursday's question period.

The responses in question dealt with the minister's ability to act during the election period on irregularities in the business practices and operations of the Ornge air ambulance service and with the role of her ministry on that file during the election period.

The member for Cambridge invited the Speaker to make a finding that the minister's statements amounted to a prima facie case of contempt on the basis that the minister deliberately misled the House. The government House leader, Mr. Milloy, and the member for Simcoe–Grey, Mr. Wilson, also spoke to the matter.

Having had an opportunity to review last Thursday's Hansard, the notice submitted by the member for Cam-

bridge, the remarks of the members who spoke to the question of privilege, Tuesday's attempt by the minister to clarify her responses and the parliamentary authorities, I am now prepared to rule on the matter.

As noted by the member for Cambridge, McGee's Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand identifies what needs to be established for the Speaker to find a prima facie case of contempt based on a member deliberately misleading the House. Pages 653 and 654 of the third edition of this text states as follows:

"There are three elements to be established when it is alleged that a member is in contempt by reason of a statement that the member has made: The statement must, in fact, have been misleading; it must be established that the member making the statement knew at the time the statement was made that it was incorrect; and, in making it, the member must have intended to mislead the House. The standard of proof demanded is the civil standard of proof on a balance of probabilities but, given the serious nature of the allegations, proof of a very high order. Recklessness in the use of words in debate, though reprehensible in itself, falls short of the standard required to hold a member responsible for deliberately misleading the House. The misleading of the House must not be concerned with a matter of such little or no consequence that is too trivial to warrant the House dealing with it. A misunderstanding of this nature should be cleared up on a point of order.

"For a misleading of the House to be deliberate, there must be something in the nature of the incorrect statement that indicates an intention to mislead. Remarks made off the cuff in debate can rarely fall into this category, nor can matters about which the member can be aware only in an official capacity. But where the member can be assumed to have personal knowledge of the stated facts and made the statement in a situation of some formality (for example, by way of personal explanation), a presumption of an intention to mislead the House will more readily arise."

Satisfying the criteria to find a prima facie case of contempt based on a deliberately misleading statement to the House is difficult to do and rarely achieved. As Speaker Carr indicated in his ruling on page 102 of the journals for June 17, 2002:

"The threshold for finding a prima facie case of contempt against a member of the Legislature, on the basis of deliberately misleading the House, is therefore set quite high and is very uncommon. It must involve a proved finding of an overt attempt to intentionally mislead the Legislature. In the absence of an admission from the member accused of the conduct, or of tangible confirmation of the conduct, independently proved, a Speaker must assume that no honourable members would engage in such behaviour or that, at most, inconsistent statements were the result of inadvertence or honest mistake."

In the case at hand, the minister indicated that she was standing for election during the election period and had not been sworn in, and that the ministry was operating in

a caretaker role, making it inappropriate for the ministry to share the Auditor General's draft report on Ornge with the minister during that period. She also indicated that "when a writ is dropped, the responsibility of the minister changes, and that the ministry is in charge of the operations."

In a response to a subsequent question, she indicated that she took action shortly after she was sworn in as minister in October 2011. Finally, the minister indicated as follows:

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"When the House is dissolved, when we are in that interim period between the writ dropping and the new cabinet being sworn in, there are limitations on the activities of ministers.... [W]hen I was sworn in as minister in October, after the election, I was made aware of the issues that were examined by the auditor and I became aware that the auditor was having trouble getting information from the people at Ornge, so I called the Auditor General and I asked him about that."

Let me now assess these remarks. First, I accept that during the election period, the caretaker convention acts as a restraint on some governmental activities. That being said, it is not for the Speaker to decide or rule on the ambit and application of the convention, because Speakers traditionally avoid delving into constitutional and legal matters better left to governments, courts and litigants. Even if I could look into such matters, the minister's remarks about the existence and the application of that convention in the case at hand stand uncontradicted and therefore do not satisfy the test set out in McGee's text.

This brings me to the minister's remarks to the effect that she was not sworn in during the election period, and that she was sworn in after the election. Many members, including myself, were surprised by these remarks. If the minister was referring to her not being resworn in as a minister until after the election, this does not detract from the fact that, based on her 2009 appointment as Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, she would still have been in charge of her ministry during the election period. She would have been in charge because ministers normally retain their ministerial status during the election period so that the province is never without a government.

The brevity or the incompleteness of the minister's remarks on the matter of whether and when she was sworn in were unfortunate. She sought to rectify the confusion on Tuesday when she indicated that she had not intended to suggest that she was not the minister during the election period, or to suggest that she was not responsible for overseeing Ontario's health care system during that period.

The important point about last Thursday's remarks and Tuesday's clarification was that the minister did not concede, and no one has established, that she both made and intended to make a misleading or incorrect statement, or that she both made and intended to make irreconcilable statements to the House.

Moreover, it is not enough to say that, in the cut and thrust of question period, a minister's elaboration on, or

clarification of, something the minister said earlier in question period points to a strategy of misleading the House. What we are left with, then, is a disagreement on the correct interpretation to be placed on the minister's words, and as to the nature and the application of the caretaker convention.

For the reasons I have indicated, the onerous threshold established by the parliamentary authorities on the subject of misleading statements has not been reached in the case at hand.

A prima facie case of contempt not having been established, I do thank the member from Cambridge for the very thoughtful submissions in his notice. I also thank him, the government House leader and the member from Simcoe-Grey for speaking to this matter.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Peter Shurman: Speaker, in the days, weeks and months before the budget was tabled, we saw the signs that the government was going to back down—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Which minister is getting the question?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Sorry; I didn't say "To the Premier."

To the Premier: In the days, weeks and months before the budget was tabled, we saw the signs that this government was going to back down and avoid taking the measures that are necessary to turn Ontario's economy around and present a weak budget. They used the Drummond report to delay taking responsibility for their failed management of Ontario's finances, and then subsequently dismissed their own economist's recommendations for cutting government spending.

Speaker, the Premier spent another \$2.5 billion he didn't have, and the Premier said that \$214 billion in debt was "not that bad." Premier, just how deep does the debt have to go, how extensive does the deficit need to be, before your government finally stops your wasteful spending?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I thank the honourable member for his question. Speaker, I have a concern—and I think it's shared by more and more Ontarians—that Her Majesty's loyal opposition keeps painting itself further and further into an ever-smaller corner of unreasonability.

Speaker, we introduced, just 48 hours ago, a budget of great significance. The budget documents themselves are 354 pages long. The budget bill itself is 355 pages long.

Former Premier and Finance Minister Ernie Eves said, "I think they made a step in the right direction. I don't think there's any doubt about that." Janet Ecker, former Ontario finance minister and president of the Toronto Financial Services Alliance, said, "We strongly support

their efforts to eliminate the deficit. It is an important step for Ontario's future economic growth...."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Speaker, two provinces released their budgets this past Tuesday. One province's deficit was down; the other province's deficit went up. One province is receiving \$35 million less in equalization payments this year; the other province is receiving \$1.1 billion more.

Given this government's track record and spending habits, it's not surprising that the province with the larger deficit and receiving more payments is Ontario. But I don't know if anyone has ever expected to see the day that New Brunswick was better off financially than we are. How did your government manage to put Ontario in a position where New Brunswick is reducing its deficit and receiving less in transfer payments while Ontario's deficit keeps going up and we're getting \$1 billion more in transfer payments?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: A couple of things, Speaker. First of all, I want to draw to my honourable colleague's attention an important finding in the Drummond report. I forget exactly which page it appeared on, but he said specifically that in 2009, our relationship with the federal government cost the taxpayers of Ontario a net \$12.3 billion. I'd recommend that to my honourable colleague.

But I want to get back to this point of the corner of unreasonability in which they continue to paint themselves. I have quotes here endorsing our budget from the Royal Bank of Canada, from TD Bank, from Scotiabank, from the Dominion Bond Rating Service, from BMO Nesbitt Burns, from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, from the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario, from the Ontario General Contractors Association, and a host of others.

Again, I say to my honourable colleague opposite, they have time to reconsider, Speaker. Nobody in the province of Ontario is looking for an election. We're looking for a way for all of us to work together and to move forward—

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: Premier, since you don't seem to want to face facts, I'll give you the answer; it's simple. Your out-of-control spending continues. Your own economist said spending increases have to be held to 0.8%. You failed to do that. Instead of cutting your spending, you're spending more than you did last year. You claim you will save \$17.7 billion, but your additional spending adds up to \$18 billion over five years. What is the Premier going to do, Speaker, to make up for this \$18-billion hole?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, again, my honourable colleague is part of a political movement which has very, very little support in terms of their determination to cause an election within six months of the very last election.

I would bring to my honourable colleague's attention some of the measures in our budget which I think are

going to be very important for them to consider. We reduce our spending by nearly \$18 billion. We tackle compensation in a firm but fair way. They ask that we take into account wages. We're doing more than that. We're tackling both wages and benefits, and then we're going beyond that to deal with a very thorny issue, and that is the whole notion of public sector pensions.

Again, I say to my honourable colleagues opposite, don't marginalize yourselves. Be part of the—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let's maintain momentum. Let's—

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

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Peter Shurman: Back to the Premier, Speaker. You know, there's only one person in this entire Legislature who, if an election should eventuate, is responsible, and that's Premier McGuinty.

Ontarians were counting on this government to take real action to turn Ontario around. Our party made a series of recommendations to reduce the government's spending, but they were all rejected. Instead, we see that the government will spend more, not less—billions more, in fact: Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, up; Ministry of Consumer Services, up; Ministry of Finance, up; Ministry of the Attorney General, up; 14 out of 24 ministries, up. Is it any wonder that when you finally get to the line item, "interest on debt," it's up?

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Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, it's become clear that the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Attorney General, come to order. Come to order.

The member from Nepean–Carleton, please do not ignore me when I say, "Come to order."

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Sorry, Speaker, I didn't know it was you.

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Peterborough is not helping.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The party to the right of us says that we are not moving aggressively enough; the party to the left of us says that we are moving too aggressively. That tells us, Speaker, that we probably have it just about right.

We're holding our spending, over the course of the next three years, at 1%. The Drummond commission recommended that we hold our health care spending at 2.5%; we're bringing it in at 2.1%. In the past, we were spending around 6% in health on an annual basis.

We are doing everything, Speaker, from tackling compensation to reducing the office space used by our public

servants by one million square feet to reducing the number of workers in the OPS by some 4,900. It's a balanced and reasonable and thoughtful budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Speaker, the budget that this government presented on Tuesday shows that they just don't get it. As the old saying goes, "Denial is not a river in Egypt." This government doesn't want to comprehend just how deep a hole they've dug this province into.

Our province is in historic debt and a deficit that equals three times the total of every other province combined. Your answer to that is to spend \$1.7 million per hour more than what we take in in revenue. Any reasonable person understands that to control debt, you have to rein in spending. You didn't do that; you decided to spend more instead. We'll go \$1.75 million further into debt in this one hour of question period.

How much worse does it have to get before we finally see you take some responsible action and rein the spending in?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I say to my honourable colleague that the former leader of the Conservative Party, the former Premier of the province of Ontario, in fact, disagrees with him. Mr. Tory just yesterday said—another leader of their party, Speaker; I'm sure they'd be interested in this—"I hope there is no election. I think that would be a waste of time and money, given everything."

I say to my honourable colleagues in Her Majesty's official opposition that they give careful consideration as to whether or not the people of Ontario want to be plunged into another election within six months of the last one. If they are truly committed to strengthening our economy, if they're truly committed to a determined recovery, how is it that they think that a provincial election is going to contribute to that in any way, shape or form, Speaker? I ask them to consider that.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: I say again, Speaker, that any election is on him.

You have not reduced the deficit, sir, and you are not creating jobs. The 2011 deficit is \$15 billion; the 2012 deficit is \$15.3 billion. You have put Ontario on a disastrous path to a \$30-billion deficit, and your broken promises will cost our province 30,000 jobs.

The Ontario PC Party cannot support a \$30-billion deficit. We cannot support more debt. We cannot—and we will not—support a further 30,000 job losses.

How can you stand here today and pretend that this budget makes tough choices when the deficit is increasing, when spending is increasing and when debt is increasing?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I don't understand the 30,000 job losses. I think it's a matter of fiction.

Again, if they have a written plan, Speaker, if they have a written plan they're prepared to put forward, I'd like to see that. I want to repeat: The budget documents

that we put out 48 hours ago are 350 pages; the budget bill itself is over 350 pages.

I say to my honourable colleague once again, I'd ask them to take the time to be reflective, to give some serious consideration to the substantive elements that we've introduced by means of this budget. It does protect health care, it does protect education, it does balance the budget and it does build a foundation for jobs and growth.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. New Democrats have asked Ontarians to join us in giving the budget some very serious consideration, and I want to share some of their thoughts.

Richard from London told us that the budget, "has done nothing to address the lack of jobs in Ontario. The lack of opportunity for young people in Ontario will have a lasting effect on the entire economy."

In the lead-up to the budget, I put forward some concrete plans to link tax relief to job creation and training.

What does the Premier say to people like Richard who want to see action on jobs in this budget?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I appreciate the question. Jobs are a very big component of this budget. There is a southwestern Ontario economic development fund, which I would encourage my honourable colleague to support. We had some great news in the auto sector just yesterday with Toyota announcing 400 new jobs, Ford announcing 100 new jobs and General Motors announcing 300 new jobs. I'm pleased to say, Speaker, that in every instance, we have been partnering with those companies.

I remind my honourable colleague as well that an important dimension of this budget is our new jobs and prosperity fund. It will be some \$2 billion. We look forward to working with the opposition to lend focus and strategic purpose to that to ensure that it is in fact creating new jobs and enhancing our productivity.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, New Democrats and Ontarians disagree; we watched 4,000 jobs leave this province last month.

David from Oshawa says this, Speaker: "As a young person (age 23) with a university education, I have been unable to find a well-paying job. I find that most jobs are low paying or part-time for young people like myself, and this budget does not address this key issue...."

"I was hoping to see some sort of job creation measures in this budget and was sorely disappointed that it was not addressed."

This budget contained a lot of bad news for people, Speaker, particularly those people who are worried about jobs.

Is this Premier willing to consider changes that would actually give Ontarians like David some help and some hope?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We are open to reasonable amendments that do not compromise our three over-

arching goals. First of all, we must balance the budget in 2017-18. Secondly, we must protect health care and education. Thirdly, we must build a stronger foundation for new jobs and new growth.

There is no receptivity on this part over here on this side of the aisle for new spending. I must make that perfectly clear to my honourable colleagues opposite. We've worked long and hard to bring forward a budget that is responsible, that puts some specific restrictions on new spending.

So there's no room for new spending—I've got to make that clear—but if there's other things beyond those measures that help us meet our objectives, then we're more than open.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: James from North Bay wrote: "They should be using" Ontario Northland "as a strategic asset to grow the north and not sell it off for their bottom line. Doing this will cripple the north and have a much larger effect than the 1,000 ONTC jobs."

A job strategy should leverage our assets, like Ontario Northland, to create jobs all across Ontario.

In the lead-up to the budget, I put forward some concrete ideas to create prosperity and jobs in the north.

Is the Premier willing to consider changes that create jobs and give people like James some hope for the future?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We remain open; we will not back away from the decision we made with respect to ONTC.

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I will remind my honourable colleague that we're going to continue to invest over \$30 billion in infrastructure over the course of the next three years. That will create, on average, 100,000 jobs every year. Our healthy homes renovation tax credit will create 10,500 jobs every year. Our OLG modernization plan will create some 6,000 new jobs. Our Ring of Fire development—we're talking about 1,500 permanent jobs there. The Pan Am athletes' village—some 5,200 jobs. And there's a lot more. In fact, building jobs and creating jobs is an important component of this budget.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. People are worried about jobs, but the state of our health care concerns them as well.

Martin from Toronto is worried about the impact of frozen budgets on our hospitals. He writes, "Health care is important to every one of us since we all have someone who at one time or another is benefiting from our health care system."

I've put forward some concrete ideas about changing our health care system to ensure that it's there for people who need it when they need it. Is the Premier ready to address the concerns of people like Martin?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I want to make it as clear as I can: We're open to positive, constructive pro-

posals, but we're not open to new spending. We've got to balance that budget in 2017-18, we've got to protect health care and education and we've got to build a new foundation for jobs and growth. Those are the simple parameters. Those are the overarching goals. Those are the unwavering objectives that we will achieve and that we're absolutely committed to.

Beyond that, I tell my honourable colleague again that in fact we're increasing spending for health care—that's one of our priority areas—by 2.1%. We're going to do that in the smartest way possible. We want to begin to shift some of the increase in spending away from hospital-based care to community care, including home care. That's something that we committed to in the campaign, and I know that's something that my honourable colleague supports: more investment in more home care. I think we're increasing our home care budget by some 4%. That's a significant increase.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People who contacted us have expressed real concern about CEO salaries. This budget does nothing to curb outrageous CEO bonuses and lavish perks. It's a bitter pill for everyday Ontarians to swallow service cuts while CEOs get richer and richer and richer on the public dime.

Gavin from Point Edward writes this: "I was disappointed that there was no cap on CEO bonus[es] ... especially in the health field."

What does the Premier say to people like Gavin?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I say to my honourable colleague, I know that she's been very determined on this issue and consistent, and I commend her for that. But I'd ask her to consider what we've done in the budget. We'll freeze executive compensation for two more years, for a total of four years. We're requiring that the boards of directors benchmark their salaries internally against public sector comparables around the country. We also say that when it comes to bonusing and the like, that they abide by certain restrictions that we put in place.

Having said that, if my honourable colleague has other considerations that she'd like us to put forward, other considerations that do not cost Ontario taxpayers any money, then we're very open to considering those.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, I look forward to the government looking at public sector comparables, particularly in health care around the country. It's something that we advise.

Rebecca, a nurse from Sarnia, writes this: "I am really worried that the first cuts to be made to health care will be nurse layoffs. There is so much other waste in health care that it upsets me that we are often seen as a drain on the system and not an asset."

Carlo from eastern Ontario is blunter. He says the government is "trying to make the poor pay for the mistakes ... [like] Ornge and eHealth."

People see tough times ahead for our health system. Is the Premier ready to consider changes that will actually help build for our future for a healthy health care system?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: That's exactly what we're doing. And as much as possible, we want to protect those jobs, because that's the way that we protect the quality of services for the people of Ontario.

You'll know, for example, Speaker, that one of the things that Don Drummond's commission has recommended is that we abandon full-day kindergarten. There are some 10,000 jobs that we would have lost doing that—and removing our cap from class sizes. He also recommended that we get rid of some 11,000 educational support workers. That's 20,000 jobs-plus. We said that we're not going to do that because that's going to compromise the quality of education that we deliver to our children.

We're going to bring the same perspective to health care as well. Our determination is to maintain jobs for our nurses so they can continue to provide great, quality service to our patients.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. After the Auditor General found that the government had ignored the warning signs at Ornge, your government House leader tried to blame this inaction on the opposition; and your Minister of Health blamed everyone and everything, from the provincial election to the charitable status of the organization.

Does the Premier agree that his government's response is irresponsible, unbecoming of his ministers or just plain sad?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Members will be interested to know that yesterday, the public accounts committee had a chance to question both the minister, the deputy minister and Mr. McKerlie, the acting head of Ornge, for over two and a half hours. It was an opportunity to start to ask some of the detailed questions that members have been asking back and forth. And those questions, Mr. Speaker—many of them have been about when briefings were received, when letters were received.

The only point that I'm making to my colleague from the New Democratic Party is that we had to hear for weeks and weeks about a letter that the minister received in January, and yet at the same time, the NDP forgot to tell us that they received a similar letter about two months earlier.

