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of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

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Tuesday 26 February 2013

Mardi 26 février 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

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The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 25, 2013, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate? Mr. Tabuns had the floor. Mr. Tabuns is not here, so therefore we entertain further debate.

The member from Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It certainly is a pleasure to rise in this House and make a few remarks in relation to the speech from the throne entitled *The Way Forward*.

As everyone knows, last week the government opened the second session of the 40th Parliament with a new leader, Premier Kathleen Wynne. It was a historic moment when Kathleen Wynne became the first female Premier of Ontario, and I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate her.

Now, as we all know as representatives in our individual ridings, our most important duty as an elected representative is to represent the feelings, the aspirations, the hopes of our constituents. And over the last few months, I've certainly had the opportunity to have many, many conversations with the constituents in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham. So I'm going to focus on the areas of the throne speech that particularly address their concerns.

As we've outlined in *The Way Forward*, we have a number of priority areas; first of all, a strong economy. Through fiscal responsibility, economic growth and increased employment, we will be strong economic stewards. We will take a balanced approach—I think that's a word that we have used on this side of the House over the last several years, certainly since I've been here—in our approach. And so we will take a balanced approach to the budget and seek innovative ways to create new jobs and address youth employment.

Our government will work to coordinate services, through renewed partnerships, to ensure all individuals can participate in this economy, while reducing govern-

ment spending and eliminating the deficit by 2017-18. I can assure the members of this House that this sense of fiscal responsibility is one that's very much valued by the constituents in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham.

Secondly, *The Way Forward* also includes a commitment to a fair society with a new sense of community, where individuals can prosper by being afforded important social supports such as expanded home care and mental health services—I'm focusing on those as a particular interest of mine. Investment in infrastructure and transit networks will provide important and necessary community links where municipalities and families play an important role in shaping their communities.

Perhaps most importantly of all, *The Way Forward* also includes references to an effective and accountable Legislature. With renewed co-operation, collaboration and respect, legislative partners can work together in this minority government to ensure the success and prosperity of Ontario. Though our views and backgrounds may differ, we have a common goal: a more prosperous Ontario.

This collaborative approach is one that I've heard over and over in my riding. There is no appetite for an election in the near future. The message from my constituents is, "Make this government work." I know on this side of the House we have every intention of trying to do our part in that regard.

As the member of provincial Parliament for the great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, I'm optimistic that our government will deliver on what is important to my constituents. Our government's successes to date and our *Way Forward* touch on the key issues that are important for Oak Ridges–Markham constituents. Improved transportation infrastructure is top of mind for all in my area of York region and in the 905. Investment in home care and aging at home is a key consideration as we face our aging society and the need to deliver appropriate care. Also, the whole area of mental health issues—ensuring that everyone can play their part in the economy, that everyone finds their place. So I'm optimistic that, with our legislative partners, we can work together to achieve these goals, and I know that the people of my riding and the people of Ontario expect it of us.

In relation to improving transportation infrastructure, I think we should all acknowledge that a strong transportation infrastructure is the foundation of a strong economy; the movement of people and goods is fundamental to that goal. It has been one of our government's key commitments, and continues to be in this new session. Our transportation strategy has been about moving the econ-

omy and connecting communities with improvements to the way transit is planned and funded.

As York region continues to experience rapid growth, many of my constituents in Oak Ridges–Markham have contacted me regarding the region’s transportation needs. They ask for better highways, interchanges, roads, bridges, as well as a modern, efficient and integrated public transit system that will help improve their travel time—whether it be between home and work, home and school—to reduce traffic congestion on our roads, the source of such frustration for so many of us causing gridlock, and, of course, to reduce our impact on the environment. The air in Oak Ridges–Markham is certainly very clean and pleasant as one leaves the city and moves over the Oak Ridges moraine, and maintaining our environment is especially important in my riding.

We have seen many improvements over the years to our transportation infrastructure. Our government, since 2003, has committed more than \$30 billion to Ontario’s infrastructure, and we have demonstrated our commitment to getting people out of cars and onto public transit by investing more than \$16.1 billion in public transit, including more than \$7.7 billion in GO Transit. Our government has delivered two cents per litre of provincial gas tax revenues to municipalities as a source of long-term sustainable funding for transit. York region has received more than \$83 million in gas tax funding since 2003. York region has also been provided with \$620.4 million in provincial transit funding. The commitment to the vivaNext bus rapid transit is some \$1.4 billion over 10 years, and anyone who has driven along what we still call Highway 7, or Yonge Street, in York region, or Davis Drive, will know that this is creating employment opportunities for many, many individuals as the construction goes forward.

Many of my constituents depend on GO train transit to commute to their jobs. I’m fortunate enough to have five GO train stations in my riding: Markham, Mount Joy, Stouffville, Lincolnville and King City. And we have the commitment from this government—in fact, when the Premier was Minister of Transportation, she came to Gormley in my riding in Richmond Hill to announce the extension of the Richmond Hill GO train line up to Gormley, and certainly I will be pushing for that extension to go all the way up to the Aurora side road. This will tremendously benefit residents in my riding.

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We also have additional bus service between York region and Toronto, increased GO service on the Bradford, Barrie, Stouffville and Richmond Hill corridors, and one of the most popular improvements has been the addition of some 3,553 parking spaces at the five GO train stations in my riding. Trains are now 12 cars long. That is posing some problems in terms of extension of platforms, but we are committed to this continuous improvement in our transit services.

A summer project, which was weekend service on the Barrie GO line, was exceptionally popular with residents in King township in my riding, also at the north end of

Richmond Hill. They availed themselves of that service and found it very convenient.

So our government truly has a vision to transform GO Transit from a commuter service to a regional transit service with the introduction of two-way all-day service on all seven rail lines. This, of course, was outlined in our policy the Big Move, and it is incorporated in the GO 2020 strategic service vision.

Our government recognizes that transit infrastructure is important to our future prosperity, and renews this commitment. This proved popular with York regional chair Bill Fisch. In fact, he has recently been quoted as saying, “The provincial throne speech demonstrates the Liberal government’s continued commitment to reducing traffic gridlock by accelerating transit and road infrastructure across the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.... This bodes well for York region and the future extension of the Yonge subway north to Richmond Hill.” It’s clear that our communities and all levels of government—municipal, regional, provincial and federal—need to be part of this conversation.

Now turning to a topic very close to my heart—and as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care I certainly intend to vigorously pursue these areas, and I was very pleased to hear that the New Democratic Party also has found in particular home care, aging at home, to be an important priority for them as well. I hope we’ll be able to work together effectively in this particular area. We have been investing in patient-centred care and evidence-based health policy that is strong and innovative. We all know that we’re living longer and the number of seniors living in Ontario is increasing. Many of the constituents in my riding of Oak Ridges have, in fact, three generations living under one roof. So couples are often responsible for taking care of their children and their aging parents, and they are seeking services that will help their aging parents live healthy and independent lives. Ontario’s Action Plan for Health Care will support Ontario’s seniors who want to live independently at home by providing more home care supports. We are shifting resources into home care services so that seniors can stay at home longer. We have, in fact, committed to increase investments in home care and community services by an average of 4% annually, or some \$526 million by 2014-15.

Through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Ontario is also further improving quality, accountability and access to programs and services that benefit seniors, including these efforts to keep older adults active, healthy and engaged in their communities, by providing funding to elderly persons centres across Ontario. Perhaps that’s not the most attractive name; perhaps it needs a branding of some sort, but the intention is clear: to have a hub designated as an elderly persons centre where people can come together, enjoy social contact and access services as they need them.

We’re committed to reducing the number of alternate-level-of-care patients in hospitals, thereby helping decrease emergency room wait times.

We want to continue to strengthen mental health and addiction community supports, lower the price of most generic drugs and, of course, improve access to primary care through initiatives such as family health teams and nurse-practitioner-led clinics.

An example of a family health team in my riding is the Markham Family Health Team, and I'm very impressed by their numbers and their stats. They've now hired some 19 physicians and 14 additional health care professionals. They're caring now for some 26,000 people, and of those, some 6,600 were previously unattached patients—in other words, people who had not had access to a primary care physician previously. So this is serving the residents in Markham extremely well.

Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors is one of the ways Ontario is addressing the challenges and opportunities posed by its aging population, and it is a guide on how to help seniors in Ontario to be independent, active and maintain good health. The plan is focused on active aging, improved safety and security, and better access to high-quality health care in the community.

As part of the plan, we will be putting in place a number of new initiatives. One of these is called Health Links. Health Links is a program that will identify high-need seniors with complex conditions and then develop a personalized care plan to ensure that they and their care coordinators are properly connected to their primary care providers. I was extremely pleased to see that the Ontario Medical Review—which is the official publication of the Ontario Medical Association—in its February edition had as its feature article a couple of pages dedicated to Health Links, in order that family physicians can better understand what the program is all about.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the OMA have formed a joint committee to explore engagement of the OMA in the process and, on behalf of physicians, ways of advancing a meaningful collaboration. The joint committee provides a mechanism and forum for critical dialogue and meaningful feedback to the ministry. I think this is very important. As we know, we need to renew these conversations with our partners in the health care sector.

The Ontario Action Plan for Seniors builds upon a solid foundation of what has already been done. Of course, we will recall from the last session that we were able to pass the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit with up to \$1,500 annually, and home improvements like ramps and lifts made on or after October 1, 2011, are eligible for personal income tax returns, starting with the 2012 return. Hopefully, through the lengthy process of passing that simple bill, seniors were urged to maintain their receipts and keep them so they can avail themselves of this tax credit.

Of course, we did pass the Retirement Homes Act in 2010 to ensure that retirement homes were regulated for the first time in this province, to ensure that residents are protected from abuse and neglect and that there was appropriate staff training on abuse, things like fire prevention and safety—and whistle-blowing protections.

We've made some substantial progress, and I know our government is committed to continuing this kind of progress in particular for seniors.

Turning to mental health, again mentioned in the throne speech as a key priority, as a member of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, I think all of those of us who were involved in that thankfully non-partisan committee had the opportunity to see the challenges that are with us when it comes to mental health issues. It's imperative that we continue to expand access to mental health services and support, and reduce the stigma for people coping with mental illness. Efforts must be on preventing, identifying and treating mental health and addictions, given that mental health affects the lives of some one in five Ontarians.

Our comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy is committed to building a mental health system that delivers high-quality, timely services and supports to children, youth and families when they need them and as close to home as possible. It is a joint initiative, this strategy, of the Ministries of Children and Youth Services, Health and Long-Term Care, Education, and Training, Colleges and Universities. The fundamental goal is, of course, to provide timely, high-quality, integrated, personally directed health care as well as other human services that are so important for those with mental health issues, such as housing, income support, employment and diversion from the justice system.

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The first three years of our strategy have focused on children and youth, and an estimated 20,000 more children are already benefitting from the supports and services provided by 600 newly hired mental health workers in schools, communities and courts, who are providing quicker and easier access to the right mental health services and supports. In areas serviced by the Central LHIN, which covers my riding in York region and Simcoe county, some 72 mental health workers are helping children, young people and their families get quicker and easier access to the right mental health services and supports. Investments for York region in children's mental health have included funding for 15 agencies and some \$46 million in fiscal funding for 2012-13.

The region of York has also received considerable funds—some \$41.4 million for non-residential subsidies and \$3.4 million for residential subsidies—to assist those in terms of finding a roof over their heads.

Our government will continue to expand mental health services, and we want especially to move more comprehensively into the adult population. The goal, clearly, is so that every Ontarian can achieve their full potential.

In conclusion, I look forward to the comments from the parties opposite in relation to our throne speech. I know that the residents in Oak Ridges–Markham are totally committed to having a minority government that works. They want us to work together. We have the opportunity with this new session to do that. We have the opportunity to work on the priorities that our residents

express to us, and I feel confident that with goodwill on all sides, we will be able to achieve this goal.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions? The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's nice to see you back in the chair.

This throne speech—it was said yesterday a couple of times how these things are very vague documents. This was vaguer than most. But the other thing that I really found very disappointing in this throne speech was the condescending way in which it spoke to the members of this Legislature.

When you look around this Legislature, many of the members here have been elected and re-elected, some re-elected more than once. To listen to the matronly advice that we're receiving in this throne speech about how we should conduct ourselves as MPPs—what business is that in a throne speech? That's again more of the kind of empty rhetoric that we've seen from this government when it comes to really tackling the problems of Ontario. Telling members how to behave—I don't need any of your advice on how to deal with my people in Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I understand them, I know them; they know me. Most of you people have never been near the place. So when your Premier starts to tell us—

Hon. James J. Bradley: I've been there.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, Jim Bradley's been there, Bob Chiarelli's been there. I worked well with Bob Chiarelli when he was minister—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, a whirlwind tour through the riding—they know nothing about the people who I represent, and I am absolutely insulted that a Premier who takes her seat in here for the first time is going to start telling me how to conduct myself in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

I have absolute faith in my colleagues on this side of the House, I have faith in the members who are elected as NDP and I have faith in the members who are elected as Liberals that they understand their ridings best and they will do what is best for the people who they're elected to represent. We don't need some kind of matronly advisory committee telling us how to behave ourselves in our ridings from the throne speech from this new Premier.

Shame on her. Let's get to the business of buckling down and making Ontario a better place.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The member for Oak Ridges–Markham made a number of good points, and I want to echo some of the sentiments of working together. I appreciate that.

I was particularly concerned by the member from Pembroke–Nipissing's remarks using the word “matronly.” I don't know what he was trying to suggest by that. I think that's somewhat troubling. I don't think there's any problem with whether the advice comes from a woman or

from a man. I think you should attack the advice, not the source of it—somewhat troubling.

But one of my concerns with the member from Oak Ridges–Markham's remarks was that, while I agree wholeheartedly we need to invest in transit, one of the issues is that if we look at the past nine years, the track record of this government hasn't been very reassuring when it comes to investments into transit. I think there could be a lot more done in this file, and there needs to be a lot more done.

There are many areas of the province which are lacking absolutely in infrastructure, particularly in affordable and efficient transit. I was just speaking with my colleague from Welland; Niagara to the peninsula is sorely lacking. The suburbs are sorely lacking in the GTA. That issue needs to be addressed. The fact that over these past nine years there hasn't been a lot of movement is disturbing.

With home care and with alternative methods of delivery of health care, like community health centres—this is an opportunity for us to get ahead of spending. This is a way to be proactive. By investing in home care, by investing in other alternatives to health care delivery like community health centres, we can actually end up saving the province a lot of money by providing care up front so that people can stay in their homes, so people can access ready health care instead of relying on hospitals, which are already overburdened. This is a more efficient delivery of health care. Instead of seeing seniors being put into chronic care or long-term care, they can stay in their homes.

I think this is a way to be more proactive and I think this is the direction we need to head in.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Hon. John Milloy: It's a pleasure to stand and congratulate my colleague from Oak Ridges–Markham on, I think, a very thoughtful speech that I listened to intently. The latter part of the speech focused on an issue of health care, which is, of course, very near and dear to her heart, not only because she's an excellent representative of her community, where health care—like in so many communities—is a top priority, but she herself, as I think members know, is a very well respected physician and an expert in the field, particularly in the area of public health.

I think what was important in her speech, as she pointed out, was the vision in the speech from the throne of a true health care system, one where we see the connection between community-based care and its ability to keep people out of the more expensive acute care; to keep people in the community active longer, particularly in terms of seniors. She spoke with great eloquence about the outlined vision in the speech from the throne concerning home care and its important role in maintaining seniors' quality of life and, as I say, their ability to continue to function in the community.

The other part of her speech that I wanted to remark upon was the first part about this whole issue of co-

operation within the Legislature. I was reading this morning's Waterloo Region Record, and there's a letter to the editor I'd like to share here in closing. It says, "Ontario Progressive Conservative leader Tim Hudak is quoted as saying his party wants an election." Well, this gentleman, Carl Kaufman of Waterloo, writes, "Why can't the three major provincial leaders sit down at Tim Hortons and choose what is good for taxpayers and the economy instead of what is good for them?"

I think, Madam Speaker, that is a sentiment that I hear all the time. It's time to make this Legislature work. When you think of the themes that are outlined in the speech from the throne in terms of health care, in terms of the economy, in terms of a whole variety of issues, there are no great partisan differences here. Why can't we sit down and—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I do appreciate the opportunity to address the speech from the throne, and I'll have an opportunity to speak at greater length in a few moments.

I would, however, like to say this: I think this government missed the mark with their throne speech. To listen to the government House leader talk about "Why can't we all just get along?"—well, let me respond directly to him. Over the past year and a half, this side of the House, along with the New Democrats, has tried in vain to change the standing orders, to have an inquiry on a gas plant, and the single biggest obstacle to that progress was that House leader, who chose to be very difficult to negotiate with, and we know that. They set the tone after the last election.

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Now, it would be different, I guess, if a new Premier came in with a whole new agenda and a new set of ideas. But unfortunately, given the fact that we have a former Liberal cabinet minister, a Liberal MPP who served with Dalton McGuinty, we have the same old ideas—nothing new to offer to the residents of Nepean–Carleton, to the province of Ontario's residents. We don't have very much to offer by way of anything different with this throne speech that this Liberal Party has put forward. That is, of course, from our perspective, why we shouldn't support it: It's more of the same.

We believe that Ontario needs bold new ideas. We need to get our province back on track. We need to reinvigorate our economy. That can't be done with the tired old gang across the way. They may have changed who the Premier is at a party convention, but that does not give them any more credibility to continue to govern. I must say, Speaker, the only way we're going to see change is by changing the team from this side of the House over to there.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Oak Ridges–Markham has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank all the members for their comments.

In particular to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, we trust that you know your riding inside out. I think what we would like to hear from the member, in fact, are some constructive comments.

Our throne speech is broad. It points to certain priorities. There is every opportunity for the two opposition parties to present very constructive comments in relation to the aspirations of the residents of their ridings. So I would earnestly hope that the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will in fact share some of those constructive ideas with us.

To the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, yes, we share ridings with some similar characteristics, and the priorities of transit and home care that are important to him of course are extremely important to us.

The government House leader has reiterated the position that so many of our constituents are telling us—that we do not need an election in the short term, in the near term; that they wish us to make this minority government work—and I think many of us are taking that very much to heart. I would certainly and earnestly hope that all members of this House will continue to do the best as they know how for their residents.

The member from Nepean–Carleton: I look forward to your comments. I didn't hear too many in relation to the priorities as I outlined them, but clearly we always welcome your comments as well.

In summary, Madam Speaker, this, I believe, is the way forward for Ontario. I believe it's the way forward for my constituents, and I intend to do everything in my power to ensure that their needs are met. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is a tremendous honour, as always, to provide comment on either a throne speech or a budget, because it's a unique opportunity by which you can bring the views and the values of your constituents to the floor of this assembly and feel unencumbered by just talking about specific legislation, but speak more about the hopes and dreams and aspirations of your constituents.

I'm also pleased to be splitting my time with my colleague from Dufferin–Caledon. She and I arrived at this place not exactly at the same time, but we have become great friends. I know that she will defend her constituents' views, as I will today.

Speaker, when I first arrived at Queen's Park in 2006—it was a March by-election—I had the opportunity to speak to the Ontario budget. It gave me, in my maiden speech, an ability to really get to know better the people that I represent, to talk to them, to consult with them. Of course I did that on the campaign trail, but once you're an MPP you have that opportunity. I learned a lot about my constituents, and I've always kept that with me over the past seven years: what drives them, and what makes me tick on the floor of this assembly.

I must say, when I read in the throne speech one simple line, it encapsulated to me how disconnected this

government is from the people whom I represent; that line was “A New Sense of Community.”

We don’t need lessons in Nepean–Carleton from a Liberal government on what a sense of community is. My community started with agrarian roots. People like Aubrey Moodie set the stage, and he became Nepean’s first founder. They settled the land that I represent as one of self-reliance, where people didn’t expect government to do what they could do themselves, and they wanted government to stay out of their way.