So I see the public accounts committee has a chance to clear the air on many of these issues.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am going to remind the minister that answers are to be about government policy and I'd like answers directed such. References to what the opposition is doing are not conventional.

Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Two years ago, members of this Legislature asked the right questions on Ornge, like

why Chris Mazza's salary was hidden from the public record. But we received no response from the minister.

Here's what the Deputy Minister of Health said yesterday in that very same committee: "I think that what's clear is that ... the ministry has not followed its own procedures."

Premier, why aren't you asking your minister, who didn't do her job, to resign?

Hon. John Milloy: I know the members of the committee will be anxious to speak about this. In December 2010, December 15, the leader of the New Democratic Party—and it was c.c.'d to the member from Nickel Belt—received a detailed letter about Ornge that they've never raised—no questions were raised. It talked about a number—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please.

I asked the minister not to make that reference. Talk about government policy, please.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, yesterday at public accounts there was an opportunity to talk to the Minister of Health, the deputy minister and Mr. McKerlie, the acting head of Ornge. I'm pleased to report my understanding is that public accounts will be sitting—it's now on Wednesdays that it sits. It will be sitting over the next number of weeks to continue to look into Ornge. I think all members would join with me in hoping that the discussion at the committee looks at a whole range of issues.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation. Minister, the manufacturing sector in southwestern Ontario has felt the economic crush of the recession much deeper and longer than many other areas of the province. In my riding, many of my constituents once worked in the auto sector in many plants across the region.

Since the recession jobs have been harder to find, but my constituents and neighbours aren't giving up hope. Many of my constituents are thankful for the investments made by this government that have kept the auto industry afloat during the toughest of days.

Will the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation please tell this House about the state of the auto industry today and give reason for my constituents to keep their optimism alive?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Ontario is home to five of the world's top automakers. Within hours of our budget being released, three of those companies announced over 800 new jobs for Ontario workers in southwestern Ontario and the Niagara region.

Four hundred jobs will be added to the Toyota plant in Woodstock, where they'll build the highly successful RAV4. The investments we made with Toyota are certainly paying off.

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In Essex, Ford announced 100 new jobs and a third shift at their engine plant, where they produce motors for

the highly popular F-150 pickup truck. Ford said the announcement would not have been possible without the strong support and leadership of our Premier, Dalton McGuinty. And GM just announced 300 jobs at its new six-speed transmission line in St. Catharines.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario's auto sector is growing stronger and that's great news for our economy and great news for Ontario workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: I would agree with the minister. As a Liberal from Windsor, I'm proud to be part of a party that continues to stand behind our auto sector and create thousands of jobs in the process. It's particularly exciting news about the expansion at Ford; to the Minister of Environment's constituents about the GM transmission line; and I'm sure the member from Oxford would agree that the 400 jobs announced by Toyota will be welcome in his riding as well.

But it does concern me that the party opposite isn't in line with our investments in the auto sector. In fact, they've referred to them as corporate welfare and the picking of winners and losers. That's not very welcome language when talking about companies investing millions of dollars in our province.

Can the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation please inform this House why these investments are so critical to our job—

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: Ontario's auto sector employs nearly 485,000 people and contributes at least \$20 billion to our economy. The auto industry's now bouncing back, and that's great news for Ontario workers in southwestern Ontario and right across the province.

The investments the McGuinty government made in support of the auto sector during the heat of the recession helped save those 485,000 jobs. The Institute for Research on Public Policy called our auto sector investments a "smart one-time move" that saved the government billions of dollars in the long run.

I'm glad, Mr. Speaker, that we chose to ignore the advice of the Leader of the Opposition and the PC Party, who did not support those critical investments. I'm sure Ontario workers are glad it was us calling the shots on those investment decisions and not the PC Party.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday at the public accounts committee, the deputy minister insisted that there's nothing in the auditor's report to indicate that a life was put at risk due to delayed or cancelled emergency aircraft. However, on page 38 of the auditor's report, the auditor states, "We found that Ornge internally reported 20 'significant patient adverse events' in 2009-10 to its board of directors, including some that"—unfortunately—"involved patient deaths."

It is troubling that the individual the Premier has asked to oversee fixing Ornge could have missed such critical

information. Does the Premier now recognize the need for a select committee on Ornge to hear from front-line staff and fix the problem?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: As I mentioned in my previous answer, I think members will be pleased that the public accounts committee has had an opportunity to begin their hearings. They began yesterday with a session with the Auditor General and yesterday afternoon the minister, the deputy minister and Mr. McKerlie, the acting chief of Ornge, were able to be there. They talked at public accounts of the action that the minister took when she learned of wrongdoing. She of course, Mr. Speaker, called in forensic auditors, called in the police. She replaced the board, the CEO. Mr. McKerlie's now the acting chief. She replaced the performance agreement and she introduced tough new legislation.

In terms of committee hearings, Mr. Speaker, public accounts will continue to look into this. My understanding is there's a robust list of witnesses—

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would again take the question to the Premier. It was, I will tell you, very troubling yesterday to hear the deputy minister say that no lives had been put at risk or was there any cause for concern about patient safety. So I think if we're going to restore public confidence, which has now been shattered by the minister and the government that ignored problems at Ornge for many years and were brought to our attention by front-line staff, we believe it's critical that we have a forum where these individuals could speak freely, without fear of reprisals or threats of lawsuits.

I ask the Premier today: Will he appoint a select committee and will he demand that the health minister resign?

Hon. John Milloy: With the greatest respect to the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, I think she is doing a disservice to the public accounts committee of this Legislature. The public accounts committee is a committee traditionally, as it is in this case, chaired by the opposition. It has members from all parties who have come together to agree to look into the Ornge situation. Mr. Speaker, the public accounts committee has all the powers of a legislative committee in terms of calling witnesses and in terms of calling for papers.

I would also point out that at the public accounts committee, witnesses that appear in front of it enjoy the type of privileges and immunities of witnesses appearing before all public committees, standing committees, of this House. I know, Mr. Speaker, the member would in no way want to suggest that the witnesses that will be appearing do not enjoy those privileges.

Mr. Speaker, the public accounts committee is the forum to look into Ornge and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member for Nickel Belt.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. In March 2010, two years ago, New Democrats filed a freedom-of-information request asking why Mr. Chris Mazza's salary was being hidden from the public. The response we received—and that was confirmed yesterday at public accounts—said that 32 records were found, but none were shared with us. Then, in November 2010, we asked again, during estimates, why were the executive salaries at Ornge hidden? The response, Mr. Speaker, was filed yesterday while we were in committee.

Can the Premier explain why his health ministry only requested to see the salaries in December 2011?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, to the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite, who was of course in the committee yesterday looking at issues related to Ornge. I was very pleased to appear before that committee, Speaker.

Here are the facts: Within eight weeks of my becoming aware of the draft Auditor General's report, I had a forensic audit team on the ground at Ornge going through every piece of paper at Ornge. Within three weeks following that, a new interim CEO, Mr. Ron McKerlie, was in place. Two weeks after that, a new board, a very high-calibre new board, was in place. The new leadership team has taken significant action to focus on issues around patient safety.

I was at Ornge this morning, Speaker. I spoke to the front-line workers and I also spoke to the board, and I'm happy to talk more about that in the—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, the minister kept increasing the budget of Ornge year after year, without asking them to disclose any salary paid to their top executives. The government is looking to blame a faulty performance agreement, but not only did they already have the possibility to look at Ornge's books, this agreement was modified several times since 2005.

Was the reason that no one asked about the executive salaries at Ornge because high pay for CEOs and well-connected insiders is the norm with this ministry and this government?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I completely reject the insinuation of the member opposite. The Attorney General has acknowledged that we have taken substantive, concrete action when it comes to Ornge. He has described the changes at Ornge as a sea change. The member from Newmarket–Aurora, not the greatest champion of the folks at Ornge, has acknowledged that the ministry intervened very aggressively.

This morning at Ornge, I spoke to front-line staff who are delighted with the changes that have happened at Ornge, Speaker. I met with the new board, where they reiterated their top priority under the leadership of Dr. Barry McLellan, the issues of patient safety. They are

winding down the for-profits; some have already been wound down. Things are changing at Ornge, and the people of this province are the beneficiaries of that change.

1120

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Mario Sergio: My question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. Minister, I was pleased to see in Tuesday's budget that although there will be some modest decreases in infrastructure spending over the next six years, the government will continue to maintain a very robust public infrastructure investment program. I'm pleased because we have seen that properly leveraged, healthy investments in infrastructure create jobs in communities like mine and across Ontario.

The new engineering and science building at York University is a great example of a great project that will likewise generate a lasting economic and social benefit as we educate the next generation of Ontario engineers and scientists in my riding of York West.

Minister—through you, Speaker—can you share the long-term outlook, how it is for further investment in building job-creating—

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I want to thank the member for raising an important question. The fact is, there were some very difficult decisions to make. Yes, there is some reprofiling of some future projects, but the member is absolutely right: We are retaining an exceptionally robust infrastructure program, with \$12.9 billion on the table for the coming year and more than \$35 billion over the next three years. To put that in perspective, those investments will create and preserve over 100,000 Ontario jobs in each of the next three years.

The member mentioned York University, a great example where upwards of 1,200 jobs in the construction trades are being created as a result of this investment.

So the longer-term outlook is very positive, both for jobs and continued investment in building stronger communities. A robust infrastructure program, Speaker, creates jobs, but every dollar—

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

Mr. Mario Sergio: Minister, thank you. I've heard from many people in the building community who believe that the budget reflected the right choices and the right priorities for Ontario as we eliminate the deficit, protect our gains in health care and education and create jobs. These are people who collectively invest billions in our economy and employ thousands of Ontarians.

They likewise find the position and priorities of the Leader of the Opposition recently rather troubling. They cannot understand why the PC Party would make the choice to oppose the budget before they had even read it.

Again, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister, when it comes to making responsible job-creation investments in infrastructure, will the minister continue to seek the advice of the people who actually work in that sector, people whose jobs—

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. We already listened to the infrastructure business sectors, and they have applauded our budget.

I'm proud of the major projects that we are moving forward with, which unfortunately the PC Party has decided to vote against. Many of these projects are in their very own communities.

In Simcoe North, we are going to continue moving forward with the Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care in Penetanguishene. In Durham and Oshawa, we are going to continue moving forward with the 407 east extension, which is going to create about 13,000 jobs, Speaker, most of them local. In Whitby–Oshawa, we are going to continue moving forward with widening Highway 7. In Kitchener–Waterloo, we will move forward with the new Global Innovation Exchange for business and mathematics at Wilfrid Laurier University.

It's just disappointing, Mr. Speaker, that we will be creating jobs in those ridings held by PC members who will vote to kill those jobs.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, to the Premier: Yesterday at the public accounts committee, the Minister of Health indicated that because Ornge is a federally regulated charity, it's off limits to her oversight. So, now that she has declared federally regulated charities off limits to the provincial government, does that mean WSIB can't go in and audit them to ensure proper deductions are being made, or the Ontario Securities Commission can't ensure that investments comply with Ministry of Finance guidelines? Is the Ministry of Revenue restricted from auditing Ornge to ensure OHIP deductions are being properly made?

Do you really expect people to believe your lame excuse that you had no oversight abilities for Ornge because it was a federally regulated charity?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Now, I am no lawyer, Speaker, but I have received advice from legal counsel on this issue. The member opposite should know that what we're talking about is the incorporation status. We're not talking about registered charities; we're talking about where the incorporation of the entity is. We are changing that. We are changing the performance agreement, we have changed the performance agreement, and we—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We're getting into the yelling again, Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we took decisive action. One of the pieces—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member for Northumberland, come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —to recall is to change the incorporation status from a federally incorporated organization to something under the Ontario—as an Ontario-registered incorporated organization.

What is important to the people of this province is that we are bringing far more transparency and oversight. I will be able—

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, this Minister of Health's excuse she could do nothing about Ornge because it is a federally regulated charity is pathetic. It is particularly so because in the next breath, she tries to take credit for intervening at Ornge.

For weeks, she has been saying she should not be fired because she took action to get the board to resign. Just yesterday, we learned that she had done nothing to get the board to resign. The deputy minister told public accounts, "The board agreed to resign on their own volition." The minister is starting to get quite a track record of inaccurate things she is telling this House. How is it—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would caution the member of trying to say something that you can't say as unparliamentary language, and I ask him to be cautious of that, please.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you for the caution.

How is it that even the board at Ornge had the integrity to know when to throw in the towel and resign, but you don't?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, my job as the Minister of Health is to fix the problems as they arise, and I have done exactly that.

We are moving forward with important changes at Ornge. With the new legislation, if it passes, we will be able to send in a supervisor as soon as the public interest, we feel, is threatened. Under the new performance agreement and under the new legislation, we will have much stricter oversight of Ornge. There will be much higher transparency and, most importantly, we will have a rigorous quality improvement and quality reporting system.

We are making the changes at Ornge. I wish the member opposite would support us as we make these changes.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. In the middle of a province-wide social assistance review, the McGuinty government has unilaterally decided to delay the rollout of the Ontario child benefit, to freeze social assistance rates and to cut funding for emergency home repairs for people most vulnerable on social assistance. Why is this government undermining its own social

assistance review process by unilaterally imposing these changes?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I appreciate the question and the opportunity to speak to this very important issue. As I said a number of times, we've worked really hard to put together a budget that reflects the values of Ontarians, and Ontarians want to do what they can to help children who are growing up in poor families. That's why we created the Ontario child benefit in the first instance. It's the only benefit of its kind in the country, I am very proud to say. In 2007, when we began, it was \$250 on an annual basis; today it's almost \$100 every month.

Our commitment is to increase it to \$1,310. We decided that we can't afford to do it all at once, so we're going to increase it by \$100 next year and \$100 the year after that. I think that's fair, it's balanced, it's responsible, and it's reflective of our continuing commitment as a society to build a caring society.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again to the Premier: The Premier will know that under his watch over the last eight years, poverty rates have soared in this province. But we're hearing from hundreds of people across Ontario who are concerned about this government making it harder for people, so let's listen to their voices.

These are some of their stories: Mazen from Mississauga asks why the Ontario government is "targeting the poor." Andrea from London says, "Welfare and child benefits are essential for supporting vulnerable populations."

Can the Premier explain—not to us, Mr. Speaker, but to Mazen and Andrea—why his government is making it harder for families to afford nutritious food or a decent place to live?

1130

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you for the question. I'm happy to speak to it. I have to disagree, of course, with the member opposite. Perhaps she wasn't listening to the answer that I gave yesterday, where it indicated that in the first year of our poverty reduction strategy, we actually lifted 20,000 children out of poverty.

I'm going to quote an organization that she knows well, an organization called the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction. In the annual report this government released last December, that organization said: "The first lesson to be learned is that a government commitment matched by good policy can make a big difference in people's lives...."

"In Ontario, child poverty actually fell between 2008 and 2009, inching down from" 15% to 14%.

"In Alberta, for example, child poverty soared by 25 per cent in the same period. What's the difference? Ontario took concrete action to reduce child poverty." That was from the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Speaker, as an Ontarian and as a Liberal I'm really proud that Ontario leads the OECD when it comes to post-secondary attainment. This is because of the hard work and investment that the Liberal government has put in, in the last eight years, to make our post-secondary education of the highest quality, to make it accessible and to make it affordable.

But there are people now saying that because these are tough times, maybe we should hold back a little. I disagree with that, Mr. Speaker, because I think the single most important thing we can do for our youth today is to continue to invest in post-secondary education so that we can all have a prosperous Ontario for generations to come.

Can the minister tell me what he's planning to do to ensure that low- to middle-income families can continue to have—

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank my friend for the question. Our government is trying to address a serious challenge. Many middle-class and low-income families right now have two, three, sometimes four young people graduating from high school, entering colleges or universities or the trades. This puts an enormous stress on that.

In the last election, Premier McGuinty, listening to people, and my predecessor, the member for Kitchener, developed an idea which I think has been a very responsive and precise one, which is to offer students within four years of high school 30% off their tuition. Part of the reason is we had 90,000 more students come into our colleges and universities last year—more than in the double cohort. This has been a phenomenal program for our students.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Minister, as you know, my riding has Sheridan College; it's a state-of-the-art college, and I'm delighted and really privileged to have that in my riding. As a result, I try to stay in touch with students and meet with student groups. One such group was the Ontario undergraduate students' association. They expressed to me their concerns: "What happens if tuition goes up? What happens to the 30% tuition grant? Will it be indexed?"

Can the minister please tell this House what his plans are to make sure that the 30% grant continues to be affordable if tuition goes up?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: In introducing the budget, the Minister of Finance made the point that education is an incredible priority for this government. Mr. Speaker, this budget—my friend from Mississauga East—Cooksville will know, and I know is a big supporter of—will do two things: One, it will see an average 10% increase in student aid funding over the next three years, keeping

with our commitment to make sure that 70% of Ontarians have it; and, under the leadership of the Premier, we will be indexing this grant as well, so that it will always hold its real value for people. That means that the grant will not fall behind as tuition goes up. I think these are extraordinary commitments to the people of Ontario.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Todd Smith: The message today is for the Premier. I was reading the headlines and experts all over the place are panning the budget as much to-do about nothing.

Here's one from the Financial Post: "Timid, Not Tough." In the article, Ontarians are told that there's going to be another 30,000 job losses as a result of this budget.

Premier, in your budget, you raise taxes on big employers, you raise taxes on small employers, you raise taxes on drivers. You're very thorough about raising taxes. That's what you do.

Premier, since you chose not to give us a jobs plan in your road map to ruin that you laughingly call an austerity budget, can you tell us why you're taxing the only job creators in the province right now, small businesses?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Based on the member's question, it's clear we have a lot more to do on literacy and numeracy in our schools. In fact, the budget has been well received by a variety of authorities and experts around the country.

This budget moves to protect the gains we've made in health care and education as we move back to balance. I welcome the endorsement of people like Ernie Eves. I welcome the comments of Janet Ecker. I welcome the comments of a variety of others—accountants, economists.

These are difficult decisions. They're the right decisions. It's a strong plan for a better future for all of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: This minister obviously should be going back for a little brush-up on math education when you look at this budget.

Interjection: The old victory lap.

Mr. Todd Smith: The victory lap still exists, that's for sure.

Premier, you can hide behind this finance minister all you want, but you're going to wear the blame for this economy. You're to blame for this economy. You're to blame for the debt that's rising after this so-called austerity budget. You're to blame for tax increases on corporations. You're to blame for tax increases on small business. You're to blame for single-handedly putting 30,000 more Ontarians out of work. And you're to blame, Mr. Premier, for making this province a have-not province in Canada.

Will you at least show some courage, sir? Will you admit to businesses that the chief accomplishment of

your budget is to drive more jobs to the western provinces, where at least the Premiers are competent?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I might refer the member opposite to the Globe and Mail today and their lead editorial talking about how he and his leader, Mr. Hudak, have been digging in dismissively and unnecessarily in trying to force an election.

Mr. Speaker, that is irresponsible. We haven't seen any ideas from that party. Even in this morning's Toronto Sun, I noted that a very highly regarded columnist with the Toronto Sun, Christina Blizzard, noted, referring to the Conservative Party and Mr. Hudak, "If he votes against this budget, he votes against tough measures he's been asking for."

You know, they're trying to have it both ways. This budget is a strong plan, it's the right plan and it's the appropriate plan for a better future for all—

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

NORTHERN TRANSPORTATION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. On January 27, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines opened a brand new bus depot in Sudbury. He said at this event, "I am pleased that that this modern, new bus depot location will help provide better service for users of Ontario Northland in Sudbury."

We fully agree with the commission's decision to build a new bus depot. We fully agree; it was the right decision. Our question is, why did you turn your back on the ONTC a month, a month and a half after it opened this depot?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: We didn't turn our back on anyone or anything. What we are going to be building is a modern transportation system for northeastern Ontario, one that will meet the present needs and the future needs.

This was a difficult decision, because we know that there's going to be some impact on some workers. We want that impact to be as minimal as possible. We look forward to everyone's help at ensuring that we provide that system with the minimal negative impact on the people who work at the ONTC.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. The ONR employs 1,000 people, men and women in northern Ontario. It operates eight stations and works with 60 agencies throughout the province. The last time we heard about ONTC pulling out and that privatization was going to take over was with the aircraft, and we don't have aircraft service anymore. We're afraid we're not going to get any service at all anymore.

So why on earth did the government open a brand new passenger terminal weeks before this announcement, and why are they now announcing a garage sale of the ONTC?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The reality is that that bus terminal is a leased facility. ONTC does not own that facility. I want to make sure that the member understands that.

At the end of the day, what we want in place is a sustainable transportation model in northeastern Ontario. We see that as helping to build the economy of northern Ontario. If you have a transportation model that's not sustainable, how can that be a positive influence in affecting economic opportunity in northern Ontario? So as we move forward, with the help of everyone in northern Ontario, we will devise that model that is best and that will meet the needs of the present and the future opportunities—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: —northern Ontario.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, on Saturday, March 30, from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., people across this province and around the world will turn off their lights for Earth Hour, an initiative to show public support for taking action on climate change. I know that in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, families throughout the community will be turning off their lights to mark this historical event and show their support to tackle climate change.

Speaker, through you, would the minister explain to the House the significance of Earth Hour and what our government is doing to participate in this important event?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want to thank the member for a very serious question.

Earth Hour is an initiative spearheaded by the World Wildlife Fund as a call to action on climate change. Individuals, businesses and organizations will turn off lights for one hour, delivering a powerful message that everyone can make a difference in climate change. Everyone can take part in Earth Hour. Just one hour symbolizes the difference we can make in our climate change.

Last year, 63 buildings owned by the government of Ontario, along with individual Ontario public service employees, joined 4,616 cities across 128 countries, over seven continents, in this gesture to promote energy conservation. This year I'm pleased to announce that over 70 buildings owned by the government of Ontario will be participating.

On Saturday, March 26, from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., I encourage all of my colleagues to join the Ontario public service and millions of individuals in this most important gesture.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Minister. While it is important for people to turn off their lights during Earth Hour, it is also important for them to turn off lights that are not used each and every day. Turning off the lights is an important method of electricity conservation in On-

tario. I know that in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, my residents, especially the young people, are embracing electricity conservation and are trying their best to reduce their consumption, saving electricity.

Minister, people are concerned about the impact of conservation on their bottom line. Minister, can you please tell the House what conservation is doing to reduce Ontarians' electricity bills?

Hon. James J. Bradley: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thank you, and that's right: Earth Hour—the member is absolutely right. Earth Hour is Saturday, 8:30 to 9:30. Save energy, but also save money.

A couple of easy ways: You know, if you change 10 light bulbs and put in those energy-efficient ones—we've got saveONenergy coupons for those—\$50 a year, you save. Power bars: a power bar with a little timer is \$6 a year. But here's my favourite: If you turn off the air conditioner for up to six hours a day—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please, please.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm just trying to save the member from Renfrew some money. He might like to know it.

Turn off the air conditioner for up to six hours a day during the summer while you're not around: \$90 savings. I think we can all use that for the things we most appreciate.

VISITORS

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to note students here today from Centennial College and Collège Boréal visiting the Legislature. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome them. It's not a point of order, but we welcome them and warn them against learning something from the gallery at the press level, or something to that effect. But thank you.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment on a point of order.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I want to correct the record: It was Saturday, March 31, from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member does have a point of order. You can correct your record.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do want to make one observation for all of us today. I would again remind us that we don't want to engage in a shouting match when it comes to heckling. I would recommend that we all consider each other's questions and answers.

What I've noticed, and I'm hoping we can get past it, is that when the question is being asked, sometimes the members from the same party are making noises while the question is being asked, and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. I am serious. I'm trying to make a point here.

And when the answers are being made, the same members of the same party are heckling. I'm asking you to use your own reserve, use your own self to gauge what it's like in here. It's not me; it's you guys, and I'm hoping that we stick to that.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1146 to 1300.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member for Scarborough–Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Speaker. I just want to correct my record. Earlier this morning in question period I mentioned Earth Day as March 30. It actually should say "March 31." Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. That is a point of order. Members are allowed to correct their record.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to introduce two very good friends to the assembly today. They're seated in the west gallery: Merle Bowes from Lanark county and Gary Kelly from beautiful downtown Deloro.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CONSTITUTION OF CANADA

Mr. Randy Hillier: Today is an interesting and significant day in the constitutional history of Canada. By happenchance both the British North America Act, 1867, and the Canada Act, 1982, received royal assent on March 29.

Today, March 29, is the 145th anniversary of the royal assent of the British North America Act and the 30th anniversary of the Canada Act.

Unfortunately, however, many Canadians are uninformed when it comes to our Constitution and our history. As such, the Canadian Constitution Foundation has set up an innovative project with a fantastic website to help educate Canadians about our Constitution, on everything from the division of provincial and federal powers to the rights that are actually in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I personally believe that this is a very worthwhile effort which deserves the utmost support and recognition of this Legislature.

Today I will be tabling a bill to commemorate and proclaim the 29th of March as Constitution Day here in the province of Ontario.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: Algoma–Manitoulin consists of several rural communities. Constituents depend on small family-run businesses to provide the services of ServiceOntario. In previous years, ServiceOntario has given incentive to businesses in rural communities by providing them with a stipend—because they know that without these top-ups, it would be impossible to otherwise break even.

Now, ServiceOntario has notified them that this stipend will be discontinued, leaving most of these providers unable to cover their costs, therefore forcing them into difficult decisions, imminent closures and services lost for northerners.

Northern rural communities in Algoma–Manitoulin will never have the same demand as a larger town or city, but this doesn't mean that they don't deserve the same services.

I have spoken to our critic for government services, Paul Miller, MPP for Stoney Creek, who has also highlighted these concerns to the ministry. I have been in weekly contact with these service providers in my riding, some of whom have met with representatives from ServiceOntario. When they asked if this issue of the stipend would be revisited, they were told no.

As an MPP representing northern communities, I have witnessed how this government is denying rural Ontarians access to services they need. We are concerned about the overall direction this government is taking with ServiceOntario.

I am highlighting these issues because I strongly believe that wherever you live in this great province, you should receive the same services as everyone else.

CANADIAN AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I rise in the House today to acknowledge and support an important part of our shared Canadian heritage.

Many of my constituents have been calling my office with concerns regarding the closure of the Canadian Air and Space Museum located at Downsview Park. I also share their concerns and strongly believe that this important part of Canada's aircraft industry cannot be discarded.

A prolonged battle between the non-profit organization that runs the museum and its landlords, the federal crown corporation of Downsview Park, has resulted in a situation where the collection of artifacts is in danger—artifacts such as World War II bombers, Royal Air Force biplanes from the 1930s and a full-scale replica of the legendary Avro Arrow, which is a milestone of Canadian technical achievement.

Under current plans, the site is slated to become an ice rink. The hangar, which houses the museum, is part of

history itself, built in 1929 as home to de Havilland Canada, one of Canada's most successful aircraft manufacturers.

All Canadians should have access to our history; it is an important part of nation-building. This collection should continue to be available to the public, for our generation and future generations to come.

ROTARY PLACE

Mr. Rod Jackson: Today, it's my pleasure to honour an initiative that will serve many people from our community and surrounding area. Rotary Place at Royal Victoria Hospital officially opened its doors this month on March 19. Currently, this building houses a family teaching unit connected to the University of Toronto. Part of the building also includes Rotary House, a residential lodge for patients with cancer who are travelling for care. This lodge will serve up to 40 people in 20 rooms and will open at the same time as the new RVH cancer care centre.

This long-overdue facility was made possible only by the incredible effort and commitment of people in our community. David Blenkarn, the chair of the I Believe campaign, and Stewart McBoyle, the chair of the service club division, and the three Rotary clubs in Barrie spearheaded Rotary Place.

To paraphrase Eric Dean, the foundation chair at RVH, what makes this initiative unique is the degree of support from the 12 Rotary clubs in the Simcoe and Muskoka area. In total, these commendable clubs contributed over \$1.5 million to make Rotary Place possible.

Rotary Place is a true example of what it means to be a community and what it means to be from Barrie. I appreciate their efforts to make our community what it is.

ALICE HEAP

Mr. Rosario Marchese: This afternoon, I would like to remember Alice Heap, the social justice advocate and activist who left us late last week.

Alice was the life partner and wife of Don Heap, the former Toronto alderman, city councillor and MP for Trinity-Spadina.

She worked tirelessly on poverty issues, social housing and justice. She fought against racism, and advocated for refugees and for those without a voice. She reminded us that we, as individuals, can always contribute, work alongside those who need our support and, together, do better.

Alice was selfless, always sharing her time, her skills and her resources with the people and issues she cared about. Most importantly, Alice was our friend, and the moments we shared together will accompany us always.

ABORIGINAL FAMILY FESTIVAL

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm pleased to rise and note a wonderful milestone for a great event that takes place in

my riding of Ottawa Centre. The 15th annual Aboriginal Family Festival is taking place this Saturday and Sunday at Carleton University's Ravens' Nest gym.

I'm very privileged to live in Ottawa, which is located on Algonquin territory. Because of that, this event has grown so remarkably in these 15 years. It started in the Odawa friendship centre's own small gym years ago and has since grown into Carleton University's Ravens' Nest, a truly enormous space that shows just how well attended and important this festival is to my community.

The festival is truly youth-focused, and young people are encouraged to be involved not only in the dancing and drumming but to be involved and active in their aboriginal culture and tradition—a tradition and way of life that is so important to cherish and honour. I think it is wonderful that many of the young people who have grown up attending this event in the 15 years since its beginning continue to participate as adults, parents and mentors.

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The festival is organized by a committee of organizations and agencies in Ottawa, and I would like to recognize them for their excellent work in organizing this event, as well as all the volunteers and community members who make it a success: the Odawa Native Friendship Centre family program, the Makonsag Aboriginal Head Start program, Minwashin Lodge's Sacred Child program, the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, the Ontario Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Strategy, Gignul housing, the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa and the Carleton University Centre for Aboriginal Culture and Education. Meegwetch.

LONDON LIGHTNING

Mr. Jeff Yurek: A very important announcement here: In front of 5,106 fans at the John Labatt Centre, the London Lightning beat out the Halifax Rainmen 116-92 in game 5 in an exciting final showdown to become the first NBL Canadian champions. NBL Canada is an exciting new chapter in the country's basketball history.

In their first season, the Lightning had a record of 28 wins with only eight losses. The team ranked number one in scoring defence per game, number one in turnover margin and number one in scoring margin. Gabe Freeman led the team in scoring, averaging 18 points per game.

We all know that basketball is a Canadian sport and was invented by Dr. James Naismith. It is a fast-growing sport in Canada. Over 600,000 Canadians ages 15 and older play the game regularly.

I want to congratulate the team, coach Michael Ray Richardson and Canadian players Mike King and London-born Pat Sewell.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: Nearly two and a half years after the global recession hit its lowest mark, many of the

world's leading economies have not recovered all their recession job losses.

Neither the United States nor Great Britain has as many people employed today as they did before the recession, but Ontario has recovered all of its job losses.

Since the bottom of the global recession in 2009, more than 300,000 new jobs—the majority high-value, full-time jobs—have been created in Ontario. More people are working in Ontario now than before the recession, and that has happened even as Ontario's largest customer by far, the United States, continues to struggle.

Ontarians have shown the entrepreneurial drive, the willingness to take risks and the desire to invest in their own skills that has always seen our province emerge from a recession stronger than we were when that recession started.

Ontario did not do what our opponents would do: either freeze within the status quo or slash health care and education indiscriminately. This 2012 Ontario budget has faced Ontario's issues, laid out a workable plan back to balance, and made the tough decisions to keep Ontario as Canada's economic and business leader.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Ontario's business owners and workers are justifiably concerned about this Liberal government's plan to kill thousands of construction jobs in our province through the now infamous Ontario College of Trades, an organization designed solely to serve the interests of Dalton McGuinty's big-union friends and the Working Families Coalition.

Just recently, the Construction Sector Council produced its annual labour market forecast, citing the need for more than 60,000 new construction tradespeople in Ontario over the next eight years. You would think that this would be a good-news story for Ontario, and yet the Ontario Construction Employers Coalition has publicly stated its belief that “the college will advance an agenda of broad-based compulsory certification for Ontario's construction trades, which will stifle job creation at a time when our province needs more jobs, not less.”

How can it be that, at a time when job creators in our province are demanding more skilled tradespeople to meet growing demand, the McGuinty government and its secretive College of Trades remain determined to slam the door on new jobs and new opportunities for Ontario workers? Ontario workers and job creators deserve much better.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a point of order.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Speaker, on a point of order: I just wanted to welcome my mom to the chamber. She's here to check up on me and make sure I'm behaving myself. So, welcome my mom.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mom, I can assure you that he does behave.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Ouellette assumes ballot item number 31 and Mr. Wilson assumes ballot item number 55.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CONSTITUTION DAY ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE JOUR DE LA CONSTITUTION

Mr. Hillier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 57, An Act to proclaim Constitution Day / *Projet de loi 57, Loi proclamant le Jour de la Constitution.*

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. This bill proclaims March 29 in each year as Constitution Day. As many of the members will know, the British North America Act in 1867 was the act that created modern-day Canada, the Dominion of Canada, and it received royal assent on March 29, 1867. In 1982, the Canada Act was Canada's final step in becoming a truly independent, democratic country, and once again, the Canada Act received royal assent on March 29, 1982.

I do hope and encourage all members of this House to recognize the importance of this date and to create the public awareness within our province on the importance of the Constitution.

ORGAN OR TISSUE DONATION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI A TRAIT AU DON D'ORGANES OU DE TISSU

Mr. Milligan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 58, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to organ or tissue donation on death / *Projet de loi 58, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui a trait au don d'organes ou de tissu au moment du décès.*

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This topic has been raised several times over the past decade, and on every occasion, the idea of simply requiring applicants for health cards and drivers' licences to complete

an organ donation form has received virtually unanimous consent during debate.

My colleague the member from Newmarket–Aurora, a former member from Scarborough East and others have all implored this House to consider the dire circumstances faced by Ontarians on the organ donation transplant list, and this bill offers a tangible means of dramatically increasing awareness of the issue of organ donation amongst all adults in Ontario.

Between today and the day we get a chance to debate this bill in five weeks, another 11 people on the waiting list will have died. In fact, since the concept was first debated in this Legislature, over 1,000 people needing transplants have passed away.

This afternoon, we will be talking about a more comprehensive look at steps that can be taken to increase the number of organ donors, but on behalf of the people on the waiting list today, we simply don't have the luxury of delaying on taking the first step.

PETITIONS

GREENBELT

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's few times I get to speak in this Legislature. I'm starting to feel sorry for myself. However, the petition is from the riding of Durham, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Greenbelt Act was passed by the Ontario Legislature in 2005, affecting property rights in Ontario; and

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"Whereas the right to own, use" and enjoy one's property and "to earn a living from private property is the basis of freedom and democracy; and

"Whereas the greenbelt restricts property owners in the use, enjoyment and ability to earn a living from their" own "private property; and

"Whereas property owners are not being compensated for any loss of these rights" by zoning by provincial policy;

"Now, therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend"—at once—"the greenbelt plan area at the 10-year re-evaluation in 2015 to allow additional development when requested by the community and supported by the local municipality" and is in order. It should be allowed.

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of my constituents and members in the gallery here, and present it to Emma, one of the pages here at Queen's Park.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Michael Mantha: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have been paying over millions in extra charges on their hydro bills to help retire the debt. The amount collected to date as per the Auditor General's report is \$8.7 billion, but the amount owing was \$7.8 billion;

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers are asking, where is the money being invested?

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers are asking why this was not addressed at the time the debt was paid;

"Whereas electrical rates have increased with the new creation of green energy coming online to include solar and wind, refurbishment of nuclear plants and deregulation of Hydro One;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows to obtain answers to the following" two "questions:

"How much of the debt remains?

"When will it be eliminated from Ontario taxpayers' hydro bills?"

I'll present this to Nicholas, and I fully agree with this petition.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I have a petition from constituents of York South–Weston addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas St. John the Evangelist Catholic elementary school in Weston is overcrowded, with 480 students in a school designed for 260; and

"Whereas the students will be relocating 40 minutes away in September 2012 during the duration of the Metrolinx Weston tunnel construction; and

"Whereas the Toronto Catholic District School Board has placed St. John the Evangelist third on the urgent capital priority list for 2012;

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

"Respectfully request full funding to replace St. John the Evangelist school during the Metrolinx Weston tunnel construction; therefore, the students are not relocated twice."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it and hand it over to our page, Emily.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank the Leeds county Ontario Federation of Agriculture for providing me this petition from their meeting on Friday night. It's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario livestock and poultry farmers work to ensure their farms are treated and handled with care and respect, and agree that Ontario needs a system to identify and address any exceptions in a timely and effective manner; and

“Whereas there is a growing level of concern with how the OSPCA is currently structured and executing its mandate, as derived from the OSPCA Act;

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

“Amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act so that inspection and enforcement agents are accountable to the Legislative Assembly and/or a minister through mandatory annual reporting of activities, investigations, enforcement activities, case outcomes, appeals, and the training and qualifications of enforcement staff; legislative provisions enabling entry without a warrant are revoked; the application of the term ‘immediate distress’ is clearly defined; and the OSPCA’s dual role as the enforcer of animal protection laws and a registered charity is addressed to ensure fair and effective enforcement.”

I’m pleased to sign it and send it to the table with page Hassan.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of my riding.

“Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

“Whereas,” since 2009, “insured PET scans” have been “performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

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

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

I fully support this petition, Mr. Speaker, will affix my name to it and ask page Alexander to bring it to the Clerk.

GREENBELT

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

“Whereas the Greenbelt Act was passed by the Ontario Legislature in 2005, affecting property rights in Ontario; and

“Whereas the right to own, use, enjoy and the opportunity to earn a living from private property is the basis of freedom and democracy; and

“Whereas the greenbelt restricts property owners in the use, enjoyment and ability to earn a living from their private property; and

“Whereas property owners are not being compensated for any loss of these rights;

“Now, therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the greenbelt plan area at the 10-year re-evaluation in 2015 to allow additional development when requested by the community and supported by the local municipality.”

Mr. Speaker, I’m pleased to present this to Domenique.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Miller: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and I have an additional 1,664 signatures.

“Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates \$2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

“Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by Ontario’s horse racing and breeding industry;

“Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

“Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates \$1.1 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for OLG;

“Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government \$1.1 billion per year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

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

“Call on the government of Ontario to protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program; direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program.”

I agree with this and will put my signature to it, and Julia will bring it down.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Phil McNeely: This is a petition from a group of parents and students at Avalon Public School in Ottawa–Orléans.

“To the Legislature of Ontario:

“Whereas the current enrolment of Avalon Public School is 687 students;

“Whereas the student capacity of the school is 495 students, as determined by the Ministry of Education’s own occupancy formula;

“Whereas the issue of overcrowding and lack of space makes it impossible for Avalon Public School to offer full-day kindergarten until the overcrowding issue is addressed;

“Whereas Avalon Public School is located in a high-growth community;

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

“Whereas the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has made building a new school in Avalon a top capital priority;

“We, the undersigned, call on the province of Ontario and Ministry of Education to provide the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board with the necessary funding to build an additional school in Avalon, to open no later than September 2014.”