I represent, in Barrhaven and Riverside South and Findlay Creek, a lot of strong families, a growing population. There are requirements in our community that we need to keep up with the expanding population, but at the same time, we just need to be out of the way of moms and dads. One of the things that’s very important to my residents is safe streets, and that’s why I’ve been pleased to work with the Ottawa police and the Royal Ottawa Hospital, most recently, on dealing with the fentanyl abuse happening in my community, particularly in Manotick. I worked with the member from Ottawa Centre, who is now the Minister of Labour, on making Ottawa a suicide-safer community. And last year, I actually brought to the floor a change that I expect to see in the legislation on a coroner’s inquest, because my friends Sheri and Pat Leighton lost their son Eric at school in a shop class. I want to see some sensible coroners amendments to that act so that we can make sure that if this ever happens again, if a child dies on school property, another family will not have to come all the way from Barrhaven to Queen’s Park to demand an inquest, that that will be an automatic action.

So those are some of the things that I’ve worked on in the last year. That’s just a small part of some of the things that I’ve worked on in the last year, but I think it says to this assembly that my community doesn’t need a new sense of community; we already are a strong community. We know how our land was settled. We know who established a great, strong community, and we are thriving as a result of that.

These folks that I represent want to deal with and tackle the issues that affect them every day. They don’t need a Premier telling them that what they’ve been doing all along is wrong and they’re going to make a new sense of community, when that Premier doesn’t know our end of the province.

I look, for example, at a big issue that is important to my constituents in the rural part of Ottawa. The Minister of Agriculture is really important, and for this Premier to just assume she can tack it on—at the end of being Premier Wynne, she’ll also be Minister of Agriculture—then she forgot to put in “Food,” and now she’s the Minister of Agriculture and Food after a secret swearing-in service. Speaker, that, to me, sends an awful lot of disrespect to the people that I represent. It shows a lot of disconnect between the Liberal government at Queen’s Park and the people that I represent in Nepean–Carleton, the people of Osgoode, Vernon, North Gower and Kars and Burritts Rapids.

It’s very difficult for me to go to my community and express any level of comfort with this Liberal government, because the people that I represent are not happy with this Liberal government; they’re upset with this Liberal government. And then, to add insult, this Liberal government prorogued the assembly to shut my voice down, their representative voice that they expected at Queen’s Park. They shut that down for five months. They didn’t want our ability to ask questions of the government. This Liberal government didn’t want to have any questions asked, predominantly because they were embroiled in a major scandal.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Several.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Several scandals, as my colleague said.

And so the people that I represent, who value self-reliance, safer streets and strong families, the people I represent, whose community was built on agrarian roots and who are now experiencing explosive growth, expected that I would be here in this assembly to discuss the important issues of the day, and to them that’s the economy, the high prices of hydro, the scandals, but that side of the House prevented me from being able to do that for them.

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I highlighted some of the issues that have been important to me that I’ve been able to work on: Ottawa’s Suicide Safer Community, calling for a coroner’s inquest and sensible changes to that act; and, of course, dealing with the drug abuse problems with some of our teens, some of whom have lost their lives. Those are really important issues to my community.

But this throne speech doesn’t reflect what’s important to my community. I therefore cannot support it, Speaker—I cannot support their throne speech. I do not have confidence in this government to do what is needed for my constituents, and the people of Nepean–Carleton fundamentally expected me, when they elected me, just like all of my colleagues expect when they were elected to this chamber, to be able to stand up in it, not have our voices shut down by a prorogued Parliament.

That is where this big disconnect widens and that gap between the government of Ontario—this Liberal government—and my constituents widens. They deserve a government that responds to their needs, not rewrites what the sense of a community is, that not only would defend agriculture, but understand that the food department needs to be part of it.

My constituents also expect that their government would be honest and truthful, but a pattern of behaviour has developed even in the mere week that this Premier has been leading this province. Her base instincts are to keep things secret.

Now, I’m going to give you a couple of examples before I cede the floor to my colleague from Dufferin–Caledon. Here’s the first one: On the gas plant documents, she didn’t want to come out and let us know that more existed. In fact, she stood in the chamber and said that we had everything we needed to know. Then the next

day—whoopsie—her Minister of Energy found about 6,000 more documents. She wanted to keep it secret.

Number two: When Minister Wynne naively decided she wanted to be Minister of Agriculture, and split agriculture, rural affairs and food, she forgot to add “food” at the swearing-in.

Hon. James J. Bradley: She did not forget that.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: She forgot that. Not only did she forget that; she had to have a secret swearing-in service that she wasn't going to tell anybody about.

I'm also the education critic, and I won't delve too deeply into that because I'll have an opportunity to do that this afternoon, but recently, when she was meeting with labour leaders—she has been secretly negotiating behind closed doors. We don't know what the deal is.

Those are three examples in seven days of a Premier who has now established herself as a secret-keeper, a person who is not prepared to be honest and open and truthful with the people of the province, and I have a real problem with that—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Speaker.

I must say that is probably the most disappointing, that that would happen. So, Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Excuse me. I asked you to withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Sure, I withdraw. I thought I did.

I then appeal to this side of the assembly to start to think about the rest of this province, to start to think about good governance, because, heavens, we know for the past nine years we have not had that.

Thank you very much. It's a real pleasure to be able to speak today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Dufferin–Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Speaker. It's an honour to rise this morning on behalf of the residents of Dufferin–Caledon to respond to the speech from the throne.

In the lead-up to the House's return last week, I found myself getting asked the same question over and over back in Dufferin–Caledon. Time and time again, I would be asked the same thing, something to the effect of, “So what will the government do now that it's not prorogued and things are up and running again at Queen's Park?” Each time, I would remind people that in actuality, the government has been up and running each and every single day since prorogation. I would remind them that the only thing former Premier McGuinty actually shut down on October 15 was the ability of the opposition to hold the government to account. In essence, the Legislature's prorogation did not prevent the government from functioning. Quite the contrary, it simply spared it from functioning with oversight. If there's one, single thing that has been proven time and time again, it's that lack of oversight and the party opposite do not mix.

We've seen this most recently with the downright scandalous cancellation of two power plants at a cost of

what is expected to be \$1 billion, and all to save Liberal seats in the 2011 election. Speaker, it is the opposition that had to finally pull the Liberal government kicking and screaming into the light of accountability on these cancelled power plants.

When I'm out in the community in Dufferin–Caledon—like at the family skates I hosted in Bolton and Grand Valley—I consistently hear from local residents that they just cannot trust the Liberal government to get to the bottom of this scandal. You see, Dufferin–Caledon residents look at the facts, like how, with an election looming, the Liberal government pulled the plug on the Oakville power plant. Then, in a desperate and shameful attempt at a majority government, the Liberal campaign team, co-chaired by Premier Wynne, made the call to cancel the Mississauga plant to salvage yet more Liberal seats, and only six days before the 2011 vote. Following the election, the Liberal government then added insult to injury and stonewalled the opposition, and Ontarians, for months on end about the final costs of their cynical electoral scheme. Finally, in the face of all these scandals, and after being outright ordered to release all documents pertaining to the plants, the Liberal government then paraded its cabinet ministers out to this very chamber, one after another, to cry foul, vilify the opposition and adamantly swear that all the documents had been turned over. Yet, as we now know, this was not true, as there have now been two more documents dumps since that time.

You see, Speaker, Dufferin–Caledon residents look upon this continual fiasco in disgust because no respectable government would put its own electoral fortunes ahead of its sacred duty to safeguard the people's tax dollars.

Among the many vague promises put forward in the throne speech was the notion that local populations will be more involved in projects in their communities. The speech from the throne argued that Ontario can benefit from things like industrial wind farms, “but only if we have willing hosts”—a direct quote from the speech from the throne.

Speaker, I have read countless petitions and letters, I've been to many meetings and I can tell you that none of the municipalities in Dufferin–Caledon that currently have industrial wind turbines feel that they were anything but forced upon them. Too often, community consultation is whatever wind power corporations and a handful of government bureaucrats say it is.

In Dufferin–Caledon, there's the proposed phase 3 of the Grand Valley wind farms project, where the municipality has asked the company to stay outside of Grand Valley's projected growth area. But the company didn't listen, and it's proposing tower locations within the growth area. Additionally, the company is proposing to build a transformer station directly across from a residential area.

We talk about Places to Grow and yet we have two government policies that are completely at odds against each other, and I can tell you which one is going to win:

It's the industrial wind turbines. Grand Valley Mayor John Oosterhof thinks that it's unacceptable; Grand Valley town council thinks that it's unacceptable. Would the Premier consider Grand Valley a "willing host," I wonder?

Then there's the case of the Dufferin Wind Power project, a massive proposal that proposes to run a 230-volt transmission line through Mulmur, Melancthon, Shelburne and Amaranth. Once again, an overwhelming majority of residents, and their duly elected representatives, are in unified opposition to this project. Are they "willing hosts"?

If the Premier truly believes in the "willing host" approach, she can first implement an immediate moratorium on wind turbines and, second, instruct her caucus to support Bill 2, which would return planning rights to municipalities, brought forward by my colleague from Simcoe-Grey. This would immediately prohibit these projects from being forced on the very unwilling host municipalities that are bearing the brunt of the Liberal government's misguided energy experiments.

But alas, there are no such concrete directions in this throne speech, only vague promises and even fewer details. The trouble is, with little or no details on how any of the many new promises will be kept, the speech provided no real "way" at all. As for "forward," well, Speaker, I can tell you that this speech may be proposing to move Ontario forward; it's just in the totally wrong direction.

For almost 10 years now, the Liberal government has taken Ontario deeper and deeper into debt with its reckless overspending. No program was too expensive, no taxpayer too taxed, and all the while Ontario families were promised everything under the sun. Often, these promises were broken. Often, these programs failed. Yet the Liberal government still claims that if it could only spend a few more billion dollars, if it could only add another dozen programs to the hundreds of thousands we already have, then somehow our economy will turn around and our troubles will ease away.

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In the throne speech, Premier Wynne and her government used the term "fair society." But what is this society that they call fair? I wonder if the mother whose two-year-old child, through no fault of her own, currently owes over \$15,000 as their portion of Ontario's debt would call that a fair society. Would the senior on a fixed income, who, thanks to the skyrocketing energy rates and the HST on home heating, now has the choice of heat, hydro, and food—pick two. Is that a fair society?

You see, whenever a government places a higher priority on its priorities as opposed to the people's, it's doomed to failure and deserves it. Over the past 10 years, the Liberal government's policies have let Ontario down time and time again, so instead of taking our province forward in the wrong direction, we are already heading there.

What Dufferin-Caledon families needed to hear last week was a throne speech that proposed bold changes in

a totally new direction. This is why it is so disappointing to see Premier Wynne squander this rare opportunity for bold change and instead choose to entrench the McGuinty legacy that brought us to the worst jobs-and-debt crisis in our lifetime. It is under this legacy that we have seen Ontario's energy rates soar from among the lowest in North America to the highest.

Recently, I visited a local steel manufacturer in Caledon with my colleague from Nipissing. We were there to discuss the effect of these crippling energy costs and what they have done to Ontario's manufacturing. He relayed to us a number of investments he had made in his company's infrastructure in an attempt to remain competitive while still affording the ever-increasing energy rates. After a lengthy discussion, my constituent sat back in his chair and concluded, "So in the end, I have no real control over my hydro bills because I have no real control over the changes the government has arbitrarily placed on my hydro bill." That, Speaker, in one sentence, says it all.

The policies of this government signal to entrepreneurs and job creators that if you put in that extra effort, if you make that extra investment, there's no guarantee in your return because the government increasingly reaps the reward of your efforts and investment.

Not so long ago, I got a call from a mayor in Dufferin county. He was calling to tell me a long-time manufacturing company in his town was going to announce they were closing shop. As part of the company's North American restructuring, they decided the facility in my riding had operating costs that were just too high—no longer competitive. Ninety men and women went home that day without a job. Ninety families started the next day with one less income to support themselves.

I believe that there was a real opportunity last week, with the speech from the throne, to change that direction. We didn't see it. As a result, I must not support this speech from the throne.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think that when you look at the throne speech and you measure that and you weigh that against our responsibility in this Legislature—it is to listen and to learn from it, but also, people in this province want results and they want to see us working towards the common goals that we should all share, which are a strong education system, a strong health care system, an economy which actually meets the needs of people.

In particular, the home care mentioned has our attention. We have put out a five-day home care guarantee because that's what people have told us—families across the province have said, "We cannot cope with our aging seniors without the proper infrastructure."

I was knocking on doors last Friday just to get some feedback on our plan, and you would be amazed at the conditions that some seniors are living in in this province. We should be ashamed, actually. The supports are not there. These seniors need help with laundry. They

need help with groceries. Nutrition is an issue. They certainly need help with cleaning. You have only to knock on one of those doors and have a conversation to know that their needs are very real.

The very people that will be helping seniors in our proposed plan are personal support workers. The government has created a personal-support-worker registry without any criteria around the quality of those people. This is an issue that I'd like to raise with the government. It's an issue around quality; it's an issue around substance. Certainly, as time marches on, we are going to need those human resources, those personal care workers, to follow through on a plan. It is people that make the difference. Personal support workers are a key component of that. We have to make sure that those resources are there to ensure that this plan works.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I want to comment on some of the comments that the two opposition speakers made with respect to the electricity sector. The Leader of the Opposition and the Tories announced in a white paper that the party would sell off Ontario Power Generation—OPG—and Hydro One. It's interesting to see that the Ontario PCs are going back to their failed approach to energy. Their failed attempt to privatize the electricity system in the late 1990s led to a sudden price shock; in only a few months, the price increased by 30%. The last time they tried to privatize, Leader of the Opposition Mr. Hudak's top advisers were at the trough. Well-connected Tory insiders received nearly \$6 million in untendered contracts from Hydro One. Tom Long, Hudak's co-campaign manager, made off with \$1.3 million in Hydro One contracts. The firm of the Leader of the Opposition's other co-campaign manager received \$250,000, which Mr. Hudak later called a—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Point of order. Yes?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It is against the rules of the House to refer to another member by name and not their riding or their role. I would ask the Minister of Energy to refrain from that and for you to hold him out of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Continue, but I would ask the member to respect that, the riding name instead of a personal name.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: They referred to the management of the electricity system, and so am I; they've issued a white paper, and so am I, Madam Speaker.

There was a well-known quote which was made in 2003 by the member from Aurora: "Well, there's one reason that we accumulated that debt"—which caused an increase in prices—"in this province under the hydro ledger, and that is that people in this province for years have not been paying the true cost"—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The time has expired.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Madam Speaker, we had an interruption. It used about 20 seconds of my time.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): No. Further comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. I, too, would like to comment on the speech from the throne and the comments that we received. Certainly, I would have to begin by reminding everybody in this Legislature that, under our former Premier and our current Premier, we have seen that energy rates have doubled in the province of Ontario in the last nine years. Let's make no mistake about that.

Specifically to the speech from the throne: I have agreed with the comments made by the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—where are you, John?—as well as our member from Nepean–Carleton. I was disturbed: In the 17 pages of the throne speech, I can read you the entire commitment to northern Ontario; it's one half of one sentence. Let me read you the one half of one sentence: "It will address the special transportation needs of Ontario's north and endeavour to improve vital access to the Ring of Fire," and then it goes on to the United States, access to the United States.

Northern Ontario, under the Liberal government, has been under siege. First of all, their "special transportation needs of Ontario's north" involve cancelling the Northlander and putting the Ontario Northland rail up for sale—something that our party says will never leave public hands. Ontario's north is under siege. We saw nine parks close in northern Ontario. In northwestern Ontario, we saw tourism centres close.

Speaker, this government does not understand anything north of Vaughan, and certainly this throne speech is insulting to northern Ontario with that one half of one sentence.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you to the members from Nepean–Carleton and Dufferin–Caledon for their comments.

I want to address my comments around the hydro rates issue that was bought up by the member from Dufferin–Caledon. I met yesterday, for most of the afternoon, with mayors in a number of municipalities from across this province, and hydro rates seem to be one of their huge concerns in their particular ridings. They told me that they can't attract any new business to their municipalities or into their riding areas because of the hydro rates. Their existing businesses are struggling. They're just kind of hanging on by a thread.

I know that in my own riding, we have a small steel mill that grew out of the closure of Slater Steel—a specialty steel company that has to operate during the night shift because the hydro rates during the day and evening shifts are too high for them to actually make any kind of a profit. If they happen to hit that peak hour, they actually have to close down their melts.

Not only businesses are struggling. We heard during the period of prorogation, as we visited communities

across this province, about the struggle that individual families are having trying to keep heat in their homes. It's been a particularly cold winter, and so they're struggling as well. We need to make sure that people are being looked after with respect to their heating bills and with respect to being able to have a life that's a little more affordable for them.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Dufferin–Caledon has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Speaker.

The reason I raised some of these examples from Dufferin–Caledon is that, unfortunately, they are echoed across Ontario. Some 600,000 people are unemployed, and job creators are buried under mountains of regulations, red tape and taxes. We must reduce these obstacles to economic growth by cutting the reckless overspending of this government and starting to spend within our means.

It's clear that Dufferin–Caledon families cannot rely on this government to get Ontario out of the fiscal mess we are in, and that is unacceptable. It is unacceptable because every cent that we have to pay to service our massive, unsustainable debt is a cent that doesn't get invested in the services Dufferin–Caledon families care about—services like world-class education and health care.

I will be voting against this throne speech because I believe, Tim Hudak believes and Dufferin–Caledon residents and Ontario believe that we deserve better, we can do better and we need to do better.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's a pleasure to have this opportunity to speak on the throne speech. As I said yesterday in the couple of minutes that I had, the throne speech has a bit of everything for everyone: a little bit for the Tories, although they're not happy because they're not getting enough; a little bit for the NDP, and I'll speak to the issues that the government might be co-operating with us on, but we'll see; and a bit for the Liberals. It's a budget for everyone. And when it's a throne speech for everyone, my sense is that it's a throne speech for no one. That's the impression I get when throne speeches are not focused.

Contextually, it is a throne speech that is designed to be one that is fair for everyone, and the language that the Premier uses is that they want a fair society—which is impressive and it's good. That expression usually is a social democratic one, and it's nice to hear the Premier speaking in those terms. We're hoping she in fact, in the budget, moves in that direction rather than just speaking in that direction. But we'll see.

Historically, when you look at so many factors that speak to a fair society, I've got to tell you, the Liberals don't have an impressive record.

Now, to be fair, on the issue of a fair society and the Liberal record, much of it was started by the impressive regime that was led by Monsieur Harris—

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Who?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Monsieur Harris. You probably forgot his name, I'm sure. You're quite right. It's a good idea to forget him, for many reasons. But the decline in Ontario started under his Conservative leadership and has continued impressively by the Liberals in the last 10 years. God bless.

Let me outline a couple of things to show you how you are in a pickle as you speak about a fair society, because Ontario faces the largest increase in income inequality in Canada. The widest income disparities, of the top 20%, of the bottom 20%, are in Ontario and British Columbia. These are the top two provinces in terms of income disparity in the country—nothing to be proud of. When you've got these tremendous gaps of people who earn a hell of a lot at the high end and people at the bottom earning little, that they're struggling to survive in this fair society, you've got a little problem. And it's something that the Liberals have to face up to as part of the heritage that the Conservatives have laid the framework and the foundation for. So for people reflecting on coming back to a Conservative regime, I would look at them very carefully.

The poverty rate fell in five provinces in the last 20 or 25 years, but it has increased in the other five, and Ontario is at the high end of poverty rates. In fact, the poverty rate in 2009 was 13.1%, which speaks to about 1.6 million people being affected and facing poverty. That's a whole lot of people in Ontario. When you talk about child poverty, that rate is 14.6%. One in seven are poor in Ontario. So the context is a fair society—that's the direction the Premier wants to move in—and this is what we're dealing with. Liberals have aggravated an existing condition that had been begun by the Conservative regime before them. They have the worst record on affordable housing. There are 152,000 people waiting to get into affordable housing, assisted housing. And by the way, if you recall—because a lot of the younger Tories weren't here, except perhaps some who might have been pages at the time—Mike Harris did not build one assisted public housing, and that regime has continued under a Liberal regime over the last 10 years. So we have the worst record in affordable housing in Canada.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, don't you mind the little comments that come by here. I don't mind that. It doesn't bother me one single bit. You just let them shout out. I think it's good, and healthy in a democracy, in fact.

We have the poorest funding on public services in Canada, the poorest as it relates to health care, education, issues of justice, disability benefits. And by the way, user fees are increasing daily because we're shifting responsibilities away from corporate and income tax to user fees. Who do you think user fees affect mostly? Well, many in the northern communities that so many of the Tories are speaking to today—user fees began under that Conservative regime and continue in a healthy way under the Liberals. God bless. The hospitals are funded less than anywhere else in Canada and they have the fewest hospital beds per person of any province.

Ms. Cindy Forster: And they want to cut them more.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Well, they want to do some trade-offs. We'll cut this, we'll give here by offsetting it with cuts somewhere else. That's what the Liberals will do, no doubt. They've begun doing it.

By the way, as it relates to a fair society, we have the highest tuition fees in the country—proudly number 10.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Even with the 30%?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes. The young Liberal skipper there who just became a minister—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Rosie, you know what? I think if we just tax the corporations out of existence, we'd solve all of their problems.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: John, the Speaker is just going to shut you up in a second. You've got to be careful.

The highest—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. I would ask that the member make his remarks directed to the Chair and I would ask those to reduce the heckling so he's able to do so.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you very much, Speaker, for taking my side. That was clearly an unbiased approach. Very good.

So we've got the highest tuition fees in the country, and the Liberals are proud to be number 10. Good for you.

The whole point of establishing and moving to a political direction of fairness—this is a good idea, because when I—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Talk about the deficit. You like deficits.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: John, sorry. If you keep going, the Speaker is really going to go after me. I can't have that.

I wanted to put that out for you so that you have a sense of the challenges that you, as Liberals, face.

I've got to tell you, we New Democrats are trying to make it better. We worked at it in the last budget. We tried to co-operate as best as we could. We asked you, "Please include a 2% surtax on those who are earning over \$500,000"—and I've got to tell you, the negotiations were tough. We understood that the former Premier didn't want to do it and we understood that there were a lot of people, including the former finance minister, who, I hear, didn't want to do it. But I know there were a lot of Liberals who really liked our idea of a 2% surtax on those who are making over \$500,000 because it was fair; it was fair. They finally caved in and said, "All right. We'll blame it on the New Democrats so that we will not be seen as attacking the wealthy in Ontario." But ultimately, they did.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: How much have you collected with that?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: How much? Well—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Hold on, hold on. You're asking me a question. You can't keep talking when you're asking a question.

Our studies indicated that we would be collecting \$500 million; the government said \$400 million. That's a whole lot of money.

Now, if you close the tax loopholes, you'd probably get all of it, right? But you've got a whole lot of wealthy people, especially good Tories, who love not paying taxes, who love avoiding taxes. If they can avoid paying taxes, God bless, they're number one. They're right there.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm happy to pay my taxes. I just want them to be spent properly.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Absolutely. That's why I outlined the whole list of problems that we've got to get to a just society. And you're right: We've got to spend it properly; we can't just give it away. And we've been giving it away to corporations for the last 20 years. We can't just give it away.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Wait, don't we have—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We have come very close to the time to recess.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm really excited to introduce a good friend of mine and also a councillor from Dawn-Euphemia, Maureen McCutcheon. Thanks for coming to the Legislature.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'd like to welcome Lucy Zhao, who is the mother of page Angela Wang, a student at Terry Fox Public School and a resident of the riding of Scarborough—Agincourt.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I think I'm going to beat the Attorney General to the punch, but I would like to introduce from Alberta the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, the Honourable Jonathan Denis. Welcome.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm pleased to introduce yet again Susan Gapka, a trans activist, to the House. Welcome, Susan.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I too would like to welcome Alberta's justice minister, the Honourable Jonathan Denis, in the Legislature today. We had a very, very productive and good meeting this morning, Speaker.

He's also joined by two very important people that he relies on on a day-to-day basis: his chief of staff, Mathew Steppan; and his press secretary, Josh Stewart. Welcome to Queen's Park to all of you.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today Mark Bain, our candidate from Kingston and the Islands in the next provincial election.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to introduce two councillors from the municipality of French River here to visit us today: Mike Bigras and Mike Bouffard.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I'd like to introduce Mrs. Connie Sellors. She is a former president of the Hamilton and District Pharmacists' Association, and she is the mother of my executive assistant, Chris Sellors.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to introduce my good friend and the former MP Sarkis Assadourian.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce the mother and father of page William Strathdee: Gloria and Al Strathdee; Andrea and Rachel Strathdee, his sisters; and Yasmin Velloso, who is an exchange student from Brazil. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to welcome a number of people from my riding. We have Mayor Dennis Fife from North Stormont; Lianne Acres, a councillor in North Stormont; Joanne Haley, who is a planner in South Gengarry; Gerry Boyce, the deputy mayor of North Dundas, and his wife, Lorna; Eric Duncan, mayor of North Dundas and deputy warden for SD&G, who will be the youngest warden next year in the history of SD&G. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's my pleasure to welcome Gary Dyke, the chief administrative officer for the city of Quinte West. Welcome to Queen's Park. Also, Rick and Robin English, who are here at ROMA; Rick is retiring after 36 years of service.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Today I would like to recognize, with great sadness, the passing of Herb Epp, a former MPP from Kitchener–Waterloo. I had the chance to speak with Herb after the election in Kitchener–Waterloo, and he generously offered assistance and advice, and I thanked him for his dedication to public service. It was clear from our conversation how much he loved our community and how proud he was of Waterloo.

Herb Epp passed away at the age of 78 last night. A former MPP, three-term mayor of Waterloo, an alderman for Waterloo, Herb Epp was a dedicated public servant to the community of Kitchener–Waterloo and to the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member and recognize that as a point of order. I have asked the Clerk to contact the House leaders to continue the discussion and the dialogue on how to bring honour to those members who have passed away, to agree on a process, and that will shortly be taking place, in order that they do receive their just recognition in this House. I thank the members for that.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'd like to introduce Sarkis Assadourian, former federal member for Brampton Centre.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, it's my pleasure to welcome students from Holy Name school in my riding. It's their first time in the Legislature. Be nice to them today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm always nice to the guests; I'm just hoping that everyone else will be.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the part-time Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd like to be on record for asking for it.: Would the member please withdraw?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I withdraw.

I assume that now you've been briefed on the issues, although that wasn't evident in the answering of questions at ROMA this week.

The CSA will no longer be certifying grain dryers for farmers. Are you aware that without this certification, at the busiest time of the year, they will not be able to harvest and dry their crops?

For months, your predecessor dragged his heels on this issue. Since I assume you were briefed on this matter, what is your government going to do about it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to just say off the top that I am very committed to taking on the role of Minister of Agriculture and Food.

I am clear, I have been clear, that it is a focus of this government and it's a priority of this government to make sure that the people in rural Ontario and the people who are involved in the agri-food industry understand how important it is that the agri-food business be thriving, that we put in place the supports that are necessary—a \$34-billion manufacturing industry. That is an economic driver of the province, and I'm going to be working with the agri-food community, with the agricultural community, to make sure that they have the supports that they need.

I am going to answer the question in the supplementary. I will be very clear about that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Well, Premier, it's obvious from that answer on the first one that you haven't been briefed, or at least you don't understand it.

Premier, in our survey, some agribusinesses reported that they require 20 licences, certificates and permits just to operate their business. This crushing burden on agribusiness is drowning them in red tape. The PC Party believes that to create jobs, many could be combined or eliminated. I'm sure that you were briefed on this matter, Premier. Can you give me some examples of those that you think could not be eliminated or could be used and combined to make it a better system?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite knows that the current situation has arisen because, as he said, the CSA, the Canadian Standards Association, withdrew its national certification services and standards for grain dryers.

In fact, the provincial organization, the TSSA, has stepped in to fill the void, in an effort to ensure the public safety. Obviously, public safety is number one, so that's why the TSSA has stepped in, Mr. Speaker. The ministry

and TSSA understand that field approval is not a familiar process for farmers. They take their concerns about delays and costs seriously, and the TSSA is open to hearing from stakeholders. We are in the process of getting—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask the member to withdraw that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

She spreads it too.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask the member to withdraw that too.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. As I've told all members, I'm racing to the top, not the bottom.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I guess we're going to have to put up with the answer to the question being the one from before, because it takes that long for the briefing notes to come in. I think it makes my case.

Premier, it's clear that you were not briefed on these issues. You had to wait for the briefing here.

You claim that you are willing to work with the opposition. But more than two weeks ago, I wrote and asked for a meeting on agriculture issues, to have a meeting with you to discuss them. Your office hasn't even bothered to call me to try and set up a time.

Premier, I have a large stack of emails from farmers who want a full-time Minister of Agriculture and Food. As a part-time Minister of Agriculture and Food, do you just not have enough time to do the job or don't you want to work with us in the opposition?

1040

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, I want to apologize to the member opposite for not having been able to set up a meeting with you yet. It has been a very busy couple of weeks on this side of the House.

I have been meeting with agriculture stakeholders. I have been listening to the community. I have been paying very close attention to the concerns. You know, one of the issues that has been raised with me is about the Open for Business, and farmers making sure that we are paying attention to their concerns around regulation and making sure that we put the supports in place.

However, Mr. Speaker, I apologize. I would be very happy to meet with the member opposite. My staff, I know, are hearing this conversation and they'll be getting back to the member to set up an opportunity for us to meet.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Back to the Premier: When you forgot to swear in as Minister of Agriculture and Food, your basic instinct was a second swearing-in. Your basic instinct was to keep the power plant documents secret, and now we see you keeping secret your backroom deal with OSSTF. You have been Premier for less than two

weeks, and already we have three examples of her keeping secrets from the people of Ontario—shameful.

Will you stand up today and tell Ontario taxpayers, parents and their students how much you've decided to hand over to the teachers' union as part of a backroom deal that you're not prepared to talk about? We want to know. Please, let us know.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There is no new money. There is no new money as part of the conversations with the teacher leadership. I've been clear about that.

What I have said is that we need a new process going forward, and that is exactly what's being talked about: How do we have a collective bargaining process in place that recognizes the role of the provincial government as the funder of the publicly funded education system, and how do we have a local process in place? None of the conversations at the table have anything to do with new money.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This Premier is either incredibly naive or she thinks the people of this province are naive. No one believes you.

Look, the government says it wants to return things to the way it was. So this is what Ontario parents and students hear: that we're either going to go back to strikes or you're going to hand over more money to the unions. Which is it? We would like to know.

We already know that OSSTF is claiming victory for having the resignation of Dalton McGuinty; we know OSSTF is claiming victory for the NDP by-election win; and we know that OSSTF is taking claim and credit for the demotion of the former Minister of Education. What more are we going to find out in secret, leaked, confidential memos from OSSTF, or can you just tell us right here, in this chamber, with the media watching? The public's eyes are on you, Premier. Why don't you tell the truth?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What this conversation is about is a grade 11 student who wants to play volleyball. It's about a grade 10 student who wants to be part of an orchestra. It's about a teacher or a member of the support staff who wants to coach track. It should not be about adults who are having problems having a good, respectful relationship.

What I want is that respectful relationship. I want that conversation, which is why, after I was selected leader, I reached out to the leadership of the federations and I said, "Let's get back to the conversation. Let's go back to having a respectful dialogue." That's what we've done.

It is almost as though the member opposite would rather have conflict. It's almost as though the member opposite does not want any kind of respectful conversation with the employees of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: If the Premier wants to talk about volleyball, I'll tell her, her serve didn't clear the net.

It's incredibly naive for her to tell Ontario families that there is no secret deal when we know that there is one. She's had secret meetings with the union. They all

of a sudden, after declaring victory on destroying her party, have now come out and given her \$10,000, and we're to expect that they're getting nothing in return? That's a joke.

Ontario students deserve better. This Premier is not interested in doing anything for Ontario students. We already know Ken Coran has said that many of his teachers will not go back to extracurriculars. We know it's too early for you to be patting yourself on the back. We already know that some of these students are going out to get extracurricular activities.

So I ask you again: Are you prepared to come clean with Ontario families and tell us what's in store? Is it more money? Are you stripping EQAO? Are you going to make sure that your union buddies get big payouts a couple of years from now? We want details, Premier, and I think you can give them to me.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I'm not tall, but I'm right at the net, and that ball is going right back.

This is honestly about making sure that we have a good working relationship with the teachers and the support staff of this province—all of them. I'm here in this Legislature because I worked hard on publicly funded education in the late 1990s, when the relationship was in tatters. I believe that schools work better, that kids learn better when there's a working relationship, a constructive relationship between government, school boards, the teachers and the support staff. That's why I called the leadership and that's why we've been having a respectful discussion.

There's no more money; there is a conversation that is going to restore extracurriculars in the province.

Interjections.

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

I try my best to keep on time and to make things work as well as they do. These kinds of things do not help, nor does it help to try to tell me how to do my job.

The leader of the third party.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. In recent days, the Premier has talked about delivering change. But beyond promises, she's actually dismissing some pretty good ideas. For example, the Premier dismissed the idea of an affordable public inquiry into the gas plant scandals. Will the Premier clarify now whether she's also dismissing a real plan to get young people back to work?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I apologize; I didn't hear the last sentence in that remark—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's about getting young people to work.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —so I will just answer the first part, which is that we've been very clear about getting the information that the committee asked for into the hands of the committee members.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say to the leader of the third party that I am very interested in working with her

on making sure that we put in place the supports that help young people get into work. I've said that the mismatch between the labour market and the labour force is of great concern to me and that we need a more systematic way to help young people get exposure to a whole range of occupations. That is one of the areas that I very much would like to work with her on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, in a recent letter to Liberal donors, the Premier wrote that New Democrats would “rather [have] an inquiry than implement the recommendations of the Lankin-Sheikh report.” It's unfortunate, because we've actually put forward a concrete proposal that will allow people to keep money as they transition to work. It's a recommendation that comes directly from that report.

But we also want to get to the bottom of the gas plant scandal. Does the Premier really believe that these are mutually exclusive goals?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I really believe that the leader of the third party does want to work on implementing the Lankin-Sheikh report. It's something that she and I have talked about and it's something that I want to work on. What we can't do—and I've been clear—is put \$20 million to \$25 million into a public inquiry. I've been very clear about that.

I want to work on the recommendations of the Lankin-Sheikh report. The issue around youth unemployment is a huge concern to me. In fact, in the jobs roundtables that I've already had, this is an issue that has come forward. I believe that labour, government and the private sector need to be working together to find ways to systemically allow young people to have opportunities to discover a whole range of occupations.

1050

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, with all due respect, what we can't do is talk out of both sides of our mouth. The Premier has been making a lot of grand pronouncements, but Ontarians got a lot of that from the previous—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not a phrase that has been accepted in the House. I would ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'll withdraw, Speaker.

The Premier has been making a lot of grand pronouncements, but Ontarians got a lot of the same kinds of pronouncements from the last Liberal Premier in this Legislature. They need to know that promises are actually going to result in some real change, not endless conversation and not political blame games.

Will the Premier agree that creating jobs and getting people back to work are going to take a little less conversation and a little more action?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Actually, Mr. Speaker, it's going to take both. It's going to take conversation with all of the people who can be part of those solutions, and it's going to take action.

I absolutely accept that we need to take action on that front, and that's why the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment is putting together a plan so that we can, as we move into the budget, have those pieces in place that will allow us, as I say, in a systemic way to work with labour, to work with the private sector, to work with the college and university sector, to work with our school boards—because there are things that we can do in collaboration with all of those groups to make sure that we have better access for young people into the job market.

I am absolutely ready and wanting to take action, but there does need to be a conversation so we make the right decisions.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier. Ontarians deserve answers about how much money was wasted on the gas plants and why that money isn't available now to create jobs or invest in health care. Will the Premier agree to move this issue out of the Legislature by sending it to an open, transparent and affordable public inquiry so MPPs can get on with the business of putting families first?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, in the interest of cross-party co-operation, I think the best answer to the leader of the NDP's question comes from the MPP for Cambridge, who on January 30 said, "The cost of a public inquiry is excessive. We don't believe that that's necessary. We're paid as individuals to represent our constituents and to hold the government, and that's where we expect this hearing to take place, and we're calling on the incoming Premier to call a legislative committee immediately."

Mr. Speaker, I think it was put very well by the member. It's too expensive. We have a committee of the Legislature which is seized with this issue, and we look forward, on this side of the House, to co-operating fully with its work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, the Conservative member from Cambridge really doesn't interest me in terms of his opinion. New Democrats think we need to make sure that the public inquiry takes place so that we can get to the bottom of the gas plants scandal.

The Premier should know that getting to the bottom of that scandal is extremely important, and it's not as simple as calling up the AG. His mandate does not allow him to look at who made the decisions to not let the information come out—in other words, who ordered the cover-up. It's not that simple.

Talking about getting answers isn't actually the same thing as getting the answers. Will the Premier agree that Ontarians deserve the answers and that they will be able to get those answers by calling an independent public inquiry?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, it's a little strange that the leader of the New Democratic Party criticizes her friend the MPP for Cambridge when in fact she and the PCs came together to vote for a motion which, at its core, is vindictive against a former member of the Legislature, who is back in private life right now, and decided not to go down the route that we had proposed of having a select committee.

But again, Mr. Speaker, we will co-operate with the committee. We look forward to the answers that they will bring forward. We also look forward to hearing from the New Democratic Party about their opposition to the power plants. We look forward to them coming forward and tabling with the committee their policy analysis and their spending. Obviously, Mr. Speaker, since this seems to trump in their minds most other issues that are on the minds of Ontarians, we know that they did careful work before they opposed the power plants. We look forward to hearing about it from them at the committee.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it's very disappointing to see the vindictive misrepresentation of New Democrats' positions when it comes to the power plants in this scandal—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As I've indicated to you, I'm trying to race to the top, and I think that that expression to the member was inappropriate. Withdraw.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): "Misrepresentation."

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I normally don't respond to that, and I'm not going to, so stop. I have asked the member to withdraw.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I did.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I was too engaged with the other members' heckling. Shall I hear it again?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it's unfortunate that the Liberals aren't doing their research in terms of the positions the New Democrats took when it came to the power plants. I invite both the Premier and her House leader to do so, so that they can be clear in this Legislature in terms of the history of this matter.

But I'm concerned that there's a lot of talk about action instead of any real action being taken here. The Premier is letting this place become bogged down by Liberal scandals. Instead of getting to answers for Ontarians, the Premier keeps refusing our constructive solutions.

Will the Premier agree to send this issue to a transparent and affordable public inquiry so that Ontarians can get the answers they need and MPPs can focus—

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

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I'll do some research right here on the floor of the House. Inside Halton, October 7, 2010, the member for Toronto Danforth: "I

don't agree with the Oakville power plant; I don't think it's necessary."

The leader of the third party in this very Legislature, October 18, 2010: "New Democrats actually have thought for a long time that that plant should never have been built and we've said so."

The member for Beaches–East York, December 2, 2010, in Hansard: "I'm glad that the people of Oakville came to their senses. I'm glad the people of Oakville hired Erin Brockovich and did all the things that they did in order to have this killed."

Mr. Speaker, if the leader of the NDP is so opposed to the process that is being undertaken by the Legislature, why did she and her members stand in this place and go with the opposition on a mean-spirited, vindictive motion which is aimed at an honourable individual who is now a private citizen? Why won't she answer that question?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, come to order, please.

New question.

TEACHERS

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: My question is to the Minister of Education. As a former teacher, I can appreciate the importance of extracurricular activities. They are instrumental in character-building and fostering leadership skills. This is why students and parents should not be used as pawns in labour negotiations.

I find it odd that when it comes to unions enforcing political action upon their members, they're left with no choice but to toe the union line or face sanctions and fines. Yet when the union bosses tell the members to resume extracurricular activities, it's considered voluntary and teachers can refuse. Once again, students are the ones who suffer.

Minister, you've chosen bigger donations over students. Will you stand up, put students first and support our motion to restore extracurricular activities immediately?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think we have a different approach to working with our teachers. We believe that what we need to do is calmly and carefully rebuild the relationship. We believe that by working together, we can work with the people who are, after all, our front-line professionals. Speaker, that was something that the previous Harris government never understood: Teachers are not just union members. Teachers are the professionals in our schools who make our schools work. We know that they want to work with their students to help them succeed. They want to do all those extra things in schools that make schools a positive, caring place. We expect that they will be coming back to extracurricular activities because we're working together.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

1100

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Parents, principals and teachers understand that some teachers are simply better than others when it comes to fostering learning. The PC Party demands that the best qualified teacher is considered for the job, not the teacher who has been in the union the longest. A recent Fraser Institute report concluded 30% of GTA schools scored below the provincial average. Hiring teachers based on seniority rather than merit does not result in the best people teaching our children.