Speaker, I approve this petition and send it up with Emily.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here on the future of 80 long-term-care beds in Tavistock, signed by a great number of constituents from the Tavistock area, and it is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Tavistock’s Bonnie Brae Health Care Centre is an 80-bed, D-class nursing home that must be either rebuilt or closed by July 2014; and

“Whereas there is currently an application by a private operator to move the 80 licensed beds outside of Oxford county to the city of London, despite the recent opening of two other long-term-care homes in Middlesex county in 2010; and

“Whereas long-term-care wait times in Oxford county can be as much as 134 days longer than in Middlesex county; and

“Whereas Tavistock receives referrals from the nearby Waterloo Wellington CCAC, which has among the highest waits for long-term care in the province;

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“We, the undersigned, request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario retain these beds in Tavistock and seek partners to fast-track replacement of the Bonnie Brae as part of Ontario’s 10-year plan to modernize 35,000 long-term-care beds.”

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to present this petition. I will also affix my signature, as I totally agree with it.

EMPLOYMENT RESOURCE CENTRE

Ms. Laurie Scott: The Brock Beaverton community employment centre is due to close.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we are asking for intervention to reverse the decision made by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to close the employment resource centre in Beaverton, Ontario;

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

“To request that the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities of Ontario continue to fund, or find alternative funding for, the employment resource centre

in Beaverton, Ontario. This is a vital service for Brock township and a centre point for social assistance in our community.”

It’s signed by hundreds of people from Brock township. I’ll hand it to page Liam.

WIND TURBINES

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

“Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed; and

“Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects; we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of wind turbines; and

“Whereas Ontario’s largest farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning;”—this is important—“and

“Whereas there have been no third party health and environmental studies done on industrial wind turbines, and the Auditor General confirmed there was no real plan for green energy in Ontario and wind farms were constructed in haste;

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

“That the Liberal government support Huron–Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson’s private member’s motion, which calls for a moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed.”

I’m pleased to sign this petition on behalf of my constituents, supporting it, and to present it to Victoria, one of the pages.

BAITFISH INDUSTRY

Ms. Laurie Scott: “Protect Your Rights.”

A petition to “protect the use of live baitfish in Ontario.

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

“That the Ministry of Natural Resources recognize and work with the live baitfish industry to ensure a viable, quality baitfish product for the anglers of Ontario.”

I’m happy to present this to page Dominique.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates \$2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

“Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by Ontario’s horse racing and breeding industry;

“Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the” Ontario Lottery and Gaming “slots-at-racetracks program is re-invested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

“Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates \$1.1 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for” the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.;

“Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government \$1.1 billion per year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

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

“Call on the government of Ontario to protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program; direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program.”

I’m happy to sign that petition, and I want to thank Jeff MacLaren of Tottenham for sending a whole pile of them to me.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which I’ll pass to Liam.

“Whereas, on April 22, 2002, Premier Dalton McGuinty signed a pledge in North Bay to never privatize the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission; and

“Whereas high energy prices have forced northern Ontario businesses to close or move, including Xstrata, which had moved its Timmins smelter operations to Quebec and made up 10% of Ontario Northland railway’s business; and

“Whereas some 60 lumber mills have closed across northern Ontario in recent years with a loss of 10,000 resource jobs, and Ontario fell from being the number one mining jurisdiction in the world to number 23 due to high taxes and government red tape, resulting in the erosion of Ontario Northland’s commercial customer base; and

“Whereas the Far North Act that has banned development and turned much of northern Ontario into a virtual museum is the biggest barrier to new job creation in northern Ontario and cost Ontario Northland business; and

“Whereas the ONTC was completely omitted from the province’s northern growth plan issued two years ago; and

“Whereas the former MPP for Nipissing staged an election campaign announcement on September 30, 2011 regarding what is now known to be a non-existent strategic alliance between” Ontario Northland “and Metro-linx; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario on March 23, 2012 announced it would wind down and divest itself of” Ontario Northland “and its assets with no prior consultation with community stakeholders in Nipissing and across northeastern Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, hereby demand Dalton McGuinty come to North Bay, look workers in the eye, and explain why he broke his word and has abandoned northern Ontario.”

I’ll sign my name to this and give it to page Liam.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for petitions has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS AMENDMENT ACT, 2012 LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ DE PROTECTION DES ANIMAUX DE L’ONTARIO

Mr. MacLaren moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 47, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act / Projet de loi 47, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société de protection des animaux de l’Ontario.

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

Mr. Jack MacLaren: The purpose of the OSPCA Act is to look out for the welfare of animals and protect them from abuse. Bill 47 will maintain that objective, and all parts of the act that pertain directly to animal welfare and protection will remain intact. The changes that this bill will make to the act will provide oversight and accountability of the enforcement of the act. Currently, the OSPCA operates as a charity that provides sheltering services for animals and has inspectors to enforce the act to prevent cruelty to animals.

The OSPCA Act has one shortcoming: It does not have a provision for the oversight and accountability of the OSPCA enforcement staff. The OSPCA inspectors have police powers to seize animals and lay charges for provincial offences or under the Criminal Code of Canada. All police forces in Canada have oversight and accountability mechanisms in place so that police officers can be held accountable for their actions. This is a

necessary, understood and accepted practice. This change to the OSPCA Act, this entrenchment of oversight and accountability, will ensure animal welfare as well as just and fair treatment of people.

I would like to go through some of the key changes that are proposed in Bill 47. Farm organizations have asked that farm animals be treated differently and separately from non-farm animals. This is a reasonable and sensible thing to do, so we have done it. Farm animals will fall under the jurisdiction of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, better known as OMAFRA. The inspectors for farm animals will be employees of OMAFRA. The inspectors will be required to meet with farm organizations to discuss protocols for entering onto farms—things like biosecurity—and they will be required to learn about normal farm practices and acceptable standards of animal welfare for the different species of farm animals.

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These inspectors will become knowledgeable about farm animals. The inspectors will respond to complaint calls and will enter onto farms with either the owner's permission or a warrant. These are the same powers as the police; no more, no less. The inspector will look at the animals and have the authority to call a veterinarian if abuse or neglect is suspected. The inspector and the farmer will choose a veterinarian that is acceptable to both parties.

If the veterinarian decides that the animals must be removed from the property in the interest of their welfare, he will write a report making that recommendation. The inspector will take that report to a justice of the peace and get an order to remove the animals. If the inspector and the veterinarian decide that there may be abuse or neglect by the farmer, the inspector may then call a policeman. The policeman will decide if it is appropriate or necessary to lay charges.

These changes give enforcement powers to the veterinarian, the justice of the peace and the policeman. These professions are licensed by their professional licensing bodies and are accountable to their licensing bodies for their decisions and actions. This is how the much-needed oversight and accountability of enforcement will be embedded in the OSPCA Act. This will, first, enhance the monitoring of animal welfare and, secondly, provide fair and just treatment of animal owners.

Non-farm animals or small animals like cats and dogs will fall under the jurisdiction of the OSPCA as it is currently structured: as a charity that offers sheltering services and has inspectors on staff to respond to complaint calls. These inspectors will have the same powers as the OMAFRA inspectors. They will enter onto private property with the owner's permission or a warrant. They will look at the animals. The inspector will have the authority to call a veterinarian if abuse is suspected. The inspector and the animal owner will choose a veterinarian that is acceptable to both parties.

If the veterinarian decides it is necessary to remove animals in the interest of the animals' welfare, he will

write a report making that recommendation. The inspector will take that report to a justice of the peace and get an order to remove the animals. If the inspector and the veterinarian decide that there may be abuse or neglect by the animal owner, the inspector may call a policeman. The policeman will decide if it is appropriate or necessary to lay charges. Again, this is how the much-needed oversight and accountability will be imbedded in the OSPCA Act.

It should be noted that inspectors will have the ability to get a telewarrant and will have the right to make a warrantless entry onto private property in the case of an emergency. These two rights are currently in the OSPCA Act, and Bill 47 proposes to keep them.

Another very important change will be who hires the chief inspector of the OSPCA. Currently, the OSPCA board of directors hires the chief inspector, and the candidate must be a member of the OSPCA. Under Bill 47, the Lieutenant Governor in Council will have the authority to approve or disapprove the hiring of the chief inspector. This gives the government the much-needed oversight and accountability, by being able to decide who becomes the chief inspector. A chief inspector with a strong background in training and policing and who is fair-minded and unbiased would be essential in order to provide the strong leadership that is required at the OSPCA.

I would like to comment on what effect Bill 47 will have on the cost of policing. The OSPCA and OMAFRA inspectors will be encouraged to respond to complaint calls without police backup unless it is necessary for safety reasons. According to the OSPCA annual reports for the last 10 years, there has been an average of 15,000 complaint calls per year in Ontario, but an average of only 450 charges per year were laid. In Ottawa in 2011, 90% of the OSPCA complaints that the police were called to by OSPCA inspectors did not require the police to write a follow-up report.

Only 3.5% of the police calls involved a criminal charge. Policing costs can be reduced by reducing the number of unnecessary calls.

I want to tell you two stories: a story of tragedy and a story of success.

First, the tragedy: Sunny Reuter of Richmond Hill had her dog Arko taken and killed by the OSPCA. Sunny went on a trip and put Arko in a kennel. Arko had recently been given a clean bill of health by her veterinarian. The OSPCA came to the kennel and took Arko. Arko was an Akbash, a rare breed of dog that is fine-boned and slim-bodied. The OSPCA mistakenly thought Arko was a much heavier-bodied breed and said he was sick and starving. The OSPCA killed Arko that day, the day that Sunny got home from her trip. They didn't call her sister, even though they had her phone number. Sunny was devastated. When the OSPCA was informed of their mistake, their response was to threaten Sunny with criminal charges. This is wrong.

Now for a success story: The Lanark Animal Welfare Society was an affiliate of the OSPCA. They sent a

young woman named Melanie Young for OSPCA training to be an inspector. The Lanark Animal Welfare Society was very proud of Melanie because she had a strong sense of compassion for animals and also a healthy respect for the rights of people. The OSPCA failed Melanie as an inspector. They said she did not have an aggressive enforcement attitude. The Lanark Animal Welfare Society stood by Melanie and divorced themselves from the OSPCA and their aggressive ways.

The Lanark Animal Welfare Society has been an independent, self-funding animal shelter since 1985. Melanie continues her work at the Lanark Animal Welfare Society and is called an animal welfare advocate. She is doing a marvellous job of helping animals and people. This is the right way to do things.

We have strong community support for Bill 47 from farm animal organizations, small animal organizations, community associations, private animal owners and municipalities. Municipalities know that Bill 47 is the right thing to do and are pleased that policing costs won't go up and in fact may go down. Farm organizations are pleased that farm animals will be treated separately and that inspectors will be knowledgeable. Small animal organizations and private shelters welcome the inclusion of professional enforcement. Veterinarians, lawyers and police who have had first-hand experience with OSPCA inspectors tell us that they are pleased to see the more professional approach to enforcement that will be mandated by Bill 47.

One thing that all supporters agree on is that oversight and accountability that would be mandated by Bill 47 is long overdue and absolutely necessary. Thank you.

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

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I would like a moment to speak to this very important legislation. The other day, I had the opportunity to speak with the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills about this bill, and I can say with confidence that he has the right intention in bringing this motion forward.

There are serious concerns with the OSPCA's current ability to enforce animal cruelty legislation, and to be honest, the penalties are not strong enough for those who violate the act. The problem is that the weakness lies not with the OSPCA, who receive very limited government funding to enforce this act; nowhere is this more apparent than in my riding, where there is, I believe, about one agent in the region stretching from Thunder Bay all the way to the Manitoba border. It's about 400 linear kilometres. I'm wondering, how is it possible that one or maybe even two agents can reasonably be expected to investigate acts that are spanning this vast geography? This is also assuming that animals are only neglected or abused along the TransCanada corridor, which we all know isn't the case. There are many, many communities that don't lie along this corridor, and, in fact, these communities are sprawled across the nearly 300,000 square kilometres. But passing responsibility on to the local police isn't the answer either, because I have con-

cerns about the priority that these complaints have with police and the costs that are associated, as municipalities are already cash-strapped and they're struggling to pay their current policing costs, never mind additional costs.

1350

The fact that enforcement of animal cruelty laws and education and the prevention of animal cruelty is not managed by the government speaks to its priority, and that is unfortunate. It is shameful that, to this point, government has chosen to absolve itself of responsibility by handing it to a third party—a charity without stable, guaranteed funding, at that.

I would argue that the penalties for those caught abusing animals do not go far enough, but I can appreciate the concerns raised by the public about the lack of accountability and oversight of having these complaints managed by a third party, and a charitable organization at that.

That's why, despite my concerns, I have decided to support this bill and to send it to committee. Let me be clear that if this bill comes forward without any amendments, I will have to vote against the bill at its third and final reading. But that said, I think we need a forum where we can discuss the major shortcomings of animal cruelty legislation, and sending this bill to committee may provide us with that forum and give a voice to those who don't have voices.

I want to thank the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills for highlighting some of the very serious shortcomings of this act, as it exists now, and I will vote in favour, as I said, in the hopes of bringing greater awareness to the serious challenges that the OSPCA Act and other animal welfare agencies face in Ontario today.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: As I begin my remarks, I would like to state outright that Bill 47 will have significant cost impacts to our government and will fail to protect our animals.

This government has already clamped down on animal abusers by updating and strengthening the Ontario animal welfare laws for the first time in over 90 years. Bill 50, the Provincial Animal Welfare Act, was introduced in April 2008. It was passed by the Legislature in November 2008 and took effect on March 1, 2009. The bill substantially revised and updated the OSPCA Act to provide more stringent penalties for animal abuse and increased powers for the OSPCA to better protect animals.

Through this legislation, we have established the toughest rules in Canada to protect the safety of animals in Ontario. Those caught mistreating animals can now receive jail time, substantive monetary fines or a potential lifetime ownership ban. These tough rules are not targeted at responsible animal owners or those who work responsibly with animals. They only impact those committing acts of cruelty against animals, allowing the OSPCA to respond to complaints of animal abuse. Through this legislation, Mr. Speaker, we have sent a

clear message: Acts of animal cruelty will not be tolerated in the province of Ontario.

If passed, the bill put forward by my colleague from Carleton–Mississippi Mills would have significant impacts on the animal welfare system and will take a step back from the progress we have made in creating the laws to better protect our animals.

First, if passed, this legislation will grind our animal welfare system to a halt. This bill will remove the major tools used by the OSPCA to enforce animal-welfare-related laws in Ontario. It will place the burden on to the OPP, the municipal police and the justice of the peace. This lengthy process may result in significant animal suffering and death. The OSPCA would simply be an observer and would have to refer all matters to the police.

This change in the policing would create an impossible workload challenge for our police officers and the courts, Mr. Speaker. For obvious reasons, such as resource pressures and public savings choices, the police would likely see animal welfare as not being within the core business of their core duties. As a result, animal welfare would fall onto the bottom of the priority list. Thus, Bill 47 would reduce our ability to protect our animals.

This bill would also download the cost to the municipalities. The OSPCA estimates the cost of providing inspection and enforcement services at \$10 million to \$15 million annually. The cost to do the same work would be much higher for local law enforcement, given the level of pay and the cost of necessary equipment and training.

If passed, Mr. Speaker, this bill would also create unnecessary bureaucracy for the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. OMAFRA will be required to create a new bureaucracy to deal with animal welfare on farms. This will all come at a significant cost. Preliminary estimates show that, if passed, this bill would cost the ministry \$4 million to \$6 million annually, and it would be required to hire and train 15 to 20 inspectors.

My colleague from Carleton–Mississippi Mills tried to paint a picture that the OSPCA is an abusive organization that does not have proper oversight of its responsibility. He uses minimal examples, and I would challenge him to provide me five, 10 or 20 examples where the OSPCA abused its mandate.

I wonder how the members will respond to the fact that any order issued today by the OSPCA, including animal removals, can be appealed to the Animal Care Review Board, an independent tribunal established under the OSPCA Act. This board has authority to uphold, revoke or modify an order made by the OSPCA.

I wonder how the member will respond to this quote by Dave Stewart, executive director of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, in which Mr. Stewart states: "The Ontario Cattlemen's Association gets few calls from farmers who think the OSPCA oversteps its bounds compared to the number of calls it gets from farmers who need mentors so they can better care for their animals."

I also wonder how the member would respond to the February 15 agreement signed between the Dairy Farmers of Ontario and the OSPCA, where both organizations would provide on-farm training sessions in the application of the dairy cattle code of practice. If the OSPCA was such a bad organization, why would the Dairy Farmers of Ontario enter into an agreement with them?

Lastly, I wonder how the member would respond to numerous cases of the great work done by the OSPCA in rescuing animals. I'm just going to give one example. In 2008, the OSPCA conducted an investigation after being contacted by a licensed veterinarian regarding suspicious injuries to two Boston terriers, Abbey and Zoe. Because of this investigation, Christopher Michael Monroe of Toronto was convicted and sentenced under the Criminal Code of Canada for wilfully killing an animal, and additional charges.

You see, the current OSPCA Act is working well in protecting our animals. It does not need to be changed. Most certainly, we should not be passing a law that will reduce our ability to protect animals and create greater work and costs, not just for our government but also for local municipalities.

On this side of the House, we believe that evidence should make sound policy, and the evidence shows that the current OSPCA Act is doing a great job. That is why I will not be supporting this bill. Thank you.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 47, introduced by my colleague from Carleton–Mississippi Mills. The member recognized that we have a problem in the way our animal welfare system is working. We have cases being thrown out of court because of improper procedure, and we have people doing inspections who haven't received proper training.

What I want to speak about is from an agricultural perspective, because I hear from farmers and many farm organizations who say the current system isn't working. It is great that so many of them, like Ontario Pork and the National Farmers Union, are supporting this bill.

Animal protection is an issue that needs to be discussed here and in committee so we can make sure that we do it right. I believe that all people on both sides of this bill want the same thing: Our animals need to be cared for, and the people who are abusing animals need to be stopped. We also want to ensure that resources and time of animal owners, investigators and the courts aren't wasted pursuing cases where there really isn't any abuse or harm at all.

Unfortunately, most OSPCA inspectors haven't received enough training with farm animals and agricultural practices to know what is normal and healthy for our farm animals. Since only 10% of their calls involve farms, it makes sense that their focus is on house pets. But then it isn't fair to them, to the animals or to the farmers to give them responsibility for farm animal

welfare. It is resulting in raids where there appears to have been no abuse or need. It wastes resources and creates problems between farmers and enforcement officers.

1400

The Provincial Animal Welfare Act recognizes that there is a difference between how agricultural animals and house pets are to be cared for. The act allows for farmers to care for their agricultural animals in a manner “carried on in accordance with reasonable and generally accepted practices of agricultural animal care, management or husbandry.” The problem occurs when those enforcing the law don’t know those reasonable and generally accepted practices. They don’t understand the needs of farm animals.

When farmers appeal to go to the Animal Care Review Board, a board whose membership includes four lawyers but not a single farmer, how can we ask them to judge what are reasonable and acceptable practices of agricultural animal care? That is why I support this bill to move to separate farm animals from the OSPCA and give OMAFRA, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, responsibility for inspection of farm animals.

The staff at OMAFRA are experts in farm animals and farm animal care. Let’s use that expertise and ensure that we’re identifying real cases of abuse and dealing with them properly, and to make sure that we aren’t wasting resources and time charging people and taking them to court to find out that they haven’t done anything wrong.

The staff at OMAFRA also understand the biosecurity measures that need to be taken on farms. Someone who isn’t aware and hasn’t been trained could accidentally spread disease from one farm to another. In addition, OMAFRA staff already have inspection ability under the Animal Health Act, so this would eliminate duplication.