Will you support the PC motion to remove regulation 274/12 so the most qualified teachers are teaching our students? Minister, ensure the best teachers are hired.

Hon. Liz Sandals: We actually agree with something that was said here. We want the teachers who are hired to be high quality and to be able to do work in the classroom. But we also need a fair and open and transparent hiring process. We want to ensure that when there's an opening in a school, the job gets posted. We want to ensure that as teachers move from the occasional list, where they might be doing one or two days, onto the long-term occasional list, where they might be doing a month or so, that in fact we're looking at that experience, and that principals are evaluating that experience and that the people on our LTO lists are teachers who can deliver high quality. We think it's only fair those teachers who have proven their records in long-term occasional practice have an opportunity to go—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question? The member from Nickel Belt.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

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

Yesterday, the Ontario Health Coalition was at Queen's Park. They were sounding the alarm on the drastic hospital cuts occurring in Windsor, London, Niagara, Ottawa and dozens of other communities. These communities are facing deep cuts to hospital services and the care is not being replaced in the community. Can the minister explain why she said yesterday that these cuts are okay with her?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As we discussed yesterday, the health care system is in transformation mode. We are moving services from hospitals to communities. We're supporting more people at home, where they want to be. This does mean that the health care system has to change in order to support increased investments in the community sector, in the home care sector; things like home care but also things like day programs for people with Alzheimer's, transportation programs and so on.

We did have to make some difficult decisions, Speaker. One of those decisions is we're holding hospital base increases at zero per cent. That means every hospital in the province is making some tough decisions. The decisions, though, will protect patient care, and I think, if it's better for patients, it should be better for all of us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It seems like the minister is implying that the only way we can increase capacity in home care, in the community care sector: is by cutting hospital services and programs. Yet she seems to want to completely ignore proposals like ours, proposals like Don Drummond's report, to find administrative savings in the LHINs, in the CCACs.

Will the minister please explain to those communities that are losing possible services and programs—explain to those health care workers who are being laid off—why she prefers to cut hospital services over administrative budgets?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: In fact, there is no hospital expenditure that has not been examined very, very carefully, and there are changes being made at all levels of hospital care. But Speaker, if we can support someone at home instead of keeping them unnecessarily in the hospital, that's the right decision to make. I'm not alone when I support our transformation.

I have some quotes that I would love to share. Mary Egberts, president and CEO of Quinte Health Care, says: "It's the right thing to do. This is going to be better for the patient...I have to commend the government." Mark Rochon, when he was interim president of the Ontario Hospital Association, said, "The government has very clearly signalled that it has rejected harmful, across-the-board cuts to health care funding, and that it intends to move forward quickly and responsibly with implementing its action plan for health care." These are the right decisions in our health care system—far, far preferable to the deep cuts that would result if the PC Party ever had their way.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Research and Innovation. Investing in research and innovation is important to the continued economic strength of our province. Ontario, we all know, has some of the world's best entrepreneurs, researchers and innovators. It's through our investments and research that our highly skilled workforce is able to take those innovative ideas and those discoveries right through to their commercialization stage.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Research and Innovation, would the minister please let us know what is being done right now to support research and innovation in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I would like to thank the member from Oakville for his question. Research and innovation are key drivers in our economy, and our government understands that very well. That's why we came out with the Ontario innovation agenda in the year 2008. The innovation agenda outlines our commitment to research and innovation and fostering the culture of research and innovation in the province of Ontario. Since the year 2003, we have invested \$3.6 billion in research and innovation in this province. This is twice the money the Conservatives invested when they were in office.

Through these investments, we have created 30,000 new jobs, we have trained 10,000 researchers and we have established world-class research institutions such as the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research and the Ontario Brain Institute. That's why our province has become one of the leading jurisdictions for research and innovation in the world.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: These are all important achievements and it's clear, I think, to most of us in this chamber that these investments have produced world-class research, they've helped grow our research and academic institutions, and of course they create jobs. We can see the tangible effects of these investments right around this building, near Queen's Park, when we look at the MaRS building across the street. Down University Avenue, we've got some of the country's leading hospitals. But we know these benefits aren't contained just to Toronto, just to urban centres; they stretch all across this province.

Speaker, through you back to the Minister of Research and Innovation, would the minister highlight how our investments in research and innovation benefit the province of Ontario as a whole?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Thank you again for the question. Our investments in research and innovation are driving our knowledge-based economy. For example, let's take a look at the ICT clusters around the GTA, Ottawa and Kitchener–Waterloo: These clusters are contributing \$28 billion to our economy every year and employing 270,000 people. We can take a look at the life sciences cluster, which is employing 38,000 people and contributing \$9.1 billion to our economy through over 1,000 companies.

Our private sector partners in Ontario have confidence in our province, and our commitment to research and innovation plays no small role in that area. We are committed to investing in research and development to grow our economy and create jobs in the province of Ontario.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Speaker, I'd ask you to send over to the Premier some of the cabinet documents, Project Vapour documents, from the Oakville gas plant. These documents date back to July and August of 2011.

Let me refresh your memory with some of the phrases from these documents: "Coming out of Project Vapour"; "Attached are the Vapour minutes"; "Just spoke to Livingston on Vapour"; "Vapour is interesting"; "Subject: re: Vapour"; and they go on and on. That's a lot of cabinet discussion on Project Vapour back in 2011. Premier, will you acknowledge that you heard of Project Vapour in 2011?

1110

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Energy, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton, come to order. When I say “quiet,” I don’t want any rebuttal.

Minister of Energy?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Thank you for the question. First of all, I want to say that the critic for the opposition and I had a very nice meeting and discussion, and we look forward to working together, as we did with the NDP critic.

Thank you for the question. The member would know that this Legislature agreed to refer all the document issues to the justice committee. That committee, as I understand it, is going to start its deliberations.

The Premier has been open and forthright. She is willing to come to the committee. She’s willing to answer any questions, under oath, in as open and as transparent a way as possible. So I would say to the critic, next week you’ll have your opportunity to ask anybody from this side to go in and answer questions.

The documents that he is referring to, Mr. Speaker—

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier: On September 25, as I said yesterday, you stood in this House and said, “All of the documents that have been released are the documents that were available.” However, we now see that you and your cabinet saw these Project Vapour documents over a year earlier, and you knew there were no Project Vapour documents released when you stood up and proclaimed, “You have all the documents.”

Premier, your credibility is running on fumes. Set the record straight. Why did you tell us we had all the documents when you absolutely and irrefutably knew we did not have those documents?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: As everyone in this House will know, last week, I announced that there were some additional documents that came to my attention. On that day, I asked the chair and the president or CEO of the Ontario Power Authority to make themselves available in an open and transparent manner in the media studio. They had an hour to answer questions, and one of the questions went to the chair: “The opposition has accused the government today of a cover-up. Would you say that it is an accurate assessment of what has happened here?” The chair of the OPA said, “We messed up some search terms, and we were trying to get them cleaned up. So I’m not sure what this has to do with the government. This is all about us. That’s my answer to you.”

CASINOS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. The Premier has repeatedly said that she wants to create a new relationship and to start listening to the people of Ontario but, in reality, she’s not listening to communities like Hamilton, Kingston and Toronto when they say they want a chance to decide if they want casinos. Despite

these concerns, the OLG is moving full steam ahead with privatizing gambling without giving communities an opportunity to have their own say.

Will the Premier start to really listen and do the right thing, which is to stop the privatization of the OLG and give Ontarians a choice and a chance to vote on whether they want casinos in their communities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Finance will want to comment on this, but I will just say, Mr. Speaker, I’ve been very clear that municipalities have the authority and the autonomy to decide whether they want to have casinos or not.

As a government, we will not be imposing those casinos on a municipality. It is up to the municipality to decide how it wants to consult with its constituency, with people of the jurisdiction. It’s up to them. They can have a referendum, they can do other consultation, but they are going to make the decision. The provincial government is not going to decide whether a casino is located in a particular municipality. That is up to the community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Premier, the OLG plan to privatize is having an adverse effect on people in urban and rural Ontario. The cancellation of the slots-at-racetracks partnership caused a 50% reduction in sales at last year’s yearling auction, which has crippled a once world-class breeding industry.

The transitional panel report stated in black and white that about 20,000 to 30,000 people work full-time in the horse racing industry, and many of these jobs will be lost.

Can the Premier tell us why she’s so determined to push casinos on communities that don’t want them and take jobs and investments away from communities that desperately need them?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The premise of both these questions is wrong; both premises are wrong.

The first premise is that the province is going to force municipalities to take casinos. That’s just not true; we’re not doing that. The second premise is that—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It’s not helpful when a member from the party that’s asking the question is heckling while I’m trying to get quiet, and I actually stop the clock.

Now, before I move on, I do want to make a comment about that: First and foremost, I am doing my utmost—and as I said, I’m racing to the top—to bring decorum into the place, but it can’t be done unless you’re with me. I’m asking you: Please come with me.

When a question gets asked from the opposition, it tends to get relatively quiet, but as soon as the answer is given, we then end up with the shouting—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I don’t need anyone making editorial comments while I’m speaking either.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The second premise, that somehow we don't want to have a sustainable horse racing industry, is also wrong. I've been very clear that the transition panel report is going to be the guideline for our changes in the horse racing industry. We have committed to a sustainable horse racing industry. It won't be exactly the same horse racing industry, but we're in negotiations with the racetracks right now. We want to have a sustainable industry. It will be changed, but it will be sustainable.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Steven Del Duca: My question today is for the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. We have had many winter storms already this year, and forecasts suggest that both in my riding and across the province there are more to come, including one, potentially, this evening and tomorrow.

I know that our government makes every effort to keep our roads safe. However, there are concerns in my riding of Vaughan that, in recent years, standards for snow removal have declined. Can the minister please update the House on our road maintenance standards?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's my great pleasure to report to the House, as they may know, that Ontario has the safest roads in North America. When you actually look at our environment—Northern Ontario—and the challenges we have, that is really an extraordinary accomplishment, given that the more temperate climates to the south, which should naturally have safer roads, don't. That is a testament to the incredible work of our municipalities, those that are at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association; the great work of the Ontario Good Roads Association; this government and, quite frankly, governments previously. We have shared this legacy of building excellent roads.

I know the member from Vaughan is working to ensure the 427 is extended and that the roads and highways to Vaughan meet the commercial and economic needs of his community, and we continue that tradition.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I thank the minister for that important update. It is certainly good to know that Ontario does have the safest roads in North America and that our standards remain at the highest level.

Minister, I have certainly heard from my constituents in Vaughan that roads do seem to be closed more often in recent years when storms hit. Can you please inform the House as to the process for road closures and the role the government plays in assisting the police to keep our roads safe?

1120

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We have maintained two things consistently. One, we have maintained the same standards of snow removal, and we have never politicized road closures. It is up to the Ontario Provincial Police to make those decisions, and I think we want to keep it that way.

Mr. Speaker, you suggested that we take a race to the top, not a race to the bottom. Right now I want to thank a few members of the opposition: the members for Perth–Wellington, Wellington–Halton Hills, Algoma–Manitoulin and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. The reason I want to thank them is because they have shown up with their municipal delegations at the Ontario Good Roads Association and they have set aside partisan politics to work with me as minister to continue road safety. I want to thank those members opposite, and I want to continue: that each member opposite will feel welcome in any delegations I am receiving. It would be very helpful if they were there. Thank you very much to the members opposite.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Premier. Premier, Ontarians have been shocked and disgusted to see that the Liberals will stop at nothing to shut down a proper investigation into the power plant scandal. In the first and most pathetic display, the Liberal government prorogued Parliament just one day before the finance committee was set to begin its investigation. Then, on just the second day of the new session, the Premier broke her promise to establish a select committee to examine all aspects of the gas plant cancellations. Speaker, within just moments of our announcement, the Premier rejected our calls for a judicial inquiry.

Premier, I have to ask, with this much stonewalling, why should Ontarians believe a word you say?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the government House leader, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we have a—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yesterday I might not have been clear; I am now. To the two members who keep using that same term over and over again, it stops.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we have a committee of this Legislature seized with this matter, based upon a motion that was brought forward by the member's own party, in fact the member's own colleague, who argued vehemently against the type of review that he's calling for right now.

I think on this side of the House we're all looking forward to hearing from the Progressive Conservatives about their opposition to the plant, about the work that they did in terms of policy analysis and costing. Again, I have the quotes: "We don't support building it"—Tim Hudak, London Free Press. Here is a statement by Geoff Janoscik in a PC press release: "The only way to guarantee this power plant does not get built is to elect a Tim Hudak Ontario government. A Tim Hudak government will cancel this plant." I have Twitter, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Again to the Premier: After hearing answers like that, I think it's quite clear that nobody believes this government is any different, not even the member for Kitchener Centre, whose only sense

of renewal has been to flip from one page to the next in the McGuinty talking points manual. Ontarians are sick and tired of stall tactics and obstruction. They want a government that's open, transparent and accountable, not a government that's willing to throw its own members under the bus to keep Ontarians in the dark.

Premier, will you keep your promise and immediately establish a select committee to investigate your government's billion-dollar gas plant scandal, or will you follow in the footsteps of your predecessor and sacrifice another one of your colleagues just to hide the truth from Ontarians?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, let me share a new one with you. We've got YouTube now. I hope members will tune in; it's a wonderful clip. The Leader of the Opposition, the day before the election, is touring the Mississauga gas plant with the PC candidates and other adoring fans. He outlines how, if he's elected as Premier, he'll cancel it. Queen's Park's own Richard Brennan points to the site in YouTube and he says, "If you get in, is that done?" The Leader of the Opposition responds, "That's right, done." Mr. Brennan asks, "Done, done?" and then the Leader of the Opposition responds, to thunderous applause, "Done, done, done."

Mr. Speaker, I suggest all members should review it. It's YouTube. It's called Hudak's Power Plant Promise: Done done, available on YouTube to everyone in this Legislature, to show their opposition to the—

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

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. Communities like London continue to struggle with high unemployment, companies shutting down and economic uncertainty. When will the people of southwestern Ontario start to see the money from the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund make a difference in their communities?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to thank the member opposite for this question. In fact, yesterday at ROMA, at the meetings, I had a number of meetings with delegations from southwestern Ontario. It's remarkable just how much enthusiasm there is for this fund, which of course was proclaimed through passage in this Legislature and by the Lieutenant Governor just last October.

Even though it's just been several months, this fund, we've invested \$1.5 million so far, which in fact, importantly, has leveraged an additional \$10.1 million in investments. It is early days, as applications are just coming in, but certainly we're very confident that, as we've seen with the Eastern Ontario Development Fund and the success in leveraging literally hundreds of millions of dollars, the situation in southwestern Ontario will be identical.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Back to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment: The development fund received a lot of attention when it was announced, but here we are, merely two months into 2013, and the board that would actually approve grants from the fund still hasn't been established.

When will the development fund corporation be established? When will people be appointed to the board?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Of course, my ministry officials are working diligently on this.

I wanted to mention one of the projects that has been funded already, despite that this is still early days for the fund. As I mentioned, it's only been in existence for several months. We're receiving quite a number of applications, of course, but we're proud to say that Lambton Conveyor, which of course is in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex—the local business owners are very happy to see a new partner there which is funded through Lambton Conveyor. They are actually doubling the size of their manufacturing plant and doubling its workforce as well by hiring 110 new workers. This is in Wallaceburg, in the heart of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. I'm sure the member opposite will join me in expressing appreciation for this investment and for the hard work of the local officials.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. My riding of York South-Weston is home to a lot of young people who are struggling—struggling to find work, to get a job, to get experience; struggling to stay out of trouble in many cases; and struggling to develop their skills for better opportunities for their futures.

There has been plenty of coverage since the speech from the throne indicating that youth employment is one of our government's priorities. Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: What actions are we taking to ensure that young people across Ontario can find valuable work placements in co-ops and other opportunities that help them prepare for future careers? Can the minister please outline what actions we've taken already to address this issue?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Of course, my colleague is correct in indicating that this is a top priority for this government. It's quite remarkable. We've had three jobs roundtables so far: one here in Toronto, I convened one with the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, and the Premier was in Ottawa last week as well with a jobs roundtable. It's remarkable how much of the conversation was directed at our young people and employment opportunities, the importance of effectively addressing this issue, and also supporting our young entrepreneurs so that they can find opportunities.

We know that the youth unemployment rate is far too high here in Ontario—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, come to order.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It's also a situation in Canada and around the world. The unemployment rate is roughly double what the average unemployment rate is. But we're doing a lot of work to address this already. Our summer jobs program has already helped to create more than 100,000 jobs for young people, including our Summer Company Program and Experiential Learning Program.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm encouraged by the fact that this is a priority for our government. I look forward to the opportunity to ensure that it stays on the agenda.

The minister made mention of some programs that are already in place for our youth living in Ontario to begin developing those skills and to make those connections that are needed to get that important job experience. Speaker, through you: Can the minister please provide some details on some of the programs that he just mentioned, such as the Summer Company and the Canadian Youth Business Foundation?

1130

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, with youth unemployment, I'm confident that this is an issue that all parties are going to want to get behind. I'm actually quite excited that the NDP has been speaking quite vigorously about this issue, and I look forward to working with them and with the Progressive Conservatives as well.

Ontario's Summer Company Program is actually in its 13th year and it provides young entrepreneurs with the chance to start their own business. It provides mentoring and up to \$3,000 in support from the government.

The Experiential Learning Program that I referenced also works with our Ontario Centres of Excellence to help post-secondary institutions foster students with innovative ideas into creating new products and businesses.

Our partnership with the Canadian Youth Business Foundation will provide \$4 million over just two years to help create nearly 2,000 jobs, Mr. Speaker, and 400 new businesses for young people.

We look forward to working with all the parties in this House, all sides, on how we can further improve the job market for our young people.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the Premier. The McGuinty-Wynne government has produced the largest scandal in Ontario history. The campaign decision to cancel the gas plants to save two Liberal seats has cost the hard-working families of Ontario \$1.3 billion, but it's also cost your government its credibility. Political interference has obstructed access to thousands of cancellation documents resulting in no less than three document dumps. The OPA's CEO claims that they didn't have the searches right the first times.

This abuse of public office is further reflected in the Premier's apparent lack of will to get to the bottom of this debacle. Premier, will you commit to calling for the select committee you promised this House and do it immediately?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the government House leader, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The Tories are all over the map on this.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, Mr. Speaker, as my friend the Minister of the Environment says, the Tories are all over the map on this. The fact of the matter is that they moved forward with the motion that was brought forward by the member from Cambridge, and they decided to go that route—a motion which quite frankly, particularly in light of the fact that the former Minister of Energy has now left public life, is nothing more than mean-spirited and vindictive.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, our side of the House will co-operate fully with the committee. The Premier has given her personal assurances about appearances before the committee. I think it's about time that we let the committee start to undertake its work.

As I've said a number of times today, we are looking forward to hearing from the Conservatives about their plans to cancel the plants, about their costing, about their policy analysis on an issue which obviously they feel is top of the public's agenda.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Speaker, I'm also a mediator and I know one thing: Mediators don't punt their problems off to other people for resolution.

The question is for the Premier, not for the House leader. It's getting to be less Groundhog Day and more Looney Tunes. I see your lips moving, but I don't hear anything coming out.

The McGuinty-Wynne duo is responsible for the gas plant cancellations and the perpetually lost documents. Together, they were campaign chair and candidate; together, they sat at the cabinet table for the last decade; together, they weathered the OLG scandal, the eHealth scandal, the Ornge scandal and now the gas plant scandal.

The Premier will have you believe that there's a new government now that she shuffled her B team into their cabinet positions, yet the same minister that the McGuinty-Wynne team didn't believe could win his own seat was rewarded with the promotion of his lifetime—Minister of Finance—despite the fact he directly benefited from tax dollars. It looks like she's not getting it right the first times either, but it's not too late. That's why I want to know, Premier, will you deliver the promised select committee so Ontarians, who are on the hook for \$1.3 billion, can finally get to the bottom—

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

Government House leader?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I don't think any of us know what the official opposition want. On one day, we have the member from Cambridge saying that an inquiry is too expensive, and then several days later, the member from North Bay holds a press conference calling for the inquiry.