I also support the move to require permission of the owner or a warrant to enter private property unless there is an emergency. We need to respect not only that it’s private property, but the security and biosecurity rules that need to be followed when entering many farms. They go to great lengths to protect their animals from disease, and we want to make sure that enforcement doesn’t mitigate all their work.

When Bill 50, the animal welfare act, was brought forward by this government, we raised many of these same concerns, as did the agriculture groups, and frankly, the government didn’t listen. They told us they had addressed those concerns by letting farmers care for their animals in a manner “carried on in accordance with reasonable and generally accepted practices of agricultural animal care, management or husbandry.” We now know from experience that without investigators who are trained in those reasonable and acceptable practices, this does not work, which is why we are debating this bill here today.

I encourage my colleagues to support this bill today. Let’s get it to committee; let’s have farmers, vets and agricultural organizations come forward and talk about what works. Let’s let the police talk and find out what

will work for them. Let’s find a solution that protects our animals without punishing farmers that are giving them good care. Let’s find a solution that sees the right people with the right training looking after the protection of our farm animals.

Thank you very much to the member for the bringing this forward, and thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me time to speak.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I’d like to take this opportunity to comment on Bill 47 and thank the honourable member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills for bringing it forward. Welfare of animals is a touchy subject, but it’s near and dear to my heart because I’m a farmer. Judging by all the emails that I’ve gotten—and I’m new to this job; I didn’t realize so many people wanted to send politicians emails. But judging by all the emails we got, it’s near and dear to a lot of people’s hearts.

The crux of this issue is agendas, because many farmers believe that the OSPCA has an agenda because of who they’re financed by, and those opposed to Bill 47 believe that farmers and veterinarians have an agenda, because quite frankly, we make money on farm animals. So the whole thing comes down to a matter of trust. Who do we trust?

Quite frankly, by some of the emails that I got, I was offended, because as a farmer—farmers love animals. We don’t love animals like you might love your dog, but if we didn’t love animals, we wouldn’t make a living. There are people in the country who shouldn’t have farm animals and who shouldn’t have pets, and that’s why we have rules to protect the animals. But when there’s a large section of the population who doesn’t trust how the rules are enforced, there’s a problem with the rules.

I don’t support everything in Bill 47, but I do believe that we have to bring it forward so we have this discussion. I did a bit of research on it. There was a report, the LeSage-Meek report, about a problem the OSPCA had in one area. And you know what? Even the best organizations in the world can have problems. I’m not out here to trash the OSPCA, not at all. But one part of that report said:

“The OSPCA Act gives the OSPCA powers akin to those of a police force, but does not identify an agency responsible for overseeing the OSPCA in its execution of the legislative mandate. The Ontario government should consider legislative amendments to provide for oversight of the OSPCA in order to remedy the current situation of having the OSPCA essentially policing itself.”

That’s why some parts of the population don’t trust it and that’s why it should be changed.

This proposed act says—I had it blacked out here somewhere. Anyway, it’s going to be the Lieutenant Governor who appoints the chief inspector. That’s a pretty big change. That’s a change that’s got to be very well discussed. But it does kind of follow what this report said. So I think it’s a change that should be brought forward and we should talk about it, because it is a big

change, and I think it would make the farm community feel a lot better.

Now, the member across said, “We can always appeal it.” But even if it’s only one case that goes wrong, if it’s a farm case and it’s a dairy farmer or a beef farmer, by the time he gets to the appeal process, he’s broke. I’m sorry; he’s broke.

One other thing: I’d like to commend DFO, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, for coming to an agreement with the OSPCA, because you know what? They’re a progressive organization and they’re going to deal with the only people in town, right? You work with what you’ve got.

Once again, I’m not complaining about OSPCA. I’m complaining that there doesn’t seem to be any government oversight of OSPCA—and I think it would actually work better.

One thing in my research—I found out that after the LeSage and Meek report, June 3, 2011, there was a task force struck on animal welfare. It was struck by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. But I couldn’t find the results of the task force, so perhaps the members across could explain to me what the results of that task force were. I’m new here, so my research isn’t that good yet, but I couldn’t find it. And once again—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Maybe it’s not there. Maybe there’s nothing there.

Mr. John Vanthof: Maybe it is; maybe it isn’t.

Again, the argument, “Well, we don’t have the money in the ministry, and the way it is now with the OSPCA, it’s basically self-financing.” That’s the part that farmers—most of us—don’t trust, because if you have to get your money from fundraising, then your allegiance lies with how you raise the funds.

Once again, I’m in support of bringing this bill forward. I’m not supportive of everything in here and quite frankly, I don’t know what the ramifications are of some of it. But we have to bring it forward because the questions that were brought up in the LeSage-Meek report—we’re still waiting for the task force. Even if it’s only one or two cases, but if it’s one or two cases in my riding and I lose one or two farms because I get calls and people are afraid of this—and they shouldn’t be. No one should be afraid. If you’re doing something wrong, you should be afraid; I’ve got no problem with that. But people who don’t understand what’s going on are afraid, and that tells you that there’s something wrong with the—and I’ll give you an example.

I had a little discussion with one of the inspectors. There is quite a discussion about cattle outside, especially cattle outside in northern Ontario, where it’s 40 below. “You shouldn’t have cattle outside,” but if those cattle have shelter, they’re acclimatized outside and they’re fed correctly, you know what? They’re the happiest cattle on the planet. If you force them inside, they’ll all get pneumonia and some of them will die.

1410

Now, I would hate to have to explain that to someone who didn’t know what he was talking about, but that’s a

fact. That’s a fact you learn when you’re involved in the industry. It’s those types of things.

Is that the right way to do it? I don’t know. I really don’t know. But is the way it’s being done now—people yelling at us across the aisle how efficient it is and how great it works. You know what? If it worked that great, we wouldn’t have a report of the task force of animal welfare which—I’m still looking for the report. If it worked that great, we wouldn’t have that on the books, right? Our job is to make things better for the people we work for.

Once again, even the people who are very much against this act deserve a voice too, because they must be worried too. If you have to fight that hard, and you don’t trust the system, if you have to fight that hard to send me emails like, “Farmers are evil and they only care about animals because they’re commercial, and you can’t trust a veterinarian”—well, there is a college of veterinarians and there might be a veterinarian out there who isn’t doing his job. There are some of us in every occupation who aren’t doing their job.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Except here in this House.

Mr. John Vanthof: Present company excluded. But the fact is, we have to create a system for animal welfare that everyone trusts. And right now, judging by the emails I got on my machine, a lot of people don’t trust the system we have now. At minimum, adopting Bill 47 at this reading will bring it to the committee stage, and if the governing side wants to put something that’s much better, based on the report of the task force, I’d be perfectly willing to look at it and help it along. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill. I’d also like to thank my colleague the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills for bringing to light his concerns and the concerns of the farming community through his Bill 47. I’d also like to thank our colleagues here who also spoke.

As a rural member—and we do have a large farming community—this issue has been raised to myself during the election campaign, and we continue to talk about it. I’m also glad that the Minister of Agriculture is going to speak very shortly. I think farmers across the province need to know that we’re hearing from them at this time, and we’re going to continue to hear from them about the OSPCA and protecting animal welfare right here in Ontario.

This is a very important issue in Ontario, and I think it’s a little too important to leave to some of the components in Bill 47. I think that this particular legislation marginalizes the progress that we’ve made to date. I think it marginalizes the work that we can continue to do as well in animal protection.

It would take protections for animals and make them so complex that actually attempting to help an animal that was being mistreated would take longer and be less effective and more expensive than the current system.

Speaker, farmers know that mistreating animals is not the right thing to do. They also know that treating their animals is vital to their well-being and a healthy farm income. We don't want to go backwards in protecting animal welfare. We want to continue to move forward. We want to work together with our stakeholders in the agricultural community and want to make this system better together. Thank you.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to rise in support of the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills and Bill 47. I have to say that he deserves a great deal of credit. He has listened to his constituents, especially those in the farming community, about the fact that the OSPCA Act is deeply flawed and it needs some reform.

He has approached—and he mentioned this in his speech—municipalities, farm and non-farm animal organizations, veterinarians, lawyers, the police, and they have all provided input on this legislation. I think what he's proposing here is something that we need to support at second reading, move to committee and continue the dialogue, because I think all members of this House believe—and if they don't believe, they should—that the OSPCA Act does need an overhaul.

I know that the folks in Leeds–Grenville, farmers in Leeds–Grenville—I know that we have some here in the galleries today. They certainly have given me their concerns clearly. They're concerned, and their fear is, the OSPCA inspectors just don't have the understanding of animal husbandry to properly carry out their duties.

We all have examples. I know we all read the headlines. There was a raid last month on 16 Amish farms in western Ontario where the greatest concern seemed to be the state of a dog having bad teeth. Those actions and many others, Speaker, I suggest would cite and underline the credibility issue that they have with the OSPCA.

So as a number of members have talked about, Bill 47 does allow farm animal inspections to be with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I think what the member is talking about is balance, trying to strike that balance. This isn't an attack on the OSPCA, clearly. It's to change the act and to make it a better act.

I know in my community, I still will support—we've got a telethon this weekend; one of my OSPCA branches is having a telethon. I'll support it, as I always have, as I do the branch in Gananoque. My family's beloved cat Lily was at the shelter, and I have a lot of feeling for that shelter. But that's not what we're talking about. It's that conflict that many speakers have talked about between the enforcement branch and the charitable branch. I think that clearly Bill 47 brings forward that dialogue.

I want to quote, as my final address, from an e-mail that I received, some very insightful comments on Bill 47 from Kurtis Andrews, who is a lawyer specializing in agricultural law. He captured the essence of the issue very well with this observation: "It is my belief that all of the OSPCA-related problems we have been witnessing stem from bad law; and the actions of the society,

although often offensive, are not unexpected given the loose language of the statute, unfettered powers bestowed upon them, and inherent (and possibly even unconstitutional) problems of creating a private police force."

I urge the other members of the assembly to support Mr. MacLaren and Bill 47. Thank you.

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

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to be in my place to speak to this bill today. I want at the outset to thank those who have ventured to express confidence in OMAFRA; that's always good to hear.

As the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, I know this is an important issue for farmers and for our agricultural community. A number of our agricultural stakeholders expressed concerns about the relationship of their industry with the enforcement of animal welfare legislation by the OSPCA. I want those folks to know that OMAFRA is committed to continuing our engagement and discussions with the sector and ongoing forums—the DFO one was referenced—to help understand concerns and respond more clearly and fully. This is consistent, by the way, with the feedback we've been getting at OMAFRA to take this approach.

Speaker, I believe Bill 47 is the wrong approach to address these concerns. Bill 47 would force OMAFRA alone to spend an additional \$4 million to \$6 million a year while delivering less, and this doesn't include the added cost to municipalities, the police and the courts, which is estimated could be as high as \$15 million. No one wants the government to spend money ineffectively, but that's exactly what Bill 47 would require.

Bill 47 would take away the requirement for veterinarians to report suspected cases of abuse or neglect. This is a critically important tool for veterinarians. They are often in the best position to observe the results of harmful treatment, but privacy restrictions prevent them from speaking to authorities unless they have the legislative mandate. In legislation that is meant to protect the most vulnerable, this is like trying to tell doctors that they couldn't or shouldn't report suspected cases of child abuse.

Lastly, Bill 47 and my colleague opposite have perpetuated the misunderstanding about the nature of the OSPCA and its enforcement activity; for example—

Interjection.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: The bully bill is next. You can talk to bullying next, okay? I want to get through this—for example, by repeating the falsehood that the OSPCA profits from fines. OSPCA in fact receives no revenue from fines, and the member opposite knows this.

1420

Farmers understand better than most that treating animals properly is not only the right thing to do; it is a vital part in ensuring healthy farm income.

As Lorne Small of the Christian Farmers said recently, "Animals are not just cogs in the productive cycle. They are a part of creation and deserve to be treated with an appropriate amount of respect."

Let me be clear: There may well be ways to improve our legislation or its implementation. I'm committed to pursuing this dialogue with our farmers, as the DFO has done and others, but whatever problems may exist, Bill 47 will solve none of them. It will spend more to achieve less, it doesn't respect animal health, it doesn't respect farmers and it doesn't respect taxpayers—more downloading, costs and regulations. For all these reasons and others, including a lot of input from the agricultural community, I, and I suspect most people on this side of the House, will not be supporting this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's my pleasure to speak on behalf and in support of Bill 47.

Let me start off by referring to the minister, whom I've never known to want to take on some extra work to begin with, in the first place.

I will say this, Speaker: I know of two members in this House who have actually witnessed an OSPCA raid. There may be more, but I know of two people who have seen, first-hand and in person, the devastating effects of the arbitrary actions of the OSPCA; who have witnessed the ruin of people's lives and livelihoods as a result; seen people's livestock seized and destroyed, and the helplessness that ensues. Those two members are the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills and myself. Does the OSPCA need fixing? You would not ask that question if you had seen what we have seen.

Let me share a little story of my meeting with the chief inspector, Hugh Coghill, a couple of years ago when we met in my office here at Queen's Park. We spoke at length of the SPCA enforcement tactics and the wrongdoing that goes on in the name of animal welfare. Hugh agreed that there were a number of SPCA enforcement officers who were difficult to control and were causing problems for the SPCA.

Three names came up in that discussion: Connie Mallory, Bonnie Bishop and Larry Wilkinson. Unfortunately, Hugh felt powerless to solve those problems. Today, Hugh Coghill is gone, and in his place is Connie Mallory. Yes, the same name as we discussed earlier.

I believe members of this House should also be aware that I have been trying for over two years to meet with the chairman, Rob Godfrey, and discuss the problems. He refuses to meet. Mr. Godfrey chooses not to meet with elected representatives. He believes he's a power unto himself and finds no need to dispense with the concerns of elected people.

The member from Agincourt asked about evidence. Well, how about looking up the Hunter case or the Robinson case, and the cases that were thrown out on constitutional grounds, or the case against Cindy Pauliuk, where Justice Zuraw said, "The Hamilton-Burlington SPCA ... hires its own agents and inspector, determines the parameters of their employment and using police powers, enters property, seizes animals as in this case (without warrant or judicial intervention) ... lays charges—all the while attending to its own need to fund-raise. In order to do the latter, it relies heavily on the

publicity it can glean from high-profile seizures and charges. Indeed, there is a communications branch" of the SPCA "tasked to do this. It is a not-for-profit organization and a registered charity. Without publicity and high-profile charges, the funds the SPCA needs to operate would no doubt dry up."

The Lanark Animal Welfare Society model is the right model. That's the model that's included in Bill 47. I encourage members of this House to support this bill and bring justice back to not only animals, but to people.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Justice Patrick LeSage and Dr. Alan Meek, a veterinarian, were commissioned by the government in 2010 to do a study of the OSPCA and make recommendations for improvement after a mass euthanasia of cats and dogs at the OSPCA's head office in Newmarket became public.

I quote from the LeSage report—it is the same as the member from New Liskeard's, but it's worthy of saying again. "The OSPCA Act gives the OSPCA powers akin to those of a police force but does not identify an agency responsible for overseeing the OSPCA in its execution of the legislative mandate. The Ontario government should consider legislative amendments to provide for the oversight of the OSPCA in order to remedy the current situation of having the OSPCA essentially policing itself."

Carl Noble was a councillor and mayor of the town South Bruce Peninsula for 16 years, was a professional fireman in North York for 25 years and was on the board of directors of the OSPCA for eight years. Carl was one of 29 directors who resigned en masse in 2006 in protest over the change in attitude of the OSPCA toward very aggressive enforcement. They asked government to provide oversight and accountability, but nothing was done. Carl spoke strongly to the standing committee on Bill 50 in July 2008. From Hansard I quote Carl: "We need accountability for and to the people of Ontario."

Bill 47 will provide the oversight and accountability called for by the LeSage-Meek report and by Carl Noble and his 28 colleagues.

I would like to close with a quote from Edmund Burke: "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." I appeal to you, the good men and women of this House, to do something. Let us do what is right. Let us support Bill 47.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll deal with the vote later on in proceedings.

ANTI-BULLYING ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA LUTTE CONTRE L'INTIMIDATION

Mrs. Witmer moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 14, An Act to designate Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week in Schools and to provide for bullying

prevention curricula, policies and administrative accountability in schools / *Projet de loi 14, Loi désignant la Semaine de la sensibilisation à l'intimidation et de la prévention dans les écoles et prévoyant des programmes-cadres, des politiques et une responsabilité administrative à l'égard de la prévention de l'intimidation dans les écoles.*

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I just want to say how very pleased I am today to bring forward this anti-bullying bill in order to raise awareness and to prevent what we see as a growing problem of bullying in our schools.

I would begin by saying that bullying has absolutely no place in our schools. For whatever reason, whether it is physical, verbal, social or cyberbullying, it is a cruel practice that has far-reaching consequences for the victim, for the bully and for their families.

I want to, at this time, express my appreciation to all those who are here today in support of Bill 14. I'd like to welcome in particular Lynne MacIntyre, the founder of the Guelph Anti-Bullying Coalition. There are about nine anti-bullying coalitions in the province of Ontario, and it is people like Lynne and other members of coalitions and students who have come forward and helped to raise my awareness of the issue, beginning about three years ago.

I'd also like to thank Briar McDonald from Guelph, a student who was here today and participated in our press conference to share her views on making our schools safe for students so that our students could learn. I'd like to thank the other students who are here as well.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my colleague Lisa MacLeod. She is our education critic, and she has been a very strong advocate regarding bullying, not only here in the Legislature but in her home community of Ottawa. She has done an outstanding job in emphasizing the need for us to put aside partisan politics and to make sure that we come up with a bill that responds to the needs of the students in our schools. I say thank you to Lisa.

1430

This bill is the result of advice and stories that I have received from people during the past three years. It includes people like Mike Neuts of Chatham, whose 10-year-old son Myles was found hanging on a coat hook in the washroom of his school and never came home. It includes Katie Neu of Listowel, who was bullied from the time she was in kindergarten, and when she couldn't take it any longer in grade 9, left school and got her certificate online. She now is doing all she can to support other young people who have been bullied. It includes the Hubleys of Ottawa, whose son Jamie took his own life after he was subjected to homophobic bullying. It includes 11-year-old Mitchell Wilson, a Pickering boy, who committed suicide as a result of bullying because of his muscular dystrophy.

This bill is influenced by their stories and the stories of hundreds of other parents, students and teachers who

met with me, emailed or phoned to tell me about the impact of bullying on their lives.

This bill was influenced by the high statistics on bullying, such as the survey by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, which states that about one third of students have been bullied and another one third have been the bully; and of course the Ontario Student Trustees' Association 2010 survey of grade 12 students, which found that 46% had either been the victim or the perpetrator of bullying.

This bill is influenced by the far-reaching consequences of bullying on both the perpetrator and those who are bullied. Research shows that those who are bullied may suffer anxiety, depression, substance abuse, low self-esteem and academic failure and, as we hear too often today, commit suicide. However, the research also shows that those who bully learn to use aggression as a form of power and may become abusive adults or become involved in violent crime in later life. Thus, based on the first-hand concerns brought to my attention by students, parents and teachers when I was the education critic, the alarming high statistics of bullying and the far-reaching consequences of this behaviour, this bill is intended to address those concerns. It will enshrine into law my resolution on Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week, which was unanimously passed by this Legislature in 2010.

I want to thank my executive assistant, Dan Powers, for his outstanding work in the preparation of this bill. This bill is also the result of having done research on all of the legislation available throughout North America. The bill focuses on prevention, accountability and awareness. It provides for a formalized process; clear responsibilities; and support for victims, perpetrators and teachers.

Now, you may ask: How does it help prevent bullying, and how is it different? Number one, you will see here a clear definition of bullying. Also, there will be early intervention and incorporation of bullying education into the curriculum. There will be a ministry model for prevention and intervention plans. There will be the provision of services for the victim and the perpetrator. There will be ongoing professional development support for teachers and there will be prompt reporting of incidents and investigations.