The Premier comes forward and offers the select committee instead of having one that is focused on a very

mean-spirited and vindictive motion, and the opposition decides to go with what, quite frankly, is nothing but a vindictive witch hunt against a former member of this Legislature.

And then several days ago, Mr. Speaker, we hear from the Leader of the Opposition—his commitment not only to this Legislature but to all Ontarians that he will be voting against the budget, which has not even been written yet.

Quite frankly, I think it's time that the official opposition perhaps took some time internally to figure out what it is they want and how they can best represent the interests of Ontarians.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, highway conditions in northern Ontario and across this province in winter are atrocious. We're seeing more and more road closures; we're seeing more and more accidents. Why? Because highways are not being maintained to the standard they should.

We know that the Conservatives started winter road maintenance privatization; your government accelerated it. And what's worse is you have even privatized the patrolling of highways as to how we dispatch salt trucks and plow trucks.

Why did your government privatize that section of the work? Because clearly now, we're not getting the maintenance that we need on our highways.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank my friend from Timmins—James Bay for the question. Obviously, things have deteriorated for him, because last year he rose in the House to compliment us on the work that's done. I do—

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I know. Maybe the thought of a New Democrat complimenting Liberals—perish the thought.

But we do maintain—

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We do, Mr. Speaker, maintain the exact same road standards.

I've been meeting with northern municipalities. This has not come up as a complaint. I know I'm meeting with the mayor of Timmins later, from your constituency. I would like you to attend. If there are particular problems that I am aware of, I will happily sit down and work to resolve them with you. I know the member from Algoma—Manitoulin raised a similar issue. I've committed to meet with him and his municipal representatives.

The enemy of good is perfect—

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker, the fact that the minister is not aware that our highways are in bad condition this winter is quite frankly surprising.

It is not as if you have been without warning. It has been reported in the news for the last number of months, the same thing this year as it was last year.

My question to you is a very simple one: Why did your government go ahead and privatize the patrolling of the highways that was done by the MTO? Because without those patrols, we are not dispatching sand, salt and plow trucks in the way that we should, and as a result, our highways are in terrible condition. Why did you privatize it?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Unlike the parties opposite, we are not ideologically hidebound to a public sector or private sector solution. We believe in pragmatic, evidence-based public policy.

Every single snow removal vehicle in the north right now across Ontario has GPS and is tracked and monitored every moment that it's on duty. I don't think there's a higher standard of accountability that I'm aware of than that.

The standards—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I think the honourable member—I listened to him. I would just ask for the same courtesy.

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Sorry—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm trying to join you in this race to the top.

Mr. Speaker, the changes that were made were done with contracts to maintain a standard. If there is evidence from the member opposite, I will take that very seriously if that standard is not being maintained. But I don't want to have this driven by ideology. Whether it's private or public sector delivery of services, the standard must be maintained.

VISITOR

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: In the visitors' west gallery, I'd like to introduce a good friend of mine, Mr. Joe Crowley. He's the deputy mayor of Asphodel-Norwood. The Crowley family are part of a great agricultural dynasty in Peterborough county. Mr. Crowley.

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

The House recessed from 1139 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Todd Smith: I have a wonderful-looking crew here from Bancroft in North Hastings. Let me start with the mayor of Bancroft, Bernice Jenkins. We also have Steve and Linda Silver, Perry Kelly and Patsy O'Neill, Hazel Lambe, Steve Bruce, and the deputy mayor is

Wayne Wiggins. We welcome them all into town for the ROMA conference and here at Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We love to have visitors. Welcome.

Mr. Mike Colle: With me today I have Vaishali Prajapati and her son Rishabh Prajapati, who are here for the introduction of Jayesh's bill.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a pleasure this afternoon to welcome Scott Stewart, from Peterborough, to our members' gallery—a great member of the team.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think he looked lonely, being the only other person not introduced. So, welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ROB DUCEY

Mr. Rob Leone: I rise today to acknowledge the accomplishments of one of Cambridge's most celebrated residents. It's not every day that someone from your hometown is voted into the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame.

Cambridge resident Rob Ducey spent 13 seasons in the majors and split time with both Canadian teams, the Montreal Expos and the Toronto Blue Jays. In the process, he became the first Canuck to play both professional clubs north of the border.

He took his talents to Japan in 1995 and 1996, belting 51 home runs during a stint with the Nippon Ham Fighters of the Pacific League. He represented Canada at the Olympics in 2004 before serving as a coach for his country at the 2006 World Baseball Classic and the 2008 Beijing Games.

Ducey will take his rightful place in a ceremony in June, alongside George Bell and Tim Raines and long-time Blue Jays announcer Tom Cheek.

It's a well-deserved honour for the best player to come out of Cambridge, and we're so proud to share him with St. Marys in Perth-Wellington and the rest of Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Congratulations to Rob Ducey.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: People in Algoma-Manitoulin and all across the north are disappointed with the government's decision to once again cut ServiceOntario hours and jobs. Northerners who rely on these counters in Manitouwadge, Wawa, Chapleau, along the North Shore and on Manitoulin Island will now have their hours of operation cut in half. This is not the first time northerners have been told they would have to wait longer for their birth certificates, health cards and licences.

This government claims that the affected sites were low in volume, but of all these 22 sites, 21 of them are located in northern Ontario, once again denying northerners the same access to these services in comparison to the rest of the province. These cuts will have a negative

impact on local business and the local economy, as well as on employees who will experience reduced hours and job losses.

ServiceOntario generates \$2.7 billion annually in revenue for the province on an operating budget of only \$270 million. With these large revenues, why are northerners made to suffer again? The government made its intent to privatize ServiceOntario very clear last February, something that is a cause for great concern. We know all too well what happens with privatization.

Northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of Liberal decisions to slash operating budgets, regardless of where your address is or your home. All Ontarians should be treated equally by their government.

Speaker, northerners are not asking for more, but will certainly not accept anything less.

CLAUDETTE BOYER

M. Phil McNeely: I will be speaking about a powerful voice that is no longer there, a voice for good in our communities of Ottawa-Vanier and Ottawa-Orléans.

Monsieur le Président, comme vous le savez, j'ai l'honneur et le privilège de représenter la merveilleuse communauté d'Ottawa-Orléans depuis 10 ans, cette communauté qui compte près de 35 % de francophones. C'est pourquoi je m'adresse à vous aujourd'hui pour souligner l'héritage d'une grande dame de la francophonie qui nous a malheureusement quitté de façon précipitée le 16 février dernier et dont les funérailles ont eu lieu ce matin.

Il s'agit de M^{me} Claudette Boyer. Elle était la preuve parfaite de la persistance et de l'importance de défendre les droits linguistiques en situation minoritaire. Elle l'a d'ailleurs démontré depuis les dernières années en tant que directrice générale de l'ACFO Ottawa—l'Association des communautés francophones d'Ottawa. Elle a marqué l'Ontario français et une page historique de notre Parlement en devenant la première femme francophone élue à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario en 1999.

Notre province, la communauté francophile et principalement la communauté franco-ontarienne perdent une alliée de taille. Femme d'action hors pair, M^{me} Boyer a toujours su rassembler la communauté francophone. Elle laissera certes un vide à Ottawa, tout comme dans les coeurs des Ontariennes et Ontariens. À nous tous de lui prouver, par nos actions, que ce qu'elle a apporté à la francophonie de l'Ontario est là pour rester.

Merci, monsieur le Président.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's been a busy couple of days at the ROMA-Good Roads conference. I had a full slate of meetings, and there was a recurring theme: industrial wind turbines. It's an understatement to say that municipalities are concerned about the economics of turbines being forced into their communities because this

Liberal government stripped away their planning authority with the Green Energy Act. In fact, there are municipalities that are facing losses from developers for doing what they feel is in the best interests of their community and their constituents. This is unacceptable.

Last month I revealed FOIs that showed that the Ministry of the Environment had been told by senior environmental officers from Guelph that there were negative health effects from wind turbines. Unfortunately, according to an email exchange, the officers were told to stand down.

The FOIs also showed that the Chief Medical Officer of Health was told to make sure she used the term “direct” when referring to health impacts of turbines because the reality is, there are indirect impacts. In fact, in an internal Q&A document, she was told to “fess up to the annoyance link.”

On Friday, the Grey Bruce medical officer of health released her own review, and she told the public that the Liberal government cannot prove there is no association between industrial wind turbines and indirect impacts.

Speaker, the evidence is mounting. The new Premier promised to be respectful and direct, and today I ask her: Will she be respectful and direct and immediately call for a moratorium on industrial wind turbines until proper health studies have been completed?

BELL LET'S TALK DAY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: On February 12, Canadians from all across the country took part in the third annual Bell Let's Talk Day for mental health. Canadians combined for just under 100 million tweets, Facebook shares, texts and long distance calls, leading to Bell donating more than \$4.8 million to mental health programs.

Let's Talk Day is part of a growing effort to fight the stigma around mental health issues. A few years ago, I had the humbling opportunity to act as Chair of the all-party Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. I think all members of our committee learned a lot from that experience. What we heard repeatedly was about the importance of reducing stigma, because two-thirds of people with mental health issues still continue to suffer in silence for fear of being judged or rejected.

1510

Ontario has made significant progress in the past few years, with our province's first comprehensive strategy for mental health and addictions. Success in reducing stigma requires efforts from individuals, governments, organizations and corporate partners such as Bell. So today, Speaker, I'd like to commend Bell for being such a great corporate leader in growing mental health awareness, as well as the many Canadians who took part in the latest Let's Talk Day.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My statement is directed to the Minister of Finance. It concerns the Pension Benefits Amend-

ment Act and the regulations that are outstanding that would allow for the transfer of pension assets for roughly 10,000 public sector employees that are affected by past public sector divestments.

I rise for the 11th time on this issue, as my pleas have consistently been ignored. It has been almost three years since the Pension Benefits Amendment Act was passed in this Legislature, and the government has yet to introduce the needed regulations that would allow for the transfer of pension assets for public sector employees. While the government has said on multiple occasions that these regulations are a priority, the thousands of public sector employees that are affected continue to wait in limbo for the government to act.

In the most recent response to my correspondence from August 15, 2012, the then Minister of Finance states: “The regulations are a high priority for the government and we hope to be able to release them later this year.” It's now over six months since the former minister made those comments.

This holdup is affecting real people like paramedics and former MPAC employees in my riding and across the province who have had their lives and retirement plans put on hold as they wait for these regulations. How in good conscience can the government deny these public sector workers pensions that they paid into over the years? Regulations need to be created now so this issue can be dealt with fairly and immediately.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I rise today to speak about a problem that is getting worse in northern Ontario: the condition of our roads this winter. People in Nickel Belt wake up to beautiful sunny days to find out that Highway 144 is closed again and that school buses are cancelled again. Our kids have been back at school for seven weeks; the buses have been cancelled seven times. That means that the schools are open but the kids in Nickel Belt cannot get to those schools.

If the highway is not closed, it is snow-packed and ice-covered, and there's no salt or sand to be found anywhere. When my constituents call the Ministry of Transportation to complain, they are more or less told to “live with it.” Mr. Speaker, “live with it” is not an acceptable answer.

Nickel Belt is made out of 33 little communities all around and to the north and south of Sudbury. We depend on our roads as a lifeline to connect us to work, to school and to the grocery store. When these highways are ignored for 48 hours after the end of a snowfall, a drive can become a high-risk activity, even a life-threatening activity. Further, Highway 144 is the only road between Sudbury and Timmins; it is very active with mining activities right now. When this highway is closed, workers can't get to work. They cannot produce the wealth that the province deserves.

I hope our Premier and Minister of Transportation are listening.

SCARBOROUGH WALK OF FAME

Ms. Soo Wong: I rise here to share good news with the Legislature. Last Friday, the Scarborough Walk of Fame's 2013 inductees were announced. They include Christine Bentley, a retired, trusted news anchor for CTV; the Barenaked Ladies, formed in Scarborough; Dwayne Morgan, an entrepreneur, poet and speaker; Monika Schnarre, model and actress; Scarborough Historical Society members Lionel Purcell and Richard Schofield; Judie Oliver, an accomplished master swimmer; and the honourable Gerry Phillips, a former member of provincial Parliament and cabinet minister who represented my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt in a number of capacities, both as a school board trustee and as a member of the Legislature. What's most fitting is, he has been recognized for his community work under that category. A lifestyle advocate for Scarborough and a personal mentor of mine, I want to congratulate the honourable Gerry Phillips and all the other inductees for the Scarborough Walk of Fame.

DRIVE CLEAN

Mr. Norm Miller: There has been much talk of late by the current government about charting a new course. However, their recent handling of the outdated Drive Clean program suggests they are on the same old road of unnecessary regulations and higher costs for consumers.

Questions have already been raised about the negative impacts of the new Drive Clean regulations for car owners, but there is also a significant impact for heavy truck operators.

I was recently contacted by Steve Hammond of Northland Truck Centre in my riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka. The new rules that took effect January 31, 2013, required him to purchase new mobile testing equipment. The rushed introduction of the new rules means that the new equipment is still not available, and he can't get parts for the existing equipment, so he is left in limbo, unable to do the tests. To make matters worse, the new test takes much longer to complete and will result in a doubling of the cost for consumers.

We cannot hope to create jobs in Ontario by needlessly increasing the regulatory burden on businesses with undue regulations such as these. This is yet another example of how the current Liberal government is just as committed to making it difficult to do business in the province of Ontario as the last one was.

I call on Premier Wynne to take the advice of the Auditor General and conduct a thorough review of the usefulness of Drive Clean and begin taking the necessary steps toward dismantling what has become a \$30-million-a-year cash grab.

I would also like to encourage Ontarians to visit scrapdriveclean.ca to sign our petition and put an end to this costly program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When you guys are finished—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): They're not finished yet. I'm just waiting. Okay.

I have two items. The first one is a commentary on rotation for statements: always rotation; not necessarily rotation. I want to make it clear that if it gets to the point where this holding-off coming into rotation is there—I ask three times and if no one stands, that's the end. I just want you to be aware of the rotation issue. I understand why it's done and how it's done, but I wanted to be clear about it. I go to two times, and on the third time, if somebody doesn't stand, then that's the end of statements, just for everyone's clarification.

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. Dunlop assumes ballot item number 8 and Mr. McNaughton assumes ballot item number 47.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT (AIR AMBULANCES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES (SERVICES D'AMBULANCE AÉRIENS)

Ms. Matthews moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services / Projet de loi 11, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances en ce qui concerne les services d'ambulance aériens.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'll make my statement during ministerial statements.

JAYESH'S LAW (WORKER SAFETY AT SERVICE STATIONS), 2013

LOI JAYESH DE 2013 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES TRAVAILLEURS DANS LES STATIONS-SERVICE

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 12, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to worker safety at service stations / Projet de loi 12, Loi

modifiant diverses lois en ce qui a trait à la sécurité des travailleurs dans les stations-service.

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?

1520

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes. As you know, Mr. Speaker, over 10,000 gas thefts occur across this province at gas stations every year. Men and women who work for \$10 an hour risk their lives when they go to work at a gas station, and it's about time we did something about it. This act would at least take away or at least suspend the licence of a convicted gas thief. It would also penalize gas station operators who deduct the wages of the operators for gas thefts. Thirdly, it would provide for a system of prepayment to be introduced in Ontario at gas stations.

ROYAL CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC ACT, 2013

Mrs. Cansfield moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr11, An Act respecting The Royal Conservatory of Music.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): This is a bill entitled An Act respecting The Royal Conservatory of Music—first reading of the bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Actually, I was so enthusiastic to make sure that that happened, I got ahead of myself. So, pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I rise in the House today to reintroduce legislation to amend the Ambulance Act. I would like to start by thanking the paramedics, the pilots and the front-line staff at Ornge who, from the beginning, have put patients first—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I hear the member from Renfrew speaking, but I don't see him in his seat.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You know what? He's the invisible man today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay. Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very proud of the work our government has done to help those front-line staff do the job they do so well, day in and day out, providing the best possible care for the people of Ontario.

I am very pleased to say that Ornge is well into a new chapter. It is on the right path forward. Ornge now has a culture that puts patients first, that respects taxpayers and that values transparency. Further, over the past month, Ornge has continued to take significant steps to renew its organization.

I'm very pleased to say that we've already made significant progress to increase accountability, oversight and transparency at Ornge since the release of the Auditor General's report.

The amendments to the Ambulance Act that I'm introducing today are in addition to the actions that my ministry and Ornge have already taken.

Among those changes that have taken place, Ornge has appointed a new patient advocate, established a conflict-of-interest protocol, created whistleblower hotline policy, submitted its quality improvement plan and has had its new interim medical aircraft interiors approved by Transport Canada.

I'd also like to emphasize that our amended performance agreement requires Ornge to comply with the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act. The new performance agreement also provides greater accountability, oversight and transparency to safeguard patient care and provide better value for taxpayer dollars.

I am very pleased that Dr. Andrew McCallum has taken over the leadership at Ornge. Dr. McCallum is formally trained as a military flight surgeon and is the former Chief Coroner of Ontario. He is exceptionally well qualified to lead this organization. I know that he is dedicated to ensuring continued improvement at Ornge. I'm confident that he will build on the tremendous progress that has already been made over the past year.

I'm grateful to the new leadership and front-line staff at Ornge for their commitment to introduce greater transparency and accountability, a commitment that our government shares and that this bill demonstrates.

The legislation addresses several issues, and I'd like to highlight three of them. First, it is vitally important that employees do not feel intimidated when raising their concerns. Ornge took an important step forward when it introduced a whistle-blower policy last year. Our proposed legislation will entrench protections for employees who disclose information to an inspector, an investigator or to the ministry.

Secondly, these proposed amendments will allow the government to take control of Ornge in extraordinary circumstances, through the appointment of a supervisor, just like we do with our hospitals. These changes will also allow us to appoint special investigators where it is in the public interest to do so, and to appoint members to Ornge's board of directors, including the chair.

Third, in the past, if we needed to make changes to the government's performance agreement with Ornge, we

could do so only with Ornge's agreement. That simply was not feasible when immediate changes needed to be made. That's why the proposed legislation will allow the government to change the performance agreement with Ornge at any time.

These proposed amendments to the Ambulance Act will strengthen oversight and restore public confidence in Ontario's air ambulance service.

We're also taking new steps to enhance transparency at Ornge, Mr. Speaker. In addition to this legislation, our government is also proposing to make Ornge subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act through regulation. This measure, which would allow for retroactive freedom-of-information requests, is in keeping with our government's approach with broader public sector organizations.

I want to stress that these measures represent and reflect common ground between government and both opposition parties. I know that members on both sides of the House want to see greater transparency and greater accountability at Ornge. I also know that members from all parties want to see action that responds to the Auditor General's report.

In short, I encourage all members who care about providing patients with the very best air ambulance service to become part of the solution by supporting this bill. It's the best way to protect taxpayers and, most importantly, patients.

I'm steadfastly committed to continuing our progress at Ornge, and I'm confident that the steps we're proposing today will provide the strong oversight needed to ensure a very bright future for Ontario's air ambulance service. Thank you.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the reintroduction of the Ambulance Amendment Act on behalf of the official opposition.

I think this is one of the most important issues that this Legislature will be addressing, which is the safety of Ontarians and the ability of the government to deliver high-quality and safe air ambulance services.

Before I go any further, I would like to salute and thank the front-line service providers, from the pilots to the paramedics and all of the other front-line service personnel, who have done an exemplary job in the face of very, very difficult times recently.

However, as far as the government goes, after listening to the Minister of Health today, I fear once again it has been a little bit too little, too late. This is another example of the Liberal government talking a big game but never taking the appropriate steps to ensure substantive legislation to protect Ontarians.

It has been less than a year since I stood in this House and pointed out that nothing really has changed. This government cobbled together this piece of legislation in haste, in order to provide cover for the ministry's and

minister's failure to do their job and to provide the appropriate oversight of the air ambulance service in Ontario.