What does the bill accomplish? The number one concern for parents was what they perceived to be a lack of accountability and a clear process for reporting and investigating. So this bill makes significance improvements in accountability by mandating that statistics on bullying be kept and tracked by each school, principal, board and ministry, and that these would be reported to the minister and released to the public each year. There would be a clear, articulated process for reporting and investigating, because we do believe that we need a formalized and entrenched process of reporting, monitoring and investigating. This was probably the most serious deficiency that was brought to our attention, not only by parents, but also by teachers.

This bill will remove the ambiguity surrounding the role and responsibilities of the principal and staff. This bill will provide a clearly defined course of action that must be taken when bullying occurs. It includes notifying the parents, and that means both the parents of the bully and of the child who has been bullied. It also requires that, in the event that there's a need for police involvement, the police would be notified. It also provides for support and counselling to both the bullied and the perpetrator, because obviously we want to make sure that the perpetrator becomes aware that that behaviour will not be tolerated and is helped to recognize how that behaviour needs to change. The bill also provides clarity, publicity and education.

The definition that I have put forward is a very comprehensive definition. It also includes a definition of "cyberbullying," which of course seems to be spreading with each day.

As well, the ministry will be responsible for developing an anti-bullying plan. That will be shared with the boards and the schools, and they will also be responsible for developing their own anti-bullying plan, and it will need to be published in student and employee handbooks and made available to parents and posted on websites.

Bullying prevention and intervention will be incorporated into the curriculum, starting in kindergarten. Again, parents will be provided with anti-bullying literature and resources.

So we have before us today a bill that addresses the deficiencies that we have heard are in the legislation as it currently exists in the province of Ontario. We have heard and we have listened to students and to parents and to teachers. In fact, the ETFO has, I know, sent a document to the Minister of Education indicating the parts of our bill that they believe need to be incorporated into Bill 13.

I certainly want to thank all those who, over the course of the past three years, have stepped forward, some with tremendous courage—Mr. Speaker, I've never heard stories as ones I've heard over the last three years: the situations that parents and children have found themselves in as a result of bullying. It really is quite incomprehensible.

So today, we do have an opportunity, and I am optimistic because I've heard the Premier say that he would like us to work together, that he would like us to set aside partisan politics. When we talk about bullying in our schools or in our communities, we all have an obligation to do what we can on behalf of our students.

I hope that we can move forward. I hope that this bill will be supported, because it provides a strategy to raise the awareness of bullying, and that is very, very important. It provides a strategy to prevent bullying; it provides a process to resolve it; and it provides the data for us to learn from it.

So today, I want to conclude by a quote that was used by Lynne MacIntyre in her remarks today, and it's from Maria Robinson. It says: "Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a

new ending." I encourage us to work together to do so today on behalf of the students in our schools.

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

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to rise to speak to this issue. It's obviously a matter of importance, so I thank the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for bringing it up. It's important enough that we actually have two bills before the House right now speaking about bullying. I think they're both worthy of consideration and that the debate is important and must happen here in this House.

Bullying is not something that's easily legislated, however. I think it takes a comprehensive approach to deal with the complicated issues around bullying. I've worked in schools, I've worked as a social worker in low-income communities, and I think the answers to bullying must be comprehensive.

Things have changed a bit since I was in school as a student, for a number of reasons. There are students now more than ever who are judged based on their family's ability to buy them fancy clothes and shoes and commodities, and that wasn't the case as much when I was a kid. I think that if we're going to take a real approach to bullying, we need to include these kinds of social factors as well, to make sure there's a comprehensive approach that deals with inequities across our province.

When I talk to folks whose children experience bullying, it's often because they don't have the same resources when they enter school and go to school, and they've spent their summers without the same access to summer camps and educational experiences as their peers. And when they arrive at school, they don't have the same kind of clothing as their peers.

I have some real concerns about the fact that there is growing inequality across this province and in schools and for students across this province. I have real concerns that children on social assistance a few years ago lost their back-to-school allowance, so people have even less chance to be equal with their peers when it comes to these things.

The other thing that's changed since my time as a student is that I see growing user fees within our school system. This is absolutely opposite to our Education Act, to what it stands for. It means that people who can't afford to eat the pizza lunch that's served at school—because people are paying a user fee to use that—are ostracized. It's very stigmatizing to be a student in a classroom who can't keep up with their peers, through no fault of their own.

I think that any kind of approach to bullying—I'm glad to see the compassion within this House for young people, but I think that a real approach will look at the social factors as well.

I also think we need to support teachers to do their work here as well. We're hearing that there might be as much as—there are cuts to our education system, \$500 million of missing money. In my experience, bullying happens when nobody's there to watch. If we're cutting

back on supports in our schools, it means there are more opportunities for bullying to happen.

I will be supporting this bill. I would encourage it to go to committee and to be considered with Bill 13 as well, and that we work together to strengthen this bill. I do have some concerns, though, that we not take a punitive approach to bullying as well. A holistic approach means standing up to make sure that victims are supported in their time of need, but also that we are not only punishing bullies but making sure that they have the supports they need—because often the bullies themselves are the students who need the most support—and to make sure they have options as well, so that we don't go into a situation like we had before with the Safe Schools Act, where people are thrown out of school with no supports around them. That's something that's quite important to me.

I also think we should consult with the researchers on bullying. There's an increasing volume of research being done about bullying. We haven't talked about the role of the bystander in this. I think that supporting the school curriculum to include bullies and victims, but also the role of the bystander in stopping bullying, is quite important.

I think, in the end, we need to look at this. We need to look at the factors around poverty in our school system, around racism and discrimination and homophobia. We need to make sure that students have the supports that they have in the school, that we have sexual health classes that explain the diversity of health factors that people will experience growing up and the different experiences people have. And we need to make sure this is part of a curriculum, that students feel welcome in their schools, that their different experience is allowed for, and to make sure that students have access to GSAs, if they need them.

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I stand here today very encouraged. I'm encouraged because the members in the assembly are united. They are united to put an end to bullying in our schools and outside our schools.

It is rare, Speaker, and you know that: that on an important topic like this, you will have two bills presented at the same time. That speaks volumes. And both bills are good bills, are strong bills, and have good features in them. But that speaks to the reality that we, as the representatives of the people, which includes our children, are united. To any person, any child, any student who is listening to this debate or may hear of this debate: I want them to know that the hope is here; that their representatives, that the grown-ups, understand the issue that they're going through, understand that they are being harmed, victimized and terrified, and we're working very hard together to find a solution to make it easier for them in their own schools, in their own homes.

That's why, Speaker, it's incumbent on us that we work together as people, not as Liberals, not as New Democrats, not as Progressive Conservatives. All those

labels have no meaning when it comes to the well-being of our children. What matters the most is that we realize our responsibility to look after our children, to make sure that they are getting a good education in a healthy environment, and that they are accepted and celebrated for who they are. That's, I think, the environment most of us grew up in. Those are the opportunities that were given to us, and those are the things that we need to realize.

I want to commend the member from Kitchener-Waterloo for presenting Bill 14. I want to congratulate the Minister of Education for presenting Bill 13. I've had the chance, Speaker, to read both of those bills line by line. There are a lot of commonalities in those bills; that's a good sign. There are a lot of things that are similar. There are strengths in both the bills and there are weaknesses in both. I think we can gain so much if, as members, we bring these two bills together, take those strong points and make it an even stronger law that will protect our children.

There's another very important point that I want to make, Speaker, and I think the member from Toronto Centre, the Minister for Training, Colleges and Universities, this morning, when he was speaking about Bill 13, made a very passionate plea about that. The most common, the most basic thing we can do is encourage tolerance. That's just the starting point, Speaker. I don't want to be tolerated for the fact that I have a different faith or different complexion or I speak with an accent. That's just a given. We need to go beyond that. We need to focus on acceptance, that we get accepted for who we are; and then we need to take a step further, and that is celebration, that we encourage each other for who we are and we accept that and learn from each other. Because all of us are different—every single one of us is different—and we all have something to contribute and learn from each other. That is the essence, Speaker, that we need to capture in anti-bullying legislation that will be passed as law by this Legislature.

Be it that you're gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender; be it that you're disabled; be it that you're fat or skinny; be it that you've got freckles or not; no matter what—Muslim, Christian, Jew, no matter—I want to know. I want to learn from you. I want to get to know how things are for you. You hear my story, you'll share your story—I think that's what makes us stronger as a society. That's the province I'm so proud to call home. That's the province that my parents chose to come to from a developing country and make this place a home, because they knew that their children would be equal and would be celebrated.

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That's what we need to accomplish through anti-bullying legislation. We need to get to the core issue here. Making plans and all those things are great and they're important. We need to get to the core of the cultural issue here. We know we have a challenge to deal with when we've got protesters outside—and I respect their democratic right to protest, but the fact that there is a protest, or multiple protests out there talking about gays

or not gays, lesbians or this or that: That's a cultural issue that we need to deal with. Because that should not be an issue whatsoever; the issue should be the protection of our children.

So I really encourage, Speaker—and I'm confident. I'm an optimist. I'm extremely confident that the 107 members of this House are going to pull together. They're going to put their heads aside—the Liberal, the Conservative, the New Democrat head—and we're going to bring our best ideas and we're going to produce one of the strongest pieces of law ever produced from any Legislature dealing with anti-bullying so we can really, in a meaningful fashion, help our kids and make our schools that beacon, the incubators of learning where everybody is accepted for who they are and celebrated for their diversity. Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to engage in debate of Bill 14 and to further extend the conversation we've been having in this chamber about bullying for quite some time now.

Before I get into the meat of my remarks, I would like to acknowledge and thank the member for Kitchener–Waterloo for putting substantial thought into practice by placing this bill before us. I would also like to thank the Minister of Education. While we do not always agree, the reality is, she has thought enough about this that she has placed Bill 13 before the chamber, and I do want to thank and acknowledge her for her work in this regard.

The previous speaker is the member from Ottawa Centre. I consider him to be a friend of mine and someone I admire greatly. I know that this issue has impacted him, as it has me, because of something that's been in our community. We've had the opportunity and the good fortune to work together with a parent whose child was bullied, effectively, to death, because he chose to die by suicide. The member opposite and I came together in February to do some work to prevent youth suicide in our community, so we put aside the partisan differences, and I want to thank the member for his work on that.

A few other members spoke this morning on Bill 13, and I was listening from my office. I had a meeting, but I wanted to hear the debate. I would like to acknowledge them, because the members that I did hear speak all spoke about their own personal experiences with bullying. Although we may come from different political parties, the reality is that bullying affects everybody in varying degrees. So I would like to thank the member—the first person I actually heard speak was the member from Pickering–Scarborough East. She talked about her son. The speaker after that, I do believe, was the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, and I appreciated his emotional and passionate discussion. It's important that we bring that to this House, it's important that we listen to each other, and it's important we share those stories. That is, I think, probably the good thing that's

come out of having two bills on the order paper at the same time dealing with this substantial issue.

Also my colleague from Burlington spoke at length about this, Speaker. Her son has been a victim of bullying. To her credit, she is a new member, and the first thing she did when she became elected is she sent a letter to both myself and to our caucus chair, Mrs. Witmer, asking if we could do something on bullying here in the Ontario Legislature. So I want to congratulate the member, Jane McKenna from Burlington, for talking about that.

But let's talk about the key elements of Bill 14 that are absent, I believe, in the Liberal bill but are very substantial in this bill.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks, Speaker. The member here from Kitchener–Waterloo—a former Minister of Education, a former chair of a school board, a former teacher and education critic—spent well over two and a half years putting together research, conducting interviews, consulting with constituents across the province to develop, I think, probably the strongest piece of legislation on anti-bullying in North America. She put together a bill that includes tracking and investigating of bullying incidents, and awareness, which is very important that we all talk about, which we are doing now. There are accountability mechanisms built in place in her bill, which is very important. As a parent I say that, but also as a legislator that's important.

Something that I believe is very important for all of us to talk about is remediation. Let me talk for one minute about remediation. Let's talk a bit about children who are in elementary school, who may be a bully. We don't want that child to be doomed for the rest of their life and destined to a life where they are ostracized as being a bully and they end up committing some type of a crime. We have an opportunity in this Legislature with this piece of legislation to create the ability for all of us to work together, to be part of remediating some of our children in Ontario.

Speaker, I will cede the floor at this particular point because I do know there are other members from the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus who would like to speak to this important legislation. Thank you.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I am quite happy to support this bill. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo and I have worked on this issue for quite some time. We've been in similar committees for a long time. She and I were in one committee where we heard horrible stories of bullying on the children of these mothers—because I think they were all mothers, the ones that came in front of our committee. The stories that were recounted talked about the hurt of the children and the hurt of the parents and the failure of our educational system to deal with them. It was remarkable—remarkable, I say, because I

was a former teacher and former school trustee, an education critic for quite a long time. To see those failures not addressed was pretty horrible. You would hear people talking about how processes are in place to deal with it, but the processes that were there did not work.

So Bill 14 is something that I have no problem supporting. Bill 13 is a bill I have no problem supporting either. They actually complement each other, and I would hope that many of the Conservative members would support Bill 13, as I will be supporting Bill 14.

Both contain elements that are supportable. Much of what is in Bill 13 is in Bill 14 as well, with some additions where they define bullying as a severe and repeated harmful behaviour, which I think is a good thing to add; and requiring the minister's annual report to the Legislature to include school board data about bullying incidents, which I think is a very reasonable thing to do. The inclusion of bullying prevention in the curriculum, I think, is good. There are some limitations on that. I want to speak to that in a minute or two—we don't have much time—but it's a good thing.

Clarify—the principal should forward reports on school bullying to the minister; I think this is important. Approval of board anti-bullying plans by the minister, and the development of anti-bullying plans by school boards in consultation with parents—all of this is very positive and helpful, and I believe that everybody in this House is going to be supporting it.

There are some limitations on both bills. Some of you will recall, at least those of you who have been around for a while, that there was a Falconer report that was commissioned. We have never dealt with the recommendations made by Mr. Falconer. I want to highlight some of them, because as the Falconer report made clear, preventing violence in schools requires adequate resources for proper student supervision, adequate funding, community outreach workers to build links with the community, and adequate funding for student supports such as social workers and child and youth workers. None of these bills speak to what Falconer did by way of his report—and, by the way, his report was quite thick.

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It is clear that the Toronto Board of Education that commissioned it couldn't do very much, because they're limited by way of funding. You will know that they have an \$85-million deficit that is going to devastate the board, because it means the firing or the loss of 1,000 workers in the educational field, which is devastating. It's difficult for the board to have implemented the Falconer report because they do not have the money, having lost the ability to raise money on their own, because they rely on provincial, central governments for that funding. But we don't speak at all—this bill doesn't speak at all—to that or to the inadequacies of Bill 13, which do not speak to this either.

Unless we address that, we are not dealing with the causes of violence. Nobody speaks to it, and we need to. Why is it that students do that? Neither of the two bills

attempt to deal with it. Both bills pass on a great responsibility to boards and educators, without the adequate supports.

Now, I know that my good friend from Kitchener-Waterloo talks about some curriculum support for the teachers, or professional development. I don't see it, but it must be there, because the supports to teachers and to principals at the moment are inadequate. Principals are getting an incredible amount of additional work that both parties have passed on over the years, without the adequate supports. Unless we give them the support, they cannot do the job very well. It's very easy for us to demand they do more. It's very easy to put it in the curriculum. But when it comes to what supports school boards get and what supports teachers and principals get, they are lacking. For too long, boards have had to rely on their scarce resources to invite experts to talk about bullying and what it is they could do about it. They can't do this job on their own without support from provincial governments.

So we need to deal with the causes of violence. We need to understand why perpetrators do this. And, yes, we need to protect the victims, above all. But we have a job to do in terms of how we protect the victims and how we deal with the perpetrator as to why it is that those things happen in the first place. We've got to deal with issues of poverty; we've got to deal with issues of inequality; we've got to deal with issues of racism; and we've got to deal with issues of violence against gays and lesbians in our school system. That is a reality that we cannot avoid. We've got to deal with all of these issues.

Above all, teachers, principals and boards need our financial support. Without it, both Bill 13 and Bill 14 will have a limited effect.

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to be able to speak to Bill 14 from the member from Kitchener-Waterloo.

When I walked in here on Monday, I was very optimistic, because I saw that the order paper for the week had the government bill, Bill 13, beginning to be debated, and I saw that Ms. Witmer's bill, Bill 14, was going to be debated. I think both bills have good ideas. I think there's great opportunity to consolidate the good ideas from both bills, and I was feeling very optimistic. Then we got to the actual debate on Monday afternoon, and that optimism evaporated when we saw what happened with ringing bells and carrying on by the official opposition. I thought, "Where is the spirit of co-operation here?" But on reflection, I do think there are good ideas in Bill 14, and some of us have to behave like grown-ups. I will support Bill 14.

I was very encouraged this morning when we went back to Bill 13 and everybody who spoke to it, I think, was quite encouraging—the member from High Park, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member from Durham, come to order, please. If you're going to heckle, you have to sit in your seat.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I was very encouraged by the debate this morning.

I am not encouraged by what is going on outside this House right now, which is a horrendous homophobic demonstration. But what I do understand is that it is not the doing of the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, who truly cares—

Mr. John O'Toole: There's another remark. It's a values statement. Who made you the expert?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Well that's an interesting comment: Who made me the expert? Because what I was just going to talk about was the fact that I have spent a lot of my time around here chairing a committee, the safe schools action team, that was appointed by the Premier.

The safe schools action team, while it was chaired by me, a politician, was in fact composed of non-politicians. The people who were on the committee included Deb Pepler, who is not just a nationally recognized researcher and expert, but actually an internationally recognized researcher and expert on bullying who works out of York U and Sick Kids; Ray Hughes, who worked at CAMH Centre for Prevention Science—his particular area of expertise is looking at how we implement programs in bullying prevention, and in particular, teaching students to be respectful of each other; and Stu Auty, whom many in the education field will know is the president of the Canadian Safe School Network. Then later we added Lynn Ziraldo, who for many, many years—I think both with Mrs. Witmer as Minister of Education and into the Liberal Ministers of Education—was the chair of the minister's Advisory Committee on Special Education; and Inez Elliston, who was a former member of the board of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation.

We actually produced three different reports. We did three cycles of the province on various different areas of bullying prevention and safe schools work. So there were really province-wide consultations three times, and Bill 13 is actually the third piece of legislation.

So, in response to, "How did I get to have some opinions about this," it's from years of work.

There are a lot of ideas in Bill 14 that I support: Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week; the idea that we need to provide help for both victims and bullies is absolutely essential; the detail that the member has thought through, in terms of bullying prevention plans, I think, is very valuable; and the idea that we'll provide a provincial template, I think, is also very valuable.

What is important to me is that we save the definition that's in Bill 13: "bullying" means repeated and aggressive behaviour by a pupil where ... the behaviour is intended by the pupil to cause" and it goes on with a bunch of legal words "harm, fear or distress"—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

The member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: It's a real honour to have the chance to speak in support of Bill 14, An Act to designate Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week in schools and to provide for bullying prevention curricula, policies and administrative accountability in schools.

This bill was introduced last fall—November 30, to be exact—by my colleague the MPP for Kitchener–Waterloo. She brings her experience as a school board trustee, school board chair, MPP for six straight terms and minister of some of the most important and challenging ministries in the provincial government, including Deputy Premier. She brings her compassion and sense of fairness, and most notably today in this minority Parliament, where we need to look for opportunities to work together across party lines, setting aside the hyper-partisanship that occasionally infects this place and make a sincere effort to work together.