What's even more troubling is, the legislation was put together before the public accounts committee heard from all of the relevant witnesses and before we understood what the conditions were that led to this air ambulance mess at Ornge in the first place. How can you possibly expect to develop a piece of legislation when you don't really even know what the problem is yet? And this is, despite the amendments—that's what this amendment bill is purporting to do.

To this day, we still don't fully know what happened at Ornge, because the government refused to strike a select committee and because they were unwilling to retrieve all the pertinent documents from Ornge. Even the Auditor General himself in 2012 noted that Ornge wouldn't willingly provide his investigation with documents.

Now, the minister and the Liberals would like Ontarians to believe she didn't have the power to intervene at Ornge, and that's why this scandal happened and that's why we need this legislation. But, Mr. Speaker, we know that is simply not true. The minister did have the power to intervene at Ornge under the original performance agreement, as well as the Independent Health Facilities Act. Article 15 of the original performance agreement gave her powers of intervention.

1530

The fact is, since the McGuinty government created Ornge, the operation has been riddled by mismanagement and scandal, as documented by numerous Auditor General reports dating back to 2005.

In his 2005 audit of land ambulance services, the Auditor General recommended that the ministry conduct unannounced reviews to ensure consistent quality of service. However, although the act allows the ministry to conduct unannounced reviews, the ministry's current policy is to provide advance notice of at least 90 days. Despite the advance notice, about one third, including Ornge, did not pass their scheduled review the first time. The review cited issues such as aircraft that were not properly stocked with medical supplies and equipment, and medical oxygen equipment that was improperly maintained.

The ministry's failure to heed this good advice from the Auditor General in 2005 and to take appropriate action demonstrates that the ministry has fumbled this service for years. This poor oversight and management has only worsened in recent years.

A leaked secret cabinet document entitled Investigations Concerning Air Ambulance and Related Services, which was circulated among the Liberals' top brass, confirms that the Minister of Health was warned of numerous problems and that patients in respiratory distress could not be provided with appropriate care due to the interior design of the Ornge helicopters. That document directly links the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to more than a year of inaction that could have resulted in several deaths and endangered patients.

The first incident occurred on July 15, 2011. The document states: “While en route to an on-scene rotary-wing request, the” critical care paramedic “notified Sudbury CCAC he was unable to perform CPR on the AW139 and would have to accompany the patient in the land ambulance. The patient subsequently was declared dead.”

The emergency health services branch investigation report of this incident, dated October 4, 2011, states: “It was found that due to the interior of the AW139, which was designed by Ornge staff, continuous quality CPR could not be performed in accordance with ...[basic life support] standards per s. 11(a) under the Ambulance Act. It was also found that patients in respiratory distress could not be provided with appropriate patient care....”

On and on it went, Mr. Speaker.

Clearly, there is more that needs to be done than a few sundry changes being made to the act. We need to continue to investigate this, to get to the bottom of Ornge, to ensure patient safety here—

Interjections.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: When this bill was originally introduced, New Democrats, including myself, had many concerns. Today, I listened carefully to what the minister had to say, and I must say that a lot of my concerns are still there.

We were concerned, first of all, that Ornge would not be subject to FOI; I’m now told that, through regulation, it will be. I will trust her word and know that it will come through. But will that mean that any subsidiary of Ornge will also be subject to FOI? I don’t know this. The minister did not cover that. That was part of my first series of worries.

My second is that I want Ombudsman oversight. If you are serious that you want transparency and you want accountability, then you have to give the Ombudsman the right to investigate complaints. There had been complaints, Mr. Speaker, about Ornge, but there was no way for those grievances and those complaints to be heard. There was nobody to turn to. The Ombudsman knows how to do investigations of complaints. He should have oversight.

Ornge will continue to be an organization that cannot be called in front of Government Agencies. This is also another measure that this Legislative Assembly has to make sure that we have accountability, that we have true transparency into the transfer payment agencies of the Ministry of Health. The minister did not mention that it was going to be in the bill—and I haven’t read the bill; it was just tabled. I hope it will be there.

I will be looking closely at this second rendition of this bill to see if we really are on target to bring accountability and transparency.

We will also be looking for some straight talk, both from the Ministry of Health and from their government, as to how the Ornge fiasco happened in the first place.

How come this happened? How could it happen here in Ontario? After months—and I lost count of how many days we sat at Ornge hearings—and in spite of testimony that showed government was complacent and basically allowed this mess to continue for a very long time, so far the ministry has refused to look at what was their role in letting this unfold for so long.

They have avoided the fact that they did not fulfill their obligation under the existing accountability agreement. Was it a good accountability agreement? Absolutely not. Can it be made better? Absolutely, yes. But even if you have a bad agreement, if you don’t fulfill your side, if you don’t use it, then all is for naught. It doesn’t matter if the agreement is better if you don’t do your side of oversight.

This is significant, because that leads me to believe that in the thousands of transfer payment agencies at the Ministry of Health, there could be another Ornge right here, right now. There could be another transfer payment agency that is spending taxpayers’ money in a way that is not acceptable. There could be people coming to the ministry, blowing the whistle and telling them, “Listen, there’s something wrong here,” and the ministry not doing anything and the mess is agreed to continue.

I want to learn. I want to go to the bottom as to how could this have happened. How could it be that something that was the jewel of this province turned out so badly? Why do I want to go to the bottom? Because only then will we have learned what really went wrong. Why? Because this way we can make sure that it never happens again.

With the thousands of transfer payment agencies out there; with all sorts of accountability agreements existing out there; with all sorts of people who are trying to put complaints forward but there is no way for those complaints to be picked up, to be heard, to be aired, then the chance that there’s another one is real and it exists.

So, yes, we will go back to Public Accounts. We will go to the bottom of Ornge, not because it is necessarily a fun task to do—believe me, it’s not—but it is a necessary one so that the transparency and the accountability measures that we put forward are the ones that will assure the people of Ontario that this will never happen again.

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m always pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. This one reads as follows—earlier today the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka spoke on the Drive Clean program:

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

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

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

“Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during” five or six “months of the year;

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

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of Gerry Lukow and many others in my riding of Durham.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

1540

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

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

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

I join my signature to the tens of thousands that have signed this and I give it to Jaden to be delivered to the table.

SPRINGWATER PROVINCIAL PARK

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

“Whereas we oppose the making [of] Springwater Provincial Park in Springwater township, Ontario, non-operational on March 31, 2013;

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

“We ask that the park remain operating and facilities such as the animal sanctuary, cabins/shelters, playground

equipment and ground maintenance remain open and operating.”

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to sign this petition.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

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

“Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of no accountability, complacency, waste, patient neglect and substandard care in our health care system;

“Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and oversight of most health care agencies is done by that agency or sometimes through the ministry;

“Whereas Ontario is one of the few provinces in Canada where our Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of health care” facilities;

They “petition the Legislative Assembly ... to expand the Ombudsman's mandate to include investigation of our health care services, including health units, hospitals, retirement homes, long-term-care facilities and ambulance services.”

I fully support this petition, Madam Speaker, and will give it to page A.J. to bring it to the Clerk.

FAMILY SAFETY

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to present this petition in the Legislature on behalf of one of the truly outstanding agencies in Peel region, which is Catholic Family Services Peel-Dufferin. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the Safer Families Program is a successful partnership of Catholic Family Services Peel-Dufferin, Family Services of Peel and the Peel Children's Aid Society (CAS), receives year-to-year funding from the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, and is a critical component of social services to families within the Peel community; and

“Whereas the intervention model for Safer Families currently operates with no waiting lists, an important consideration for families experiencing domestic violence and child protection concerns, as they require immediate access to service; and

“Whereas the Safer Families Program is aligned with Ontario's child poverty agenda, is committed to preventing violence against women, and contributes to community capacity building to support child welfare delivery; and

“Whereas currently, Safer Families serves 14% of all domestic violence cases referred to Peel Children's Aid Society and has the ability to double the number of cases it handles;

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

“That the government of Ontario adjust its funding to supply ongoing core funding rather than year-to-year funding, and realign funding to double the percentage of cases referred by the Peel Children's Aid Society and served by the Safer Families Program.”

Speaker, I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and to send it by page Alexander.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the price of gas is reaching historic price levels and is expected to increase another 15% in the near future, yet oil prices are dropping; and

"Whereas the real reason for the high price of gas is, gas companies are putting pressure to allow for the pipeline from Alberta to Texas; and

"Whereas the" McGuinty-Wynne "government has done nothing to protect consumers from high gas prices; and

"Whereas the high and unstable gas prices across Ontario have caused confusion and unfair hardship to Ontario's drivers while also impacting the Ontario economy in key sectors such as tourism and transportation; and

"Whereas the high price of gas has a detrimental impact on all aspects of our already troubled economy and substantially increases the price of delivered commodities, adding further burden to Ontario consumers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and urge the Premier to take action to protect consumers from the burden of high gas prices in Ontario."

I affix my signature in full support, Madam Speaker.

DOG OWNERSHIP

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Parkdale-High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Nice to see you in the chair again.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas currently the law takes the onus off of owners that raise violent dogs by making it appear that violence is a matter of genetics; and

"Whereas the Dog Owners' Liability Act does not clearly define a pit bull, nor is it enforced equally across the province, as pit bulls are not an acknowledged breed;

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

"That the Legislative Assembly passes Bill 16, Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011, into law."

I couldn't agree more. Again, I sign my name along with the tens of thousands and give it to Jaden to be delivered to the table. Jaden is a busy guy today.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians who require emergency in-patient hospital services while out-of-country are eligible to

receive a reimbursement of up to a maximum of \$400 for complex hospital care, and \$200 for less intensive medical care, and \$50 for outpatient care other than dialysis treatment; and

"Whereas in the 2004 provincial budget speech the Minister of Finance for Ontario stated it costs an average of \$851 per day to be in an Ontario hospital; and

"Whereas with a maximum out-of-country reimbursement rate of \$400 this is a clear violation of the portability principle of the Canada Health Act;

"We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the government of Ontario to abide by the portability principle of the Canada Health Act and raise out-of-country emergency reimbursement rates to equal those of health services in Ontario."

I agree with this petition, sign my name and pass it to page Daniella.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until an independent 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 industrial wind turbines; and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning;

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

"That the Ontario government place a moratorium on the approval of any wind energy projects and a moratorium on the construction of industrial wind projects until further studies on the potential adverse health effects of industrial wind turbines; their effect on the environment; the potential devaluation of residential property are completed; and that any industrial wind projects not currently connected to the grid be cancelled."

I agree, and I affix my name to this petition.

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: "Whereas many of the resources of this planet are finite and are necessary to sustain both life and quality of life for all future generations;

"Whereas the disposal of resources in landfills creates environmental hazards which will have significant human and financial costs for;

"Whereas all levels of government are elected to guarantee their constituents' physical, financial, emotional and mental well-being;

"Whereas the health risks to the community and watershed increase in direct relationship to the proximity of any landfill site;

“Whereas the placement of a landfill in a limestone quarry has been shown to be detrimental;

“Whereas the placement of a landfill in the headwaters of multiple highly vulnerable aquifers is detrimental;

“Whereas the county of Oxford has passed a resolution requesting a moratorium on landfill construction or approval;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, humbly petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To implement a moratorium in Oxford county on any future landfill construction or approval until such time as a full review of alternatives has been completed which would examine best practices in other jurisdictions around the world;

“That this review of alternatives would give special emphasis on (a) practices which involve the total recycling or composting of all products currently destined for landfill sites in Ontario and (b) the production of goods which can efficiently and practically be recycled or reused so as not to require disposal in landfills.”

I affix my signature, Madam Speaker, and I thank you very much for the opportunity to present the petition.

WIND TURBINES

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

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

1550

“Whereas we support the petition of mayors and councillors from 80 municipalities, farm organizations, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, which petition requested that the province place an immediate moratorium on all wind projects until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health, amongst other things; and

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

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

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

“That the government of Ontario agree and accept that until the federal health study is completed and federal aeronautical zoning is in place, it will immediately take whatever action is necessary to give full effect to a moratorium on all wind turbine development in Ontario,

including all projects for which final approval has not yet been given.”

I agree with this petition, and I will sign it.

GASOLINE TAX

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Pembroke-Nipissing—no, the other way around—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): —Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the skyrocketing price of gasoline is causing hardship to families across Ontario; and

“Whereas the ... Liberal government charges a gasoline tax of 14.7 cents per litre to drivers in all parts of Ontario plus 8% for the provincial share of the HST tax; and

“Whereas gasoline tax revenues now go exclusively to municipalities with public transit systems, while roads and bridges crumble in other communities across Ontario;

“Whereas residents of Ontario have been shut out of provincial gasoline tax revenues to which they have contributed; and

“Whereas whatever one-time money that has flowed to municipalities from the ... Liberal government has been neither stable nor predictable, and has been insufficient to meet our infrastructure needs;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to redistribute provincial gasoline tax revenues fairly to all communities across the province.”

Speaker, I have a private member’s bill that would do this, so obviously I support the petition and affix my name to it—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Prince Edward-Hastings.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Todd Smith: I present this on behalf of residents in the Bancroft and L’Amable area in Prince Edward-Hastings.

“Whereas the 2012 Ontario budget eliminates the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit and the Home Repairs Benefit; and

“Whereas these two programs have been used by thousands of Ontarians across the province as a way of lifting themselves out of poverty and achieving financial independence; and

“Whereas these two programs are in the best tradition of providing Ontarians with a hand up and not a handout when they’re in need;

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

“That the government of Ontario find some way to restore the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit and the Home Repairs Benefit that aid the Ontarians who depend on these services without endangering the province’s ability to return the budget to balance.”

I agree with this and will sign it.

OPPOSITION DAY

TEACHERS

ENSEIGNANTS ET ENSEIGNANTES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I move that, in the opinion of this House, Ontario students and their parents deserve a world-class education system with the best and brightest teachers that includes extracurricular and co-curricular activities that are free from disruptions; and

Whereas extracurricular and co-curricular activities enrich our children’s learning experience, and the McGuinty-Wynne government has been unable to ensure that these programs are protected in our schools; and

Whereas despite enacting and then repealing Bill 115, the Putting Students First Act, which imposed union contracts on teachers and education workers, the government has not been able to ensure stability in Ontario’s schools; and

Whereas the House believes that teachers in our classrooms should be hired because they are the best and most qualified to teach our students rather than being hired based on seniority;

Therefore, the Premier and the Minister of Education should, within 72 hours of the passage of this motion, send a letter to all directors of education, trustees of district school boards and the union leaders at the central offices and local offices of all the provincial teachers’ unions that expresses the will of this duly and democratically elected Legislature that:

The government should introduce legislation that amends a teacher’s job description to re-include certain co-instructional activities that the Liberal government removed. Said co-instructional activities to be re-introduced into a teacher’s legislated job description shall include, but not be limited to: timely and fully completed report cards; meeting with parents outside classroom hours; attending staff meetings; marking assignments; and helping students with remediation, special needs and extra work after school;

That union leaders should no longer tell front-line teachers how those teachers may use their personal time both inside of or outside of the school day, including but not limited to: volunteering; helping students; supervising, performing or organizing extracurricular or co-curricular activities; and that contravening the aforementioned shall be considered by this House an abuse of union power and that those involved in such tactics should be referred to the Ministry of Labour for investigation for engaging in illegal labour action under

Ontario’s Labour Relations Act and subject to fines; and that, if fined, they should be reported to the Ontario College of Teachers for workplace harassment and conduct unbecoming of a teaching professional;

That the Liberal government, through an order in council, should repeal all aspects of the controversial Ontario regulation 274/12, Hiring Practices, that was instated on September 12, 2012. By repealing this regulation, the government recognizes that they have hindered student success by preventing principals in our schools from hiring the best-qualified teacher for the job.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Debate? Ms. MacLeod.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciated the opportunity to move the motion on behalf of Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak and our entire caucus. This is a comprehensive plan to enhance co-instructional activities like report card writing and parent-teacher interviews. It is a plan to fully restore extracurricular activities in our schools, and it is a plan for our province to hire the best teachers for the job on merit rather than simply through seniority.

Speaker, as you know, the last few months have been very difficult on students and their parents. The labour disagreement between the government and the teachers’ unions have placed Ontario students squarely in the middle, making them pawns in a dispute they have nothing to do with. We know, for example, that some unions have had their teachers cancel open houses and parent-teacher nights. Speaker, if I may, these are both substantial opportunities for parents to monitor their child’s progress and learn more about the home and school expectations of the teachers. The Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus rejects that action. We believe it is unacceptable. It is intolerable and we want to change that.

We also know that some unions have had their teachers include only the bare minimum in the fall report cards. In fact, a memorandum from ETFO, the Elementary Teachers’ Federation, to its 76,000 members advised its teachers to simply put in a “single sentence indicating strength and next steps” and further said, “Personalized feedback does not mean every student must have a different comment ... teachers are not required to fill all of the boxes.” This is disappointing. Personalized feedback, Speaker, should be personalized because after all, each child in our education system is unique and they deserve to have a teacher who is fully analyzing their progress.

As a parent, I can attest report cards are an important way for me, as I know they are for other parents, to assess my child’s learning. And we know, for example, that extracurriculars, the great equalizer in our province, have been removed by the unions who have threatened their teachers with sanctions if they were to dare offer after-school clubs, drama productions or music lessons outside of school hours. This is particularly destructive, Speaker, to students who rely on extracurricular activities to enrich their student learning. I think of a small child

who may not be able to afford, through his or her parents, to play hockey in a house league, but they can through school. This action that has been taking place in our school system for the past seven months is hurting that child, is hurting that person's equal opportunity, and it needs to be restored.

1600

If I may speak right now to those teachers who don't support the union's activities, it is personally, I think, destructive for them as well. That is why it is time for Ontario to clearly define a teacher's job and take action to protect our children's extracurricular and co-curricular activities, which have become bargaining chips in the recent labour dispute.

We need to shift the focus in our education system back onto the students in this province and away from our unions. After all, our education system was built for student learning and success, not to embolden union leaders. Reducing the ability of union leaders to inflict punishment on our children and on their teachers is a critical priority for Tim Hudak and the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus. Our motion will protect teachers like Ottawa's Caroline Orchard from being told by union leaders how they may spend their personal time, both inside and outside of the school, by recommending that sanctions be placed on those who engage in these practices.

Caroline Orchard is a high school teacher at Sir Robert Borden High School in Nepean, in the city of Ottawa. She recently launched a petition called "It Is My Time." We couldn't agree more in the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party. Extracurriculars are done on voluntary time. That means government can't tell a teacher what he or she can do on their spare time, but a union leader shouldn't be able to tell them what they're not allowed to do on their spare time. We think those intimidation tactics are terrible. We think it's time that they be removed.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Draconian.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's draconian. We need to move our system into the 21st century and not be stuck in 1950s labour tactics that hurt our students and hurt those teachers who want to teach.

But, Speaker, that's not all. Our recent white paper on education talks about if a teacher is not available. We'll give more power to principals, just like the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board did, to find community volunteers to coach that hockey team, direct that school play, lead that school trip and so on. The show must go on because our students in our schools in Ontario deserve that.

On Friday, the Premier decided that she would applaud herself for OSSTF's recent announcement on extracurriculars. But that plan, if you could even call it a plan, is problematic. While the OSSTF head now says that teachers can offer extracurricular activities, he openly admits that a large percentage of his teachers will not go back to extracurriculars. We also know that the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario has not decided that they would restore extracurricular activities.

Beyond all that, we know that at the drop of a hat, the minute these union leaders get angry again, they'll take it out on our students and they will employ these same tactics. That is not fair. We cannot put our students in that position one more time. That is why we have taken a tough stand here today, on behalf of students, through the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus. We will restore extracurriculars in our schools, and we'll do it in a responsible and a sustainable way, because we believe students need to be put first.

My final point is if this motion is passed, it will also recommend that the government amend the Education Act to include certain co-instructional activities that the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government had previously removed. Co-instructional activities, as I mentioned, like timely and fully completed report cards, meeting with parents outside of classroom hours, marking assignments and helping students with extra work should not be optional. It should not be optional.

It is time to give our students and their parents certainty in our education system by legislating a teacher's job description. We will restore parents' confidence in the classroom by ensuring those important duties are not only recognized but they are completed. The best learning experience is one where parents and students know what the results are. They can analyze and assess and move from there. That is the best way, Speaker.