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Ten years ago, when the province had a balanced budget and a Progressive Conservative government—the two went together for some reason—the member for Kitchener–Waterloo was the Minister of Education and I was the parliamentary assistant to the minister. Even then she was saying we needed to do something to address the bullying problem in our schools. More recently, she brought forward a resolution in this House in 2010 calling attention to the issue of bullying, as a first step.

And now we have Bill 14. Bill 14 is comprehensive. It is based on thorough research of the best practices in jurisdictions across North America and honest consultation with Ontario educators, parents and students. Bill 14 focuses on prevention, accountability and awareness. It provides students, parents and educators with a strategy to raise awareness and prevent bullying, as well as a process to resolve it, collect data and report to the ministry.

Bill 14 stands up to bullying and addresses bullying head-on. Here's how: It addresses the issues of reporting and investigation of bullying, accountability of school officials and boards to the ministry, education and public awareness to prevent bullying, and remedial action for bullies to teach them that bullying is totally unacceptable. Bill 14 provides for a formalized process, clear responsibilities and resources for victims and perpetrators. So I support Bill 14.

It's worthwhile to point out that Bill 14 is supported by the president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, Sam Hammond, and he has written to express his support. I think it's also important to acknowledge the Premier's public statements on this issue, which imply that he believes Bill 14 has merit and his belief that the principles articulated in Bill 14 should be incorporated into the government's bill—that the two bills could be merged.

Let's look at Bill 14 in greater detail. Bill 14, the Anti-Bullying Act, includes:

- a clear definition of bullying;

- early intervention and incorporation into the curriculum starting in kindergarten;

—a province-wide ministry model for prevention and intervention plans;

—the development of detailed school board prevention plans, counselling services for the victim and perpetrator;

—ongoing professional development, parental and community education and consultation;

—publicizing anti-bullying initiatives and policies; and

—reporting of incidents and prompt investigations.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo deserves credit and the appreciation of this House for the work that she’s done on this issue and her sincere commitment to creating a framework where every student in our schools can learn without fear.

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

Mr. Rob Leone: I’m pleased to rise to speak to Bill 14 and to congratulate the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, who has spent a long time developing this bill. Certainly, she had the goal of creating a very robust, comprehensive and hopefully leading bill in North America with respect to anti-bullying. I congratulate her for her work. I congratulate her for what she’s done.

I want to state very clearly to this House that when it comes to bullying—and I want to acknowledge some of the things that the member for Ottawa Centre had said. I agree with him that we have to set our partisanship aside, that we have to focus to the greatest extent on making sure that we’re standing up for our kids, that we’re protecting our kids. That must be the first course of business in this Legislature. It evidently corresponds with a conservative principle, Mr. Speaker. We believe that governments should and can intervene to protect people. It’s called the harm principle—the harm principle that I stated and talked about earlier this morning in my comments—from John Stuart Mill, who states, “That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others.” I think that’s something that we share in this Legislature, a commitment to protecting people from harm. I think that’s essentially what we’re talking about in this bill.

I also want to acknowledge the member for Wellington–Halton Hills, who talked about our time in government. We also, during that time, introduced the Safe Schools Act, so we were very much interested in protecting our kids from violence in the classroom, and we do that and continue to do that in our deliberations on Bill 13 and Bill 14.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about some of the things that people have said about bullying. Rigby, for example, wrote, in a 2002 book, *New Perspectives on Bullying*, that it involves simply six criteria: It involves a desire to hurt, a harmful action, a power imbalance, typically it involves repetition, an unjust use of power and, finally—and I think an important one that we should underline—evident enjoyment by the aggressor and gen-

erally a sense of being oppressed on the part of the victim.

Certainly, that is the goal of this legislation. This legislation will go a long way to eliminating particularly all those points, but that last line, the “enjoyment of the aggressor,” simply shouldn’t happen. We have to minimize to the greatest extent possible the oppression on the part of the victim. I think we’d go a long way in helping our kids feel safe in their classrooms.

Finally, in the short time that I have left, I want to also highlight one of the points in this bill that I really think is necessary and important to discuss. It has to do with cyberbullying. I think that the nature of bullying today has changed. It’s very easy to put something on the Internet, to spread these rumours very quickly. It’s actually permanent, and we can’t do very much about that.

I applaud that aspect of this bill, and I’ll support it wholeheartedly.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Kitchener–Waterloo, you have two minutes for a response.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I’m very pleased to express my thanks to the members for Davenport; Ottawa Centre; Nepean–Carleton, our education critic; the member for Trinity–Spadina, with whom I’ve spent a lot of time engaged in, hopefully, helping to improve the educational system in the province of Ontario; the member for Guelph, who, like me, served as chair of a school board; the member for Wellington–Halton Hills, who was actually my parliamentary assistant in 2003, and he has reminded me that I had tasked him just before that election with taking a look at how we could continue to do everything possible to prevent and eliminate bullying; and, of course, my newest colleague the member from Cambridge, who represents his riding so very well.

I think it’s clear, when we hear all of the comments that have been made in here today, that nobody has a monopoly on being concerned about the issue of bullying and the impact it has on those that are bullied, the negative impact it has on the perpetrator as well and, of course, the families who suffer the consequences.

We do have an opportunity today in this House to pass this bill, and I hope that we will, and obviously, then, we need to move forward. I think it’s incumbent upon us to put aside any differences we may have and try to come up with legislation that will ensure that our students can go to school and feel safe, because in order to learn, they need to feel safe.

I would just conclude with a comment in a letter that I received from Karen Sebben and Corina Morrison, both on different anti-bullying coalitions. They say to me here, “To those of you who have had the benefit of being elected into power, dig into your conscience and do what is right for Ontario families. You have an opportunity to collaborate and collectively take credit for doing something positively. Do so, knowing it is for the sake of our children.”

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We’ll take the vote on this item later.

1520

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION
DONS D'ORGANES ET DE TISSUS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should, as soon as possible, establish an advisory committee made up of affected stakeholders to investigate all possible options for encouraging and improving organ and tissue donation in Ontario. This committee should also investigate ways of improving the quality of care provided to those individuals waiting for an organ or tissue donation. Upon receiving the committee's recommendations, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should then move forward with appropriate policy and legislative changes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Jaczek has moved private member's notice of motion number 14. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the outset, I would like to welcome to this debate two constituents of mine who have been truly an inspiration in the formation of this particular resolution. Gerri and Dennis Seeley were hoping to be here today, but were unable to do so, so they're watching at home in Ballantrae.

Too often, Mr. Speaker, we talk about patient-centred care, but seldom do we ensure that this concept is actually operational. My private member's resolution recommends that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care establish an advisory committee as soon as possible to investigate options for encouraging and improving organ and tissue donation in Ontario, and, particularly, to investigate ways of increasing the quality of care for those waiting for an organ or tissue transplantation is one way to do this.

Although I'm loath to recommend an additional committee to the many already established, the urgency of the situation for the many patients on transplant wait-lists is such that I believe further patient input, directly to the Ministry of Health, is necessary to solve the many problems related to patient care in the complex area of organ and tissue donation and transplantation.

After speaking with some of my constituents about their experience of being on the transplant waiting list, luckily receiving a life-saving organ and recovering from the surgery, I heard many interesting insights and opinions about ways the process could be more thoughtfully laid out from the patient's point of view. Recently, a number of media stories have raised similar issues.

Imagine for a moment that you come from a family where many members have had potentially fatal polycystic kidney disease. Perhaps you've seen some family members with failing kidneys spend years on dialysis waiting for a transplant. Perhaps some have died waiting for a life-giving organ, or perhaps you witnessed a family member receive a call that an organ is available, only to

have their hopes dashed when it is found to be incompatible.

Surely, you will wonder when your own kidneys will start to fail. How will you reach out to family and friends to donate a kidney? How will you feel about the relatively small number of Ontarians who register to be a donor after death? How will you keep your job when you're on dialysis? How will you survive transplant surgery? What is your chance of a post-transplant lymphoma? You'll wonder whether you should go overseas, where you've read a kidney can be purchased from a live donor.

Some of the ideas my constituents have expressed to me are simple but would make a real difference in people's lives—for example, Gerri Seeley's idea of ensuring that those who register to be a donor be very strongly advised to tell their family of their intention, as it has been shown that this facilitates the speed with which organs may be harvested at the donor's hospital.

An excellent suggestion came from Joe Menna, a constituent of our colleague from Niagara Falls whom he told me about. I'm quoting from a recent article in Niagara This Week, which explains that Joe lost a close family member while awaiting a donor organ. Joe compiled a list of ways to make sure patients who are possible candidates for organ transplants have the proper information available to them to make informed choices when it comes to their medical care. As Joe said, "It's about empowering patients and their families and the public at large." So his suggestion is that wait times by organ, removals from the wait-list and life expectancy after transplant all be available to the public, as they are in BC and in the USA. Luckily, Mr. Craitor was able to arrange a meeting for Joe with Ministry of Health and Trillium Gift of Life officials, who have since agreed to ensuring this information will be available. An advisory committee such as I'm suggesting would allow for creative patient-centred ideas to be brought forward directly to those who can enact the changes.

Another suggestion has been the use of post-transplant patients as volunteer peer supporters to those awaiting transplant. These patients have a wealth of experience that they could use to provide not only emotional support, but practical suggestions to make patients' and their families' lives easier. Post-transplant patients could go into schools, workplaces and clubs to educate students and the general public about the virtues of being a donor.

In summary, the many suggestions that I've heard make me think that an advisory committee that is patient-based would be of benefit to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and subsequently to the agency in Ontario responsible to the ministry for stewardship of all matters related to donation and transplantation.

As I'm sure most members are aware, the Trillium Gift of Life Network was established in December 2000 by the Ontario government. It has assumed the role of Ontario's central organ and tissue donation agency, with the challenge to significantly increase organ and tissue donation across the province and improve related processes and functions.

The Trillium Gift of Life Network has been working hard to fulfill their mission of saving and enhancing more lives through the gift of organ and tissue donation in Ontario. I've met with the CEO, Ronnie Gavsie, and her staff, and have been in communication with a board member, and they are all clearly very dedicated to their work, but they have also expressed their frustration with their need to engage the many jurisdictions that are involved with the process. Charged with such a large task, the Trillium Gift of Life Network has certainly done a good job in increasing the number of donors in Ontario and laying the foundation for a successful program.

The number of registered donors since the creation of the organ and tissue donor registry has more than doubled since 2003. As of December 2011, there are over 2,300,000 Ontarians registered to be donors. But donation rates vary across the province, from a low of approximately eight donors per million people in Kingston to a high of over 21 donors per million in Hamilton and London.

While the newly initiated online donor registry beadoner.ca is proving very successful, with celebrity endorsements boosting numbers quite dramatically, it is estimated that at least doubling current numbers is required to make any substantial difference to transplant wait-lists. Because in Ontario there are approximately 1,500 people waiting for an organ transplant, 1,000 of which are waiting for a kidney, some become so desperate they go overseas where they can purchase an organ. So it is clear there is much more to do.

The Auditor General reviewed organ and tissue donation and transplantation in 2010, following up on the report of the organ and tissue transplantation wait times expert panel of 2009 chaired by Dr. Gary Levy, who is director of the multi-organ transplant program at University Health Network. The Auditor General made seven recommendations, and some have been implemented by Trillium Gift of Life while a number are being worked on by various committees. The problems surrounding organ and tissue donation are very complex, as the Auditor General has outlined, and involve many stakeholder groups. There is no question that Trillium Gift of Life faces many challenges in getting agreement from transplant centres and donor hospitals on common policies and procedures.

I'll give you a few examples. There are 61 hospitals with advanced ventilator capacity, necessary to maintain the viability of organs for transplant in Ontario; yet currently, just 21 hospitals are required to notify Trillium Gift of Life of potential organ donors.

Another example: Consistent clinical criteria have been developed in conjunction with hospitals to assist physicians in knowing when to notify Trillium of potential donors. However, these criteria have yet to be rolled out to all hospitals and relevant physicians.

Furthermore, a consistent set of criteria for non-transplant physicians to use to know when to refer patients to a transplant wait-list needs to be disseminated.

Although these matters sound rather technical, the requirement is quite simply to maximize supply to an

unmet demand. Solutions are available and, I believe, should be urgently sought and implemented.

1530

One impressive initiative, led by Canadian Blood Services, is the national paired registry for live kidney donors. A patient who has a willing live donor, whose kidney may or may not be a match for their transplant, can swap with another patient anywhere in the country who may have a more compatible live donor. It is this type of innovative thinking that is helping patients on wait-lists live with more hope.

I've been concentrating my remarks on how the current system needs to meet the needs of patients. However, it is important to note that the costs of transplant surgery are marginal when compared to the costs associated with ongoing treatments for those with end-stage organ failure. For example, each kidney transplant surgery costs approximately \$25,000, whereas dialysis costs approximately \$70,000 annually per patient. In addition, less than 8% of Ontario's tissue needs were met with Ontario tissue, due to a lack of resources to recover, process and store it. Hospitals have to purchase tissue from outside the province: no doubt, a more expensive proposition. So it is clearly in the best interests of all parties, including the taxpayer, to do everything possible to increase the supply of donor organs and tissues to meet the needs of patients.

An advisory committee that considers all these matters, that includes patients and patient advocates, could provide to the Ministry of Health some oversight of the progress being made in organ and tissue donation and transplantation by actually personifying the urgency of the situation.

I'd like to close by thanking the many individuals and associations who have encouraged me to bring this resolution forward, and this includes so many of my constituents, including Gerri and Dennis Seeley; and also Jim O'Brien, the executive director of the Kidney Foundation of Canada; Joanna Mitchell, the founder of the Live Donation Awareness Association; Jane Tucker, the president of the London Transplant Gift of Life Association and a member of Trillium Gift of Life Network's provincial volunteers committee; Dr. Gary Levy; Dr. Charles Tator; and Karen Philp, executive director of the Canadian Patient Coalition.

I'd like to quote directly from Karen's letter to me: "We fully support your efforts to address effectively the challenge of increasing the donation of organs and tissue across Ontario. We also thank you for your efforts to enhance the quality of life of patients needing an organ transplant, their families and caregivers with your private member's resolution."

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, we must move forward and constantly look to ways to improve Ontario's health care system. We must ensure that patients' concerns and needs are put at the centre of the circle of care. I urge all members of this House to support my resolution.

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

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: First off, I would like to thank the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for presenting the resolution today. It's something I also strongly support, and I can say that I will be supporting the resolution brought forward by my esteemed colleague.

This is one of the reasons, Mr. Speaker, why I brought forward earlier today my private member's bill, Bill 58, which is to look at the idea of organ and tissue donation on death, and I would encourage all members of the House to closely look at the bill. I think it's exactly what we need. In fact, in 2003, it was the Progressive Conservative Party which brought forward a bill, very similar, in which it was unanimously debated and accepted. It was the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker.

To date, we have—one person dies every three days on the waiting list, waiting for organs. In the last 10 years—2003—we've had lots of time. Over 1,000 people have passed on because we haven't moved forward. This is something I think we definitely—all parties can agree it needs to be reviewed and passed as soon as possible. In fact, by myself presenting the private member's bill today—between now and when we're able to debate the bill, May 3, almost 12 people will have passed away waiting on the list.

I would like to commend the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for taking the courageous steps forward, and I would look forward to working with her in reviewing—I think it's an important process. Even though it's my private member's bill, it's not a perfect piece of legislation. As we all know, legislation is not perfect, and it's something that we can work toward and pass.

But I'm asking all parties today to take a serious look at this because it saves lives. I think all parties can agree that that's the right thing to do. So I would like all members to look at this.

You know, it's sort of near and dear to my heart. We've all had family members, neighbours or friends who have been in situations where they could have probably, perhaps—we're not going to save everybody with my private member's bill, but it increases the chances of survival. It increases the chances that they get to spend more time with their loved ones, seeing their children grow up, have grandchildren.

I ask all members today to please support the member from Oak Ridges–Markham in her endeavours to make the system better, but I would also extend an invitation for all parties and all members of this chamber to support my private member's bill.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is a pleasure for me to speak on behalf of my party about the private member's motion—organ and tissue donation advisory committee—that was put forward by the member from Oak Ridges–Markham. We will, without a doubt, be giving our support to this very worthy endeavour. I thank the member for bringing this forward, as well as my colleague who was just talking, because this is an important issue.

The statistics speak for themselves: 1,505 people are on a wait-list for a life-saving transplant. Make no doubt about it, Mr. Speaker, you're not put on the transplant list unless your life is in danger and your days are numbered. Those people need our help, and I think, with the motion that is put forward, we can do our little part.

Of course there's another little part that we can all do; it's to make sure that we put our name on the list to be an organ transplant donor. I can guarantee you that I am on this list, and I certainly hope that all 106 of my colleagues, including you, Mr. Speaker, have done the same and have signed their cards that say that you will be an organ donor. This is the right thing to do.

I also want to talk to you a bit about two issues. The first one is a very famous young lady who lives in Ontario. Her name is Héléne Campbell. This young lady is becoming famous the world over. She is young. She is witty. She comes from around the Ottawa region. She is full of life. She had to move to Toronto. She doesn't really want to live in Toronto, not because Toronto is not a nice city, but her home is in Ottawa, and that is where she wants to be. The reason why she's in Toronto, Mr. Speaker, is because she is on the transplant list for a double lung transplant.

Héléne has become famous because of some of the things that she did, not to help herself, but really to help people understand the importance of being an organ donor, the importance of signing your card.

1540

One of the nifty things that she did is that she tweeted to Justin Bieber, and much to her surprise, he re-tweeted it. That simple little act of sending a tweet brought in over 2,000 people to the organ donor list, Mr. Speaker. After Justin Bieber read her tweet and re-tweeted it to his thousands and thousands of fans who follow him on Twitter, the Ontario registry increased almost 800 that day and another over 1,200 the next day—and her work continues. That is phenomenal.

Another thing that she did was make a video of herself. She is as pretty as a button, she is witty, she's always positive; she's always smiling. A friend of hers got a little homemade movie of hers and put it on YouTube, and she forwarded it to Ellen DeGeneres. For those of you who don't watch TV, it is an afternoon show that is watched by millions of people. And here it is, this little 20-year-old from Ontario sent her YouTube video, and Ellen DeGeneres actually picked up Héléne Campbell's video, and she showed her YouTube video on her show. Then, much to everybody's surprise, she Skyped to Héléne here in Toronto. Héléne had no idea that she was going to be talking to Ellen DeGeneres. She thought she was talking to producers about her video, and here she is on TV for millions of people to see. Because of the work of this young woman, again, people started signing their donation cards by the thousands.

What does that mean, Mr. Speaker? Well, right now, Ontario stands kind of at the bottom of the list. Only 21% of us have signed our cards. That compares pretty badly to our neighbours to the south, who are already at 35%,

and many other jurisdictions that are way, way higher than us. What H el ene Campbell has done is that, by making it an issue, by inviting people to think about signing their cards, people actually did it. A lot of people, if you ask them if they want to, say yes. Most people do. There are very good reasons that some people may not want to, but for most people, it really comes down to a matter of, "Has anybody ever asked you? Have you ever taken the time to think and ask yourself the question, "Would I like to sign my donor's card?"

This young woman is full of other ideas. If the recommendation of an advisory committee was ever to come to be—and I hope it does—I can tell you that this young woman would bring us tonnes of other ideas. She speaks about birthday parties. A young adult, when they turn 16, is allowed to sign their own donor's card. So she has ideas like, how about we make it kind of a rite of passage? When your 16th birthday arrives—a lot of people go all out on their 16th birthday, with the sweet 16 and all of this—make it a party with your friends. Chances are your friends are about the same age as you, about to turn 16 or 17 and 18, and as they come to your birthday party, make it an organ donor card party. Make it part of your 16th birthday that you have this discussion and you make sure that people sign up.