Finally, our motion would repeal regulation 274/12, that came as a result of Bill 115. The Ontario PC caucus made it clear we did not support this regulation, because it places seniority above merit in the hiring of our teachers.

We were pleased to see a recent Toronto Star editorial support our position when they said, "Scrap Rules that Block Best Teachers from Getting Jobs." They point out that "when given the chance, principals hiring teachers for long-term contracts, such as those filling maternity leaves, look beyond general qualifications. They want a teacher whose character and talents fit the needs of students in their school. Quite simply, it's good for the kids.

"But sadly, it is now forbidden. Ontario Minister of Education Laurel Broten has blocked principals' freedom to hire by bringing in a new rule in the Education Act called regulation 274. It says hiring must be based on seniority. Nothing else matters."

It goes on to say that this Liberal government now has an opportunity with a new Minister of Education to correct this, to repeal that, and that's what we're asking them for. This motion and a future Ontario Progressive Conservative government agree. We will place merit-based hiring back on the agenda. Parents can count on us in the Ontario PC Party to make sure that the best and the brightest teachers are in our classrooms because we'll let boards and principals pick the best and the most qualified.

This motion is about students. We chose to put the first motion for the opposition on the table today on education because we cannot afford more labour strife in

our schools at the expense of Ontario students. We need to return our education system to fit the students' needs, not the unions' needs, and we will continue to be on the side of students, parents and teachers who want to teach. They can count on Tim Hudak and they can count on the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus to speak and act for them.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to speak to the motion put forward by the Progressive Conservative caucus here in the Legislature regarding education. It's interesting because the final remarks of the member who brought the motion forward said something about, "We can't afford more labour strife in the education system in Ontario," and I would resoundingly agree with that, which is why New Democrats will certainly not be supporting a motion that all but guarantees more labour strife in the province of Ontario. It's kind of like one of those things about doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.

We know what the Liberals did to throw the education system into chaos in this province. We know they did it for a politically motivated reason: in order to try to take a Conservative seat in a by-election in Kitchener–Waterloo. Thank goodness the people of Kitchener–Waterloo were actually paying attention to what the stakes were in that by-election. They could have taken the easy path. They could have taken the rhetoric and the simplistic solutions that were being brought forward by the Conservative Party. They could have taken the fearmongering, the anger, the divisiveness, because the Liberals were salivating at getting back majority power. But no, the people of Kitchener–Waterloo took a very circumspect look at what was happening politically in Ontario and they decided that the smart thing to do was to keep the Liberals away from a majority situation and make sure that the Conservatives knew very well that their simplistic ideas were not the right path for Ontario.

So I find it quite amazing that the Conservatives think that legislating solutions by taking a ham-fisted approach is somehow going to change what parents and what students are experiencing right now in Ontario. In fact, what it would do is guarantee more of the same.

New Democrats know very well that the best way to get through difficult times is to do it in a respectful way. Everybody in Ontario knows that we've been going through some tough times. Most people in Ontario—in fact, I would say almost all—understand and believe in basic principles of fairness and understand that you have to work together to get solutions achieved, that everybody has to contribute to making this province a stronger place, that everybody has to contribute to the belt-tightening.

In other provinces, we've seen quite successful processes undertaken that respected something called collective bargaining, because guess what? That happened to be the law in Ontario at the time. Not that the Liberals noticed it; they would have rather pretended there wasn't

that law and so they temporarily took that away from the educational workers of this province, threw the educational system into chaos, and made sure that students, to this day, were not getting their extracurricular activities, because there was a situation of lack of resolution when it came to the problems that the Liberals provided or caused.

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But now what we have to look at is, how have other provinces dealt with this? Well, other provinces have actually understood that they are not the almighty, that in fact they have an obligation to follow the rules of legislation and respect the rules of engagement, if you will, when it comes to working these contracts out and working these processes out. So they actually set targets of zero and set budgetary targets in terms of restraint in provinces like Manitoba, provinces like British Columbia, provinces all across the country, and what they were able to do in fact was meet those targets. Let me just say that again: Other provinces were successfully able to meet the targets of zero increases, as well as other pieces of change that needed to be implemented to restrict the expenditures of those provinces, without throwing their educational systems into chaos.

How, Speaker? By having, within the rules, within the legislative rules that exist in those provinces, a respectful dialogue, having the negotiations, if you want to call them that, they actually worked out the problem in a mature, thoughtful, respectful way. I would say that that would be the way you achieve things in a province, one that prevents chaos, that prevents problems like the ones we're facing right now in Ontario.

What the Conservatives want to do, Speaker, is to throw gasoline onto the fire. I've got to tell you, I think the parents in this province, I think the children in this province, students, most everybody in this province, is pretty darned tired of gas being thrown on the fire when it comes to the educational system, and I think it's an irresponsible and wrong-headed thing to do. They can talk all they want about how it's strong and it's this and it's that. That's the same language that the Liberals used when they put Bill 115 in place, when they took us down this horribly wrong road that has led us into the chaos that we're now slowly trying to climb out of.

So I would say that it's very, very clear that the path forward for Ontario is a thoughtful path. It's a respectful path. It's a path where we actually value each other and do not create divisiveness. It's a path where we actually understand that you cannot improve the education system, nor the health care system, nor any of the other important parts of our public services that Ontario is proud of by being at war with or being in court with the very people who make those systems work and function. I mean, it's not rocket science.

So, yes, you can take the easy path and you can take the politically expedient path of making enemies out of people, of vilifying people, of saying, "I'm going to legislate away people's rights. I'm going to decide. I'm on high. They have to do what I say no matter what."

I have to question whether anybody in the Conservative caucus cares at all about the quality of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities, because what they want to do is force people into doing things without even having a conversation or a dialogue or a negotiation about how to best serve the interests of students. They want to serve their political interests, Speaker. I understand that. They're a political party; that's their job. What Ontario wants to see, though, I think, are real solutions to the problems, not just politically motivated rhetoric and politically motivated divisiveness.

You know what? I welcome them to their method of doing things. I think it's wrong-headed. Not only do I think it's wrong-headed; I know it's wrong-headed. I think the people of this province have seen very clearly, because the Liberals did the exact same thing, and it got us into a huge mess that the Liberals are now trying to climb out of.

I know that the Liberal education minister is going to get up momentarily, and I know that she's going to talk about how they are negotiating and they have a respectful conversation going on right now. Well, you know what? That's something that I asked Dalton McGuinty and Dwight Duncan to do over a year ago. New Democrats warned Liberals that they shouldn't go down this road, that they should act in a responsible way, not a politically motivated way, but they decided to be best friends with the Conservatives because they wanted to steal one of their seats when they gave Elizabeth Witmer a plum position at the WSIB. Well, it failed, Speaker. Their machinations failed. In the meanwhile, students and parents have been suffering and our educational system has been thrown into turmoil.

But I say to you, clearly, and to the people of this province, clearly, that the easy path, the beating-of-your-chest path, the warpath that the Tories want to take the educational system on in this province is the wrong path. It's the same warpath that the Liberals have had us on for months and months and months, and it's the same failed path that has created the chaos that we are in now.

We believe that you treat people with dignity and respect. We believe that the best way to get to solutions is by working together and hammering them out within the processes that are set out in law in this province, which of course is why we're now in the courts. That's another thing that still exists. There's something called a court challenge, a Supreme Court challenge, because of the path that the Liberals went down and the Tories now want to take us down. How many billions and billions of dollars is that going to cost the province? Hundreds of millions, perhaps? Maybe only tens of millions. Those dollars should be going into education. They should be going into special education; they should be going into making sure that rural schools are not being closed; they should be going into making sure that we have the supports for special-needs kids that should be there. We should be making sure that our classrooms are not falling down around the ears of our students. We should be investing those dollars in actually making our education

system better and making sure it's meeting the needs of all of our students in this province, not wasting it on court challenges because a government decided they were more interested in their own political power and getting a majority back.

I think that it's pretty clear that the wrong-headed path that this motion takes us on is a huge mistake. Again, it's one of those things that is really clear, and it's, quite frankly, shocking. It's shocking to me that—you know, we've heard the phrase that you should learn from history, that you should know history because you can learn from it, and if you know your history, you're not destined to make the same mistakes over and over again. Well, I'm not talking about ancient history. I mean, I can talk about ancient history when the Conservatives were in government; we know what that ancient history looked like. I'm talking about recent history, I'm talking about actual history that is unfolding right here and right now, and they want to repeat it over again to the nth degree.

It is ridiculous, and the people of this province, I think, are smarter than falling for this wrong-headed path. Absolutely, parents are frustrated, New Democrats are frustrated, young people and students are frustrated, and they're worried about their loss of extracurricular activities. I think we all are frustrated. But certainly the way to solve that frustration isn't to ensure that it's ingrained for the next several years with the support of a motion like this that basically does that.

I think parents and students realize that the path that we've been on has not been a successful path. And so I would ask them to think carefully about what the Conservatives are putting forward as they read about it in the papers and hear about it in the news, because, quite frankly, it's a failed strategy. It's a failed strategy and I'm surprised that they have it here. I'm surprised that it's before us. It's absolutely shocking to me, and I don't understand for a minute why it is here. I should take that back; I do understand why it is here. It is here because the path of divisiveness, the path of creating bogeymen and creating monsters and blaming—

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Scapegoats.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Scapegoats; thank you, Dr. Qadri. I'm sorry, the member for—

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Etobicoke North.

Ms. Andrea Horwath:—Etobicoke North. That's the interest of this political party in terms of how they think they can gain support from the people of Ontario. I think the people of Ontario deserve a politics that's a higher level than that. I think they deserve governance that's a higher level than that. I think they deserve a level of respect that is greater than what this motion reflects, Speaker. And I would say on behalf of New Democrats that we will proudly be voting against this motion. We don't want more chaos; we want less.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to be able to respond to the motion that we have before us today by the member from Nepean–Carleton.

I must say, Speaker, that the member starts off well, because she starts off that “In the opinion of this House, Ontario students and their parents deserve a world-class education system with the best and the brightest teachers.” You know, we agree; that first line, we’re good. We’re in line. We agree with that first line. In fact, that is why we have invested in our schools so that our children do get the education they need to compete for high-skilled jobs in a new economy.

1620

If you look at the investments we’ve made, funding is up 45% since 2003. We have 13,400 new teachers in our schools since 2003, supporting our students, teaching our students, which means of course that we have smaller classes. Some 91% of primary classes now have 20 or fewer students; compare that to 31% in 2003.

Our full-day kindergarten program is the first of its kind, and we will continue to roll it in so that by 2014, 250,000 four- and five-year-olds in the province of Ontario will in fact have a full-day kindergarten program.

Now, if all we were doing was putting money in—and we’re also getting results out. The results of our investments, the results of the good work that our teachers are doing in our schools and working with the students—the good results are actually something that we should be celebrating.

So if you look at our secondary schools, the number of people that are graduating, the graduating rate in our secondary schools is up 14% since 2003. Some 82% of our students are now graduating from secondary school. Now, do we want that to get better? Absolutely. There’s more work we can do, but we’ve come a long way in the last decade in terms of the number of students who have graduated from high school, and that’s a result of the partnership with our secondary teachers and focusing in on supporting the secondary students so that they can graduate from high school.

If we look at elementary school overall, 70% of the students—when you sort of combine the EQAO results—in grades 3 and 6 are reaching this provincial standard. Again, up 16%, from 54%, which is where it was 10 years ago. Again, that’s as a result of the close partnership that we’ve had with our elementary teachers in terms of working very hard, especially on literacy, and making sure that our elementary students have that foundation in literacy.

One of the things that doesn’t actually always come out fully when you look at those results is that if you look at what we call English-language learners, which are the students who have English as something—it’s not their first language. If you look at that group, 30% of them are now meeting the provincial standard, which again is a significant improvement and quite exciting when you think that those are the kids who are coming into our schools not knowing English and who have to first of all learn the language, the fact that they’re now actually achieving the provincial standard in that new language.

Now, what we often hear from the opposition is that those comments are based on the EQAO results and that

somehow because the agency that does that testing is a provincial agency, it lacks credibility, which I would dispute. In fact the Auditor General has looked at the agency and actually has said that it is quite independent and doing a good job.

Leave aside the opinion of the Auditor General, what is interesting is that when you look at other third party evaluators, when you look at pan-Canadian testing, when you look at the international testing conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the OECD, when you look at those other organizations, they in fact tell the same story about the improvement in our schools over the past decade.

If you look at the pan-Canadian testing, you find that Ontario has the only students in Canada who achieve above the national average in math, in reading and in science. We’re the only province, according to the pan-Canadian testing methodology, that is above the provincial average in every one of those subjects, and that’s because of the good work that our teachers are doing in our schools—and the other education support workers who work in our schools.

If you look at PISA, which is the OECD tester, and look at their results, they tell you that if you look at reading results around the world, Ontario—not just Canada, but specifically Ontario—has some of the best reading results for our elementary kids in the entire world. Again, that’s got to do with the partnership that we have with our teachers; we have all worked together very hard to achieve those results.

If you look at a recent view by McKinsey and Co., they found that Ontario’s school system was among the best in the world, which is why we actually have people coming from all over the world to talk to Ontario about how we have achieved those results.

If you look at some of the ways in which we’ve achieved those results—we talked about full-day kindergarten and the wonderful results that we’re getting from the introduction of full-day kindergarten. But if you look at the secondary system, you also see things like specialist high-skills majors; co-op programs, which have been expanded; and the dual-credit programs, where we’re working not just with the kids who are in the academic stream and going on to university or college, but we’re also putting a greater emphasis—which we need to continue to do—on those students who may be going directly to the workplace and who maybe need a more skills-based education.

I am very proud of the accomplishments that our school system has been able to achieve with co-operation, working with our teachers and implementing the programs and really focusing on this: How do we have the best education system in the world?

What about the content of the actual motion? If we look at the motion, it suggests that we need to address the whole area of extracurricular activities. That is true; we do, because we know that what builds a good, positive school climate—what enriches and in fact often becomes the focal point of a student’s educational experience—is the fact that they have access to extracurricular activities.

We know that there are thousands of teachers in Ontario who want to deliver extracurricular activities because those teachers get satisfaction from delivering extracurricular activities; because those teachers understand, as do we, that it's the connections that a student makes on a personal level with a teacher in those extracurricular activities that allow them to focus on something they really like doing. It's often those personal connections that make the difference in the life of a student and allow that student to put up with some courses that they may not like, and to have some purpose and to make sure that they actually do graduate from high school. We understand the importance of those extracurricular activities, and we want to get those extracurricular activities back in our schools, because we agree: They're a very valuable part of the school experience in Ontario schools.

What we totally disagree with is the way that the official opposition thinks we should use to get there. We totally disagree with their strategy.

We have a different strategy. Our strategy is to focus on a collaborative approach with our teachers. Our approach is to rebuild that relationship and to build a new, more positive relationship which allows us to look at: How do we co-operatively move forward together in bringing a more positive climate back to Ontario schools?

1630

We know that we will get further ahead by working together with our teachers and building on the good work that we have done together in the past. We know that working together is the way that we can move forward. In fact, we've had a lot of discussions. We've had discussions about: How can we make the collective bargaining system better? How can we restructure the collective bargaining system so that it reflects today's reality? How can we revise the collective bargaining structure so that the government, which is the funder, and the school boards, which are the employers, and the unions, which represent the teachers and the education support workers—how can we revise that system so that we are all together at the table in a way that makes sense? Quite frankly, the legislation that controls school board collective bargaining at the moment doesn't make a whole lot of sense. We need to fix it, and then we need to be committed to using it. We, too, believe that the best way of solving problems, even difficult problems—and believe me, Speaker, we are going to continue to have difficult fiscal problems, because we still have a very large deficit to climb our way out of. So it isn't that collective bargaining is going to become easier in the future. But what we do think is that we need to have a system that will allow us to have a collective bargaining system that actually works and then we are committed to using that collective bargaining system with our partners: the teachers, the support workers and the school boards of the province. It's very important that we also have the school boards, which ultimately are responsible for implementing everything. We need their input at the

table. They're the employers. We need them. So that's where we believe we need to go.

I'm very pleased to report, as I think everybody knows, that the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation provincial council—all the local presidents—did in fact vote to lift the ban on extracurricular activities in the schools. We're looking forward to seeing those extracurricular activities begin to increase. They are already coming back. Over the next few weeks, we're looking to see those extracurricular activities starting to return to our schools.

What about the actual content of the motion? First, or maybe last on the list—I'm starting at the bottom here and working up—there's a suggestion that we should repeal all aspects of the fair hiring regulation. We reject that. There have been problems in some Ontario school boards in the way in which new teachers and other teachers who want a job are able to access new positions that are posted. In fact, that's the first problem: In some cases, the positions have not even been posted. This regulation requires that teaching positions be posted. Well, that seems to me perfectly reasonable. I was a school board trustee for 15 years, and we certainly posted vacant positions and accepted applications and then we went on to do the interviews. Posting these positions so everybody knows who's there is a reasonable thing to do.

What has changed since I was there is that, because we've got declining enrolment, most of the graduates who have come out of teachers' college start off their teaching career by, first of all, being occasional teachers and then going on to become long-term occasional teachers. How we think about hiring has shifted a little bit. We need to think about those students who've come out of the faculties of education and how we make sure that those students who have had an opportunity, or at least who have put in some hard work doing long-term occasional teaching—maybe for a month, often for a full year, Speaker, as you know; often, in the case of secondary for a semester, teaching entire courses. Those young students who are coming out and doing LTO work have good records. They're records that the school boards and the principals in those school boards can have a look at. As they've done LTO work, they can evaluate them. So I would assume that school boards are doing the proper evaluation job as people do long-term occasional postings.

When those jobs are posted, of course we want the people who have long-term occasionals to be eligible to be interviewed for those jobs. But what we do need to know is that the ultimate decision around who's going to be hired is based on not just the seniority on the LTO list; it's based on the qualifications of the teacher, it's based on the safety of students, it's based on the ability to provide the best program, so principals still have a lot of latitude in terms of choosing the best candidate.

The other thing I want to comment on very briefly, as the leader of the third party noted, is that legislating extra duties for teachers is not the way to solve a problem. The Harris government tried to legislate additional duties for

teachers and we spent eight years in an uproar. We're not going there. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon, and I want to congratulate my esteemed colleague from Nepean–Carleton for bringing this motion forward.

Obviously, extracurricular activities are paramount in the development of our young children. I look back fondly on when I was going through the system as a young child, those extra little things that we did after school, whether it be soccer or track and field. The teachers who put out those extra hours of time voluntarily, of their own free will and accord, really made the difference in not only my life, in my decision in going into the field of education, but also in the lives of my young friends growing up.

I'll give you a little example. There was a young lad whom I used to hang around a little bit who was not very academically inclined. He didn't enjoy going to school and had a really hard time getting out of bed in the morning and traversing through the village to get to school. It really pained him to go there. The only thing that actually saved him from dropping out of school was the fact that extracurricular activities were offered at our school.

It pains me to hear the leader of the third party accuse the Progressive Conservative Party of not caring about students in this province or the parents of those students. I have two young daughters myself who are in the education system. My wife is a teacher. We care about the young people of this province and where they're going to be in the years to come, preparing them for the global economy of the 21st century. In the Progressive Conservative Party, in the province of Ontario, we want to have the best education system in the world. When I hear the leader of the third party say that we don't care, I take a little offence to that.

1640

I have to say as well, when I was teaching for 13 years at the Campbellford District High School—history and English—I also did extracurricular activities. I coached the high school hockey team as well as the soccer team. It is important, connecting those dots, Madam Speaker, as you're well aware yourself, with those students who aren't academically inclined, but you get to see a different side of those students. You get to build relationships that do come into the classroom because you build that bond, that relationship, and they want to do better for you.

I'll give you an example, Madam Speaker. I had a young lad on my hockey team, again, who wasn't very academically inclined; didn't like going to school. I had him in my English class, and he was really struggling. Not that you had to have 80s to be on the hockey team, but you had to at least put forth a good effort to stay there. This young lad, once we got him on the ice and playing, and I built up that relationship with him, it transcended itself to the classroom. By the end of that

semester, I'm happy to say that that young person who was struggling and didn't put forth a great effort at the beginning of the semester, by the end of the semester finished in the top 10 of the class.