She is full of good ideas, and I'm sure there are other H el ene Campbells around with the same type of ideas and joie de vivre—and a whole electricity about her, really trying hard, by herself, to move things forward. Just think of what could happen if the Legislative Assembly actually followed the idea of the member, actually pulled this advisory committee together and allowed people like H el ene Campbell and the many, many others out there who have ideas to come and shape policies for Ontario. Maybe Ontario, rather than being at the bottom of the pack—could you imagine the day when we would be at the top of the pack? Because we are on many other levels, Mr. Speaker.

I know that we hear a lot about when our health care system is not working, and long-term care and home care certainly are having a tough time right now, but there are parts of our health care system where we are without equal.

In organ transplants in Ontario—this is a program we can all be proud of. There could be six organs that become available at the same time, because a single person could give, up to six times, the gift of life, and the hospitals in Toronto will spring into action. They will have six ORs ready, they will have six teams of surgeons and nurses ready to go and they will save the lives of six people the same day, the same night, 24 hours a day, 24/7—it doesn't matter.

We are at the top of the game worldwide when it comes to doing a good job in organ transplants. This is a program every Ontarian can be really proud of. This is something we do well. But those teams, waiting with their beepers 24/7, can only do their job if you sign your donor's card. This is how it works.

I have nothing but good things to say about the Trillium Gift of Life Network. They try really hard. They

have a huge mandate and they do good work. What we are trying to do right now is really to expand this, to shine a fresh light as to how we can do things better. Because if one little 20-year-old—she was 19 when she started. When one little 20-year-old can change the world, I think this Legislative Assembly has an opportunity to learn from her and learn from people like her.

J'aimerais prendre les deux derni eres minutes qu'il me reste pour mettre en lumi ere une jeune femme extraordinaire qui vit ici en Ontario. Elle demeure   Ottawa. Elle est jeune. Elle est dynamique. Elle est pleine d' nergie, pleine d'id ees et tr es, tr es, tr es positive—

M. Rosario Marchese: Et bilingue.

M^{me} France G elinas: Et bilingue. Oui, elle est bilingue.

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Elle est lib erale aussi?

M^{me} France G elinas: Je n'en ai aucune id ee. Par contre, elle doit demeurer   Toronto. Elle doit demeurer   Toronto, monsieur le Pr esident, parce qu'en ce moment, elle est en attente d'une double greffe de poumon.  a ne l'a pas emp ech ee d'envoyer un tweet   Justin Bieber, et en faisant  a, elle a  t e capable d'encourager des milliers d'Ontariens   ajouter leur nom   la liste de donateurs.

Elle a fait une petite vid eo, avec une de ses amies, qu'elle avait mise sur YouTube. Elle a pris sa petite vid eo de YouTube et l'a envoy ee   Ellen DeGeneres, aux  tats-Unis. M^{me} DeGeneres l'a mise sur son programme, un programme qui est vu par des millions de personnes, et encore l a, on a vu que des centaines et des milliers de personnes en Ontario ont sign e leur carte pour devenir donateurs.

Si une personne de 19 ans—elle a 20 ans maintenant—avec le peu de ressources qu'elle a,  tait capable d'avoir un impact de l'ampleur qu'elle a eu, imaginez-vous, monsieur le Pr esident, si on allait de l'avant avec l'id ee de ma coll egue de mettre un comit e ici,   Queen's Park, de donner la chance aux jeunes gens et aux plus vieux partout en Ontario qui, eux aussi, ont des id ees. Je crois qu'on pourrait faire un grand pas   l'avant.

En Ontario, 21 % des Ontariens et Ontariennes ont sign e leur carte.  a, c'est d ecevante. Si on veut continuer d' tre un leader, il faut faire augmenter ces nombres-l a. Puis, l'id ee de ma coll egue est une id ee qui, j'esp ere, va porter fruit en ce sens. Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Pr esident.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Scarborough—Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise today to speak in support of the motion brought forth by the member from Oak Ridges—Markham.

I know the member as a physician, as a mother and a caring Ontarian who has consistently worked collaboratively with community stakeholders to bring forth healthy public policies which improve and protect the health of all Ontarians.

In this brief time I have right now, I would like to speak on the significance of this motion: the portion which advocates for the creation of an advisory com-

mittee of all relevant stakeholders to improve and encourage organ donation in Ontario.

1550

Recently, like the member from Nickel Belt said, there have been some important stories which inform us as to why we need more organ donation in Ontario. On March 21, the Toronto Star wrote a story on H el ene Campbell. Ms. Campbell is a 20-year-old woman from Ottawa who suffers from idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, a chronic, progressive form of lung disease. Her lung capacity, which has been shrinking since diagnosis last October, now sits at 20%. She's in desperate need for a lung transplant and is currently on a wait-list for a double lung transplant.

Ms. Campbell has started an awareness campaign to increase organ and tissue donation registration in Ontario. Having more potential organ donors increases the chances for Ms. Campbell and others on the organ donation wait-list to receive a vital transplant which could save their lives.

Through Ms. Campbell's efforts—she got Justin Bieber to tweet his support. After that, donor registration started climbing immediately, with 1,760 new registrations in Ontario the next week. After her February 16 appearance on the Ellen DeGeneres Show, 5,027 people registered as organ donors the next week in Ontario alone. Before Ms. Campbell started her campaign, typically there were 50 online registrations a day to be an organ donor in Ontario.

Currently, there are approximately 1,500 people waiting on the Ontario organ transplant list, 1,000 of which are waiting for a kidney. Since 2001, 341 people have died in Ontario waiting for a kidney.

It is important that we realize the risks with having such a large wait-list for organ donation. People are willing to take risks, to get surgeries overseas so that they don't have to suffer while waiting for organ donation in Ontario; people like Raul Fain, a Toronto man who paid \$105,000 to have a kidney transplant in Kosovo, all because his doctors told him he could wait up to 12 years for an operation here in Canada.

We cannot let our citizens take the risk of pursuing critical surgeries in other parts of the world. We need more organ donors to reduce the wait-list that many currently face so those who need the surgery here can have it in Ontario.

It is estimated that 20% of Ontarians believe they are a registered donor when in fact they only have signed a donor card, and thus are not a registered donor. I hope this advisory council will find ways how we can encourage and inform people of the need to register online to be an organ donor.

Additional improvements can be made in our hospitals, as the member from Oak Ridges–Markham alluded to earlier, in reporting potential organ donors. Currently, only 21 of the 61 hospitals that have advanced ventilator capacity are required to notify the Trillium Gift of Life Network of the potential organ donors. I hope that this advisory council that my colleague is seeking to

create looks at ways we can expand this requirement to all 61 hospitals.

Organ donation can have important cost-saving contributions for our health care system. According to the Attorney General's 2010 report on organ donation, dialysis costs approximately \$70,000 annually per patient, yet kidney transplant surgery costs the hospital about \$25,000.

Organ donations save lives, and it's often the only treatment for people with organs that are damaged through illnesses or disease and would otherwise die. One donor can save up to eight lives.

I'm pleased to support my colleague's resolution, its efforts to improve organ donation in Ontario, and would encourage everyone in this House and in this province of Ontario to register on the organ donors' list: www.beadonor.ca.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a pleasure to be able to stand in support of this resolution here today to create a committee to improve organ and tissue donation in this province. We all know the importance of organ donation. It's a selfless, honourable act that saves many, many lives every year. In fact, as was mentioned earlier, one donor can save up to eight lives.

Currently, we have over two million Ontarians that are on a list waiting to give organs, and they're registered as organ donors; that list needs to be bigger. Every year, between 400 and 500 transplants are performed, and this year we're already at 260. One of those is a good friend of mine whose life has hung in the balance as he waited for a suitable donor match. That's a terrible position to find yourself in. I saw his life change. I saw his family's quality of life diminish as he waited for a kidney, and perhaps most dramatically, I saw how he and his family suffered while they waited as his life hung in the balance, wondering if he would survive and whether his children would be fatherless and his wife would be a widow.

Not only his life hung in the balance but, as I mentioned, his family's as well. If another person didn't take the time and the effort and the thoughtfulness just to fill out a donor card and register as an organ donor, my friend would likely have died and left behind two wonderful kids and a wonderful wife; and we would be without one really great, active citizen in our community. Those people are in short supply, as we know, in many of our communities.

In the year 2000, our own Elizabeth Witmer saw a need to establish a central organ donation agency and made the Trillium Gift of Life Network happen. Ever since, they've been doing incredible work: planning and promoting supporting activities related to donation of organs and tissue transplant; managing the procurement, distribution and delivery of organs and tissue; establishing waiting lists and awareness for the public; and informing families connected to organ tissue donation.

I'd like to thank my colleagues for recognizing the need for organ tissue donation by establishing this amazing agency, and certainly kudos to the member from

Oak Ridges–Markham for bringing forward this resolution. I think it certainly speaks to the importance of this issue. Anything we can do to further awareness of organ and tissue donation and make sure that actions actually take place to make this happen are a great thing.

I am proud to support the resolution and speak in favour of it and certainly hope that, in the future, all members of this House will see fit to do the same and take a very close look at my colleague from Northumberland–Quinte West’s private member’s Bill 58 that also speaks to this issue and really seriously give it good consideration.

This is something that should not be a partisan issue. We need to work quickly on this. People are dying every day because they’re waiting for organs, and we need to move quickly on this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the members who have brought this very important issue to the House today—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Excuse me. I think the time ran out on your previous speaker.

The member from Etobicoke North.

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Merci, monsieur le Président. La transplantation est un domaine important et émergent en médecine qui mérite l’attention de la Chambre. Ceci est particulièrement important car l’incidence de diverses maladies qui conduisent à la nécessité d’une greffe continue d’augmenter à un rythme exponentiel—par exemple, le diabète, les maladies cardiaques, l’insuffisance rénale et la maladie pulmonaire.

Ce qui est également important de remarquer, monsieur le Président, c’est que ce domaine mérite la réglementation. Sinon, il y a un marché noir considérable, un commerce illégal dans l’échange d’organes.

D^{re} Helena Jaczek, ma collègue représentant la circonscription d’Oak Ridges–Markham, propose une résolution que, de l’avis de la Chambre, le ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée devrait, dès que possible, mettre en place un comité consultatif composé d’intervenants touchés pour enquêter sur toutes les options possibles pour encourager et améliorer les dons d’organes et de tissus en Ontario.

Ce comité devra également étudier les moyens d’améliorer la qualité des soins prodigués à ces personnes en attente d’un don d’organe ou de tissus. Après avoir reçu les recommandations du comité, le ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée devrait alors aller de l’avant avec une politique appropriée et des modifications législatives.

Le Réseau Trillium pour le don de vie a été créé en décembre 2000 par le gouvernement de l’Ontario et a assumé le rôle de l’organe central de l’Ontario et l’agence du don de tissus avec le défi d’augmenter significativement les dons d’organes et de tissus à travers la province.

Le Réseau Trillium pour le don de vie a travaillé dur pour remplir sa mission de sauver et d’améliorer plus de vies par le don d’organes et de tissus en Ontario.

1600

Chargé d’une tâche de grande envergure, Le réseau Trillium pour le don de vie a fait un bon travail dans l’augmentation du nombre des bailleurs de fonds en Ontario en lançant les bases d’un programme réussi.

Toutefois, étant donné le nombre de parties prenantes impliquées, il s’agit d’une tâche très complexe. Beaucoup de gens restent sur la liste d’attente pour une transplantation d’organe ou de tissus, et d’autres, malheureusement, meurent avant de subir leur opération.

Si vous avez signé la carte donnant la permission d’utiliser tous vos organes après votre mort, vous pourriez sauver jusqu’à huit vies. Le taux de dons varie à travers la province, à partir d’une faible quantité d’environ huit donneurs par million à Kingston, à la plus haute somme de 21 donneurs par million à Hamilton et à London. En 2009, Toronto avait environ 16 donneurs par million d’habitants.

Finale­ment, monsieur le Président, j’invite tous mes collègues—tous les députés à l’Assemblée législative—à soutenir, à voter et à promouvoir la résolution de ma collègue, l’honorable D^{re} Helena Jaczek, représentante de la circonscription d’Oak Ridges–Markham. Merci, monsieur le Président.

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

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I am pleased to rise today to speak to this motion from the member from Oak Ridges–Markham. And from the member from Nickel Belt, what a wonderful story. We will have your cousin Hélène Campbell in our thoughts.

Ontario families are, as we know, sadly getting used to hospital wait times. Last year, the Minister of Health estimated that Ontarians are waiting for up to 25 hours in waiting rooms across the province. Others outside of the ER will continue to wait because they simply have no choice.

There are an alarming number of Ontarians, nearly 1,500, currently waiting for a life-saving organ transplant. They are waiting because they are out of options. They are facing end-stage organ failure. And readiness matters: These patients cannot afford to miss an opportunity. Every three days, on average, someone on the waiting list will die because of the shortage of registered organ and tissue donors. Nationwide statistics show that there were 1,022 organ donors in 2010. In that year, about twice that many transplants of solid organs took place.

But let’s look at the numbers in perspective. In 2010, Canada-wide, there were over 39,000 people living with end-stage kidney disease. Despite the advances of medicine, end-stage organ failure is still an extremely challenging issue for our health care system and unbelievably trying for patients, their families and loved ones. New and promising treatment options continue to arise and evolve, but it is important to remember the practical steps we can all take immediately to make things better today and, in doing so, extend the gift of life.

The Trillium Gift of Life Network, created 12 years ago by my esteemed colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo,

is Ontario's central organ and tissue donation agency, and it is an asset to all Ontarians that should never be taken for granted. Since the formation of the Trillium Gift of Life Network, nationwide studies have shown an increase in organ donors of around 18%. Among living donors, the biggest gains are showing up in the baby boomers demographic and—here's your dose of hope for the day—among total strangers. Trillium network's data shows that Hamilton Health Sciences centre has almost matched its 2011 organ donation numbers already in 2012—another hopeful sign.

But we are still a long way from where we need to be. Organ and tissue donation saves lives. Registering is easy. You can get started now at beadonor.ca. Take a few minutes and save a life today.

I'm going to support this motion in the interest of moving forward, for the reasons I've explained. Mr. Speaker, I would also note that earlier today, my colleague from Northumberland–Quinte West introduced Bill 58, which addresses these same, important concerns. We look forward to all parties supporting the bill.

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

Mr. Rob Leone: I just wanted to stand and rise on behalf of the people of Cambridge and the PC caucus to speak to this bill very briefly, although I don't have very much time.

I think it's a very important issue. I congratulate the member for Oak Ridges–Markham for standing up and bringing this motion forward.

I also, in the same instance, want to congratulate the member for Northumberland–Quinte West for his bill that he tabled today.

I also want to say, I think we all have some heart-wrenching stories with respect to organ donors. I do want to say, though, that it's a very emotional issue. I think we've had a pretty emotional day in this Legislature, and we can't forget about that element. We can't forget about that element because the decision to donate organs has to come at the end of one's life, in large part, Mr. Speaker. We have to be sympathetic to those families that are going through a very troubling time. But we have to hopefully understand that, by doing that, by making some pretty significant decisions, we may not have to have other families go down a similar kind of hardship.

So on the basis of that, Mr. Speaker, I support the motion and congratulate the member for Oak Ridges–Markham on her motion.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask members who are having their conversations all over the chamber—it's very difficult to hear the speaker. If we could turn it down a little.

Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: Mr. Speaker, I was really impressed by the member from Barrie and his heartfelt concern over the plight of people waiting for organ donations, and the member from Northumberland's bill, and the member from Oak Ridges–Markham and everybody else who

spoke, because it is something that really penetrates families in a way that we could never imagine.

We've all had those cases come to our office. I know I had a case of a woman who was dying and needed a kidney transplant. Somehow, she hooked up with a donor from Australia, and she arranged for the transplant to take place in Cyprus. So the authorities here at OHIP had to verify whether it was legitimate, so they checked out the hospital in Cyprus. They checked out the donor. The donor's parents had to come to Cyprus to check out the young man who was the donor. Anyway, the good end was that OHIP actually covered the transplant in Cyprus. This was excruciating for them and, I know, the people in my office. It must have taken six months to do this, but it shouldn't have to be this way.

As much as the Trillium Gift of Life is doing a wonderful job in difficult circumstances—the doctors, the patient advocates—there is something really amiss in organ donations in this province. There is not a system in place which really gives people who need this life-connecting link the help they need. There's something amiss. It's not working.

I hope that this committee, which, if struck—and I would suggest that there should be a couple of MPPs on it, really, and some patient advocates—that we can find out how to break through this logjam, because, as I said, there are difficult obstacles.

I had one young man, Mario, who has been going through dialysis. He's in his 20s. He's going for—I don't know—about three or four hours of dialysis every day. He got accepted on the donor's list at one of the hospitals in Toronto. He got a donor. By the time he was ready to be operated on, it took so long that the donor withdrew her offer to be the donor. So you can imagine: He was right on the precipice of getting the kidney, and it was withdrawn. So now he had to go back to another hospital, and now he's on the list at another hospital. He's waiting for a donor again, and this kid is 25 years of age.

So we need to do something to break the impasse. There are not enough people who are signing up. It's going to take more than Justin Bieber and these things. It's going to take all of us working together, with all our health professionals, our great doctors, our nurses, to make a breakthrough here so that we can really get people this lifeline. I hope that we all join together, in a non-partisan way, on breaking through this, because it is really hard work.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Oak Ridges–Markham, you have two minutes to reply.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'd like to thank each of the members that spoke.

To the member from Northumberland–Quinte West: Yes, indeed, I'll definitely be supporting your private member's bill, and thank you for bringing that forward.

To the member from Barrie: You really did a wonderful job in describing your friend's experience and the heart-rending type of situation that he went through.

The member from Burlington: You talked a little bit about wait times. One of the many things that we do need

to actually establish are formal wait times for organ transplantation. We also have five regional wait-lists. What I would like to see is a province-wide wait-list for each organ, which would allow for the highest-priority patient in the province, based on clinical evidence, to receive the first suitable organ available.

To the member from Nickel Belt: always wonderful in terms of sharing the experiences that she's heard of. Thank you so much.

My former colleague, and current colleague, the member for Scarborough–Agincourt, is a nurse, of course. You know the issues very well.

Le député d'Etobicoke–Nord, merci pour vos mots gentils.

The member for Eglinton–Lawrence: again, a story of the excruciating difficulties that some people have to experience.

What we can do in this House is not only, of course, support my resolution, but ensure that we, as individuals, are registered on beadonor.ca. I would urge all members, also, to do what I have done, which is to put the beadonor.ca link on your own website and take every opportunity you can to bring that to the attention of your constituents. I've become very forceful on this with individuals I meet so that we can do something very practical on a daily basis.

Thank you all for your support, and I look forward to the establishment of this committee. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for private members' public business has expired.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE
PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS
AMENDMENT ACT, 2012
LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ
DE PROTECTION DES ANIMAUX
DE L'ONTARIO

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal with the first ballot item, number 22, standing in the name of Mr. MacLaren.

Mr. MacLaren has moved second reading of Bill 47. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

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

I believe the nays have it.

Second reading negatived.

ANTI-BULLYING ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA LUTTE
CONTRE L'INTIMIDATION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Witmer has moved second reading of Bill 14. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is referred to the committee of—

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: The social policy committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill go to social policy. Is there agreement? Agreed? Agreed.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Jaczek has moved private member's notice of motion 14. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Bradley has moved adjournment of the House. Agreed? Agreed.

This House stands adjourned until Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1614.

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Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
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Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
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Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
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Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle

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Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
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Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
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Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
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MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
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McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

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Moridi, Reza (LIB) Munro, Julia (PC)	Richmond Hill York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
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Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
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Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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Cheri DiNovo, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Ernie Hardeman, Tracy MacCharles
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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