I have to say as well that what the member from Nepean–Carleton, Tim Hudak and our party are trying to establish as well is the defining role and establishing parameters for what a teacher's job description is. I think this is important. I fondly reflect, when I went for my first job interview and I was asked specifically by the panel of three principals, "Would you be willing to do extracurricular activities?" Well, of course, I said, "Yes. I'm enthusiastic. I'm young. I'm looking for a job," and I did. So it was sort of already an expectation or a part of the definition of what a responsible, professional teacher would do.

I think it's reasonable, what's being outlined in this motion. It's reasonable. These are the expectations that we have for a higher standard of professionals in the teaching profession, and I'm proud to say that the Progressive Conservative Party are the ones who are actually bringing this forward to address this issue.

The last few months have been quite disturbing, not just for ourselves here in the chamber because we haven't been here but for the parents and the students of this province who have not had extracurricular activities, who are depending on scholarships to get into universities and colleges, and bursaries based on programming and extracurriculars. Those students are suffering, and why? Because the union bosses have pushed their own agenda. What I find disturbing is that this agenda—it's funny, when I hear the new backdoor deals that the new Premier has made with OSSTF—we did ask this morning, "What is going on behind those closed deals? What have you done? How much have you given them or promised them in future?"

Mr. Bill Walker: What's it going to cost?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: What is it going to cost? Exactly.

We have great concerns because Ken Coran, president of OSSTF, said himself, "About 20% of teachers will not be going back and doing extracurricular activities." I find that appalling. I can't believe that somebody in the teaching profession would actually—after being told and dictated to by the unions that they can't do extracurricular activities, and now they're lifting that ban—saying, "No, we're still not going to engage in extracurricular activities." To those individuals in the teaching profession, I'd like to say today that I'm ashamed. They know better. They should be in it for the right reasons. The reason I am here today on this side of the House, with the Progressive Conservative Party, is because this Liberal government and their policies in the last 10 years have made the education system in this province a mockery—a mockery. They claim that they have higher graduations. They do, because they've fudged the statistics. There's a thing called credit recovery, and I'd like to elaborate sometime on that.

But the motion that we've brought forward is very clear on what we're doing, which is standing up for the

rights of students here in the province of Ontario. I think, because I do come from the teaching profession, Madam Speaker—I've been on the front lines, I've actually seen what is going on in our classrooms, I've seen the policies that have been brought down, and that's why I'm here. I gave up a great pension to come here.

With reference to the third party: It's nice to finally see the third party become engaged in the education debate here in the province of Ontario.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Yes, welcome aboard; it's good to see you.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: They're welcome. They've stood by for the last several months and haven't addressed the issue that concerns, but it's nice to see that they are here now. It's nice to see that they're supporting their unions and the money that they're hoping will fill their coffers should there be an election in the near future.

I think, however, that my esteemed colleagues here and myself are very proud of the fact that we've brought this motion forward. We're taking a stand, and we will continue to take a stand for the students and the parents of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, this has been a bad year for education in Ontario, and this resolution will make it worse. I don't want things to get worse. Students and parents don't want them to get worse. Teachers and education workers—ditto. You can't understand why this resolution has to be defeated without looking at what's happened in the last 12 months.

Last August, the Liberals called back the House to pass Bill 115. We were told it was necessary to ensure that schools opened on time and stayed open: peace in our schools, peace in our times, all with the simple passage of this bill. L'été passé, les libéraux ont dit que le projet de loi 115 était nécessaire pour avoir de la stabilité dans nos écoles. Ce n'était pas vrai.

Bill 115 was a politically motivated bill, put in place to win a by-election in Kitchener–Waterloo. It failed on two counts: It didn't bring so-called peace to our education system, and it ensured a third place finish for the Liberals in the by-election, not a victory.

Why did that bill fail? In part, because it put narrow political considerations first and the interests of students and parents last. Why did it fail? In part, because it treated teachers and education workers as targets, not partners—it treated them as targets who could be bullied to political advantage, whose democratic rights could be trampled without political cost to the Conservatives or the Liberals.

What it did—and many predicted this at the time—was it sparked anger and demoralization on the part of teachers and education workers. So, in turn, instead of bringing stability to our schools, it brought conflict and disruption to our students and our families.

Given what we're going through with the aftermath of Bill 115 in our schools, why would anyone want to make

it worse? Why would we want to go through another round of "My way or the highway," as is proposed in this resolution? We have been down this path before, with similar results.

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Writer George Santayana said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." So let's take a moment, Madam Speaker, to remember the past. During the Harris-Eves era, there was ongoing conflict in our schools. Many forget this. The resolution we debate today was the heart of Bill 74, introduced in the year 2000 to deal with declining levels of extracurriculars, or co-curriculars, as some call them. It had the same goal as this resolution: to simply change the job descriptions for teachers to make co-curriculars compulsory. It was a futile and unenforceable initiative but with substantial consequences.

In 2001, the Report of the Minister's Advisory Group on the Provision of Co-instructional Activities addressed the issue. Appointed by the Progressive Conservative government, the group interviewed people across Ontario and looked at how the issue of co-curriculars was dealt with in Quebec, Manitoba and New York.

Let me read a few crucial paragraphs from the background of the study on pages 3 and 4, because anyone who takes part in this debate today, anyone who's watching this on television, should be aware of what we have already found out in this province:

"In the past few years, teachers' unions in some of Ontario's district school boards have withdrawn from leading and participating in co-instructional activities as a bargaining tactic, to influence the outcome of collective negotiations. At present, most boards in Ontario do not offer their students a full range of co-instructional activities. In June 2000, the government introduced the Education Accountability Act (Bill 74), which included provisions for the accountability of school boards, limitations on average class sizes, and the minimum teaching assignments of classroom teachers in secondary schools. After the introduction of Bill 74, levels of co-instructional activity dropped in most schools." After the introduction of a coercive measure, even more teachers withdrew from co-instructional activities. "In some schools, co-instructional activities have ceased completely. All boards and schools report that the quality of the co-instructional activities that are offered has suffered significantly."

They go on, and I think this paragraph is useful for our understanding: "The situation across the province is deteriorating, even in the few schools that have so far managed to maintain traditional levels of co-instructional activity. Principals of these schools told us that they do not believe they can continue to maintain these levels in the next school year. In fact, everyone with whom we spoke expressed a sense of great urgency about resolving the issue."

Madam Speaker, the resolution that has come forward today is an echo of what the Progressive Conservatives have done in the past: an attempt to unilaterally redefine

the job descriptions of those who teach in our schools. Just within the last eight months, the Liberals tried it with Bill 115 and put us in the mess that we find ourselves in today. This approach has hurt our students, hurt our families, hurt our schools. It has mistreated our teachers and our education workers. Making it worse is not a good idea, not defensible, not wanted, and this motion will make things worse.

I've had a chance to talk to parents in my riding who've had to deal with the fallout from this conflict. Parents from Frankland school, Wilkinson, Leslieville, R.H. McGregor and many others have spoken to me about the need for a resolution. Teachers and education workers who live in my riding have talked to me on their doorsteps and at public meetings about the need for a resolution.

I just want to correct something right here, Madam Speaker. I have to say that the actions of the teachers in their federations have reflected the mood and attitude of teachers in their homes. Teachers and education workers were mistreated, feel mistreated and are angry. Don't think that the attitude of the teachers' federations is different from their members'. In fact, it reflects them pretty well.

This motion is not going to give us, our students, our families, our teachers, our education workers or our schools the resolution that they need and that they want. This motion is the political equivalent of the movie Groundhog Day, which leads us into an endless cycle of bullying and disruption.

One of the "whereas" clauses of the resolution reads "despite enacting and then repealing Bill 115 ... the government has not been able to ensure stability in Ontario's schools." Madam Speaker, Bill 115 was never going to bring stability into Ontario's schools. That wasn't its primary purpose. It was a tool that could not deliver, because, in fact, it simply caused disruption. We forgot history. The Liberals and the Conservatives, working together, ignored history and put us in a situation of conflict and disruption.

Going further with this motion, unilaterally rewriting the job description and duties of teachers, won't make things better; it will simply make them bitter. So I ask you and everyone in this chamber to reject this resolution and to take a different course. Students want normal life restored to schools. Parents want things to settle down so that students can get the full school experience, an experience that motivates and inspires them. For parents and students, the importance of education is far beyond a simple service—for parents, because we're talking about their children; for students, because we're talking about their future.

A lot is riding on the daily experience in schools. Those who teach, those who counsel students with difficult personal problems, those who look after our children in kindergarten or provide support to special-needs students want their democratic rights respected and to have an agreement on their working conditions settled by honest negotiation and give-and-take, not an approach of "my way or the highway."

With this resolution, no one will get what they want and what this province needs. There isn't a parent listening who would disagree when I say that students who feel good about their learning place, whose morale is high, who feel respected—all will agree that students in that situation will excel. The same is true for those who teach our children and provide them with support services. A demoralized workforce, told repeatedly that they are the problem with our education system, will have the same problems as our students in performing to their full potential.

We're not talking about metal stamping plants here. We're talking about raising the next generation, instilling skills and attitudes that will serve them well for their whole lives. It is not a simple task. If you've talked to a group of children, if you've tried to get them going in the same direction, think about doing that with 20 or more. It is complex. It requires training. It requires extraordinary resources of strength to do it properly. The only durable and realistic way to ensure that our schools function the way we want is through respect all around.

This is a very difficult thing to work through. Parents see difficulties now and want a solution now. The motion before us claims to offer a solution. However, our experience of the past year and our experience 15 years ago make it clear that this is not a solution; it is a dead end. C'est clair, de notre histoire, que cette motion ne donne pas de solution; ça donne seulement une impasse.

That takes me back to that very interesting report of the Minister's Advisory Group on the Provision of Co-instructional Activities. They didn't just report on the problems of the time, but made a series of observations and recommendations.

Observations first: They looked at what they called the key challenges to provision of co-curricular activities. Based on talks with school boards and other education partners, they identified three key areas that had to be addressed.

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The first obstacle to resumption of co-curriculars was a lack of respect for teaching and teachers. The advisory group reported what they heard time and again, that the lack of respect demoralized teachers, caused stress and discouraged them from giving more. This motion will not correct that kind of problem.

All of us have had the experience of working for a bad boss, a boss who felt that the best was achieved by treating people badly. All of us know how that has personally affected our morale or the morale of friends. We know how we've been affected when our job conditions have been unilaterally changed on us. That is what tens of thousands of education workers and teachers are going through. We know from personal experience that more of the same is not going to make things better. That was what the minister's advisory group heard all over the province.

The second obstacle was simply the burden of new tasks being added on to teachers' days as new curriculum methods and reporting were added to the day. There was

less time in the day for the teachers to do co-curriculars. Teachers don't simply walk out of the building at 3:20 or 3:30. They have marking, planning, training to do. There is a limit to the amount of time in a day. If in fact it's recommended that the job descriptions be varied, then one has to say, where are we going to take things away? What is it that's going to be undone when we add on this extra work?

The third obstacle noted by the advisory group was the provision of resources. Simply put, at the time there was no allocation of funds from the province for extracurriculars, and apparently there still is none. I spent a lot of time at school fundraisers and fun fairs. Parents, teachers, education workers and students work hard to raise the money for extracurricular activities. If this motion is serious, is there an allocation in here for the resources to carry through on those extracurriculars?

The task force appointed by the Conservatives that reported in 2001 looked at co-curriculars in New York, in Quebec and in Manitoba. In Quebec at the time, extracurricular activities were facilitated by giving teachers time off work for work that was done outside school hours or paying extra. Manitoba allowed time off or directly paid teachers to provide extracurriculars. In Rochester, New York, teachers were paid for extracurricular work. In Ontario, we're not paying for extracurricular work, and frankly, then and now, no one is recommending that these activities be anything other than voluntary.

The advisory group made a series of recommendations. Amongst them was a recommendation that there needed to be a better definition of the duties and responsibilities of teachers. Note well that in their recommendations, they spoke strongly against a unilateral imposition. They saw that as fruitless, as a dead end for the education system. They were right then; they're right now.

They also recommended that co-instructional activities remain voluntary for teachers and that the part of Bill 74 that would have made them mandatory be withdrawn. They understood that dictating conditions of work was counterproductive, undermining what we wanted in schools. They did note that an option for the province, if they felt so strongly about extracurriculars, was to pay people for the extra time they put in.

The motion before us ignores history, ignores the minister's advisory group report from 2001. It deepens the mess that we're in. If we want a return to stability and civility in our schools, we need respect for our students and for those who teach them.

Speaker, we need to defeat this motion. The government needs to rebuild its relationship with teachers and education workers, a relationship they have damaged so badly. We need to get on with the life of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Scarborough—Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise following the Minister of Education to speak on this proposed motion, and I want to address the issue: First and foremost, no one in this House does not support our students.

Furthermore, no one in this House should be saying that we don't have the best public education in the English-speaking world. That's why my family came to Canada—so don't shake your head—that's the reason why my family came to Canada. Let me remind everybody of that.

The other piece here: I am very, very mindful of my responsibility as a member of provincial Parliament. The fact that this proposed motion—the tone and language we must be concerned about. First and foremost, I am extremely distressed. After everybody said we should be working together, to be collaborative, to be supportive, to build on—we earlier talked about rising above, yet we have this motion before the House.

I also want to remind everybody of the fact that this motion is a reaction to all the conflicts that we recently experienced. So if we're going to be talking about responding to concerns, we should be proactive, working together collaboratively instead of accusing certain union leaders of doing this and that and what have you, and hurting the students.

Furthermore, I am also concerned about the suggestion that the government should "introduce legislation that will amend a teacher's job description." I have never, in my professional career as a registered nurse, seen a Legislature that should write a job description for my job as a registered nurse. How respectful is that for a professional? Unheard of. I don't know where that came from. The fact that we can legislate goodwill about this whole issue about extracurricular activities—last time, I heard that we work together to resolve concerns and issues.

The other piece I have a great deal of concern about is the fact that, in this motion, it talks about referring to the Ministry of Labour to investigate and levying fines. I don't know what the fine is—the amount, the content or the whole piece—using another ministry to address so-called illegal labour action.

The other piece of the motion that I'm also concerned about is referring and reporting to the college of teachers for "workplace harassment." Now I don't know about you, but the last time I had to deal with some issues dealing with the college of teachers, they have not been able to address many of the investigations on various types of abuse. Now we are asking, through this motion, to have this matter be referred to another regulatory body to deal with teachers' issues.

Then the other piece that I'm also very distressed about is that the member from Nepean—Carleton focused on regulation 274/12 about the concern about seniority etc.—and regulation 274/12 talks about fair hiring practices, about the whole issue of transparency and accountability. Why isn't she specifically targeting the seniority piece, about the whole issue of fair hiring practices? That's what the regulation is about.

So, at the end of the day, we are sincere in our efforts, working collaboratively, communicating effectively together in the Legislature, but also working with our parties. We must defeat this particular motion. Thank you for this opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's my pleasure to stand here and contribute to my colleague's motion on extracurricular and co-curricular activities and teachers' duties.

I must thank the member from Nepean–Carleton for bringing forward this important motion. Our young Ontarians in primary and secondary school represent the future of Ontario. I have two children of my own, a young boy and a young girl, who are also in the school system. I'm a father and a parent, and I understand exactly what the challenges are that our children are facing. Let's not make any mistake. What this motion does is for kids, first and foremost. We can't forget that.

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I'm very pleased to be able to speak to the motion and cover many of the reasons why this motion is so important, and the teachers that administer them are critically important to the well-being of our students. That's why the addition of extracurricular activities must be included in the responsibilities of our teachers on a daily, weekly, monthly, yearly basis.

The Liberal government has long prided itself on its education legacy. The legacy is one of mismanagement, frankly, and my colleague's motion that I'm speaking on today is just one step towards correcting the failures of the past 10 years of this Liberal government.

I'd like to lead off a little bit with how we wound up in this mess in the first place and why our kids are paying for the Liberals' union dispute—a little history. The students of Ontario have been paying for the mismanaged labour relations between the Liberal government and its corresponding unions for some time. Coming from a mediation and labour relations background myself, I'm particularly disappointed that children are being used as bargaining chips in this dispute.

You have to ask how we got here. Well, remember that last August, a frantic Liberal government recalled the Legislature several weeks early in a big emergency to push through emergency legislation known as Bill 115 to make sure that kids could go back to school in September. The bill didn't even pass until after they went back to school—let's be clear about that. Bill 115 was a Liberal-created wedge issue, dreamt up to win a by-election in Kitchener–Waterloo. Not only did this not pan out, but it actually created strikes and an ongoing work-to-rule campaign by unions by inflaming the same unions that have been floating you guys through the past 10 years in government.

The only people paying for it now are the children and their parents, who pay some of the highest taxes ever under the Liberals and expect some of the highest-quality education to match, but that has not happened. The Ontario PCs have been clear and honest with Ontarians from the beginning, advocating for a wage freeze across the entire public sector over the last year and to get Ontario's debt and deficit under control. Had the government simply treated all professions in the public sector fairly in the first place, we wouldn't have this work-to-

rule. Our priority has been, and will continue to be, to ensure that students are in the classroom, receiving the best education possible, full stop.

After promising that Bill 115 would prevent chaos in our schools, it actually created the opposite. The effects are felt to this day after a recall of that legislation. To be clear, it was a baby step toward an across-the-board public sector wage freeze, and as our leader says, half a loaf is better than no loaf at all.

That's why my colleague brings this motion to make extracurriculars a formal part of teaching responsibilities so that students won't wind up the pawns between the Liberal government and their disgruntled union partners. Next time you have something to fight about, don't put kids in between.

So why are we adding extracurriculars to teachers' responsibilities? Well, today the Premier has offered nothing but minimal lip service when it comes to bringing back extracurriculars for students. I agree with my colleagues that there should be no such thing as work-to-rule when it comes to our children's education. There's no time for using children as pawns in our education system.

Extracurriculars are very important. They enrich the learning experience of a child and contribute to their growth as a person, and they contribute to the growth of teachers too. In a report recently released by Statistics Canada, children's participation in organized extracurricular activities was heavily associated with positive short- and long-term outcomes for children between six and 17 years of age. That report also found that students who participated in extracurricular activities, as the member from Northumberland–Quinte West correctly mentioned, achieved higher levels of academic success, with a reduced likelihood of dropping out of school.

So no one can even come close to trying to say that extracurriculars are not a critical part of the teaching profession, period. You just can't say it. You can't separate out teaching from extracurricular activities. They're one and the same. If teachers really want to achieve the goal of educating students to the best of their abilities, extracurricular activities must be a part of it.

The StatsCan report also found that after-school activities increased pro-social behaviours while reducing children's risk of developing emotional or behavioural disorders. Why is that? Well, because they learn how to work within a team environment. They learn about physical education. We know that if you have a healthy body, you also have a healthy mind, and we know that it keeps them out of trouble—busy hands. In short, there's scientific evidence and data to support the notion that extracurricular activities contribute significantly to the development of our children. Participation in these activities helps lead to better time management skills in our children, as they learn to organize their time to account for schooling, homework and other activities. We know that as everybody's lives get busier and busier there's less and less time for some of these extracurricular activities, and we know that many parents

struggle on the days that they're off work or the days that they come home after work to get their kids to baseball practice, to hockey practice or to music lessons. That's what I do. So imagine if that gap can be filled up a little bit—just a little bit—in the school system by our teachers.

When participating in after-school programs such as sports teams and music lessons, students learn about commitment and sportsmanship and the importance of teamwork, all of which are skills important to successful jobs and careers. Probably some of us in here could take lessons from some kids on teamwork and dealing with each other in appropriate manners.

Extracurriculars help raise individuals' self-esteem. They build friendships and solid relationships between students at a time when many students and many adults, for that matter, depend on electronic devices to communicate with one another. Extracurriculars allow them to relate to one another in real terms. If this sort of interpersonal interaction can be helped and can be nurtured, imagine what it could do for bullying when people are actually making compassionate connections with their fellow students and with fellow teachers.

There are countless studies in social psychology, educational research and developmental psychology that show extracurricular activities are critically important to the healthy development of youth. That's why it's not okay to take these activities away, compromising our children's quality of education over a labour dispute between the government and unions. It cheapens our children's education. It's even worse when we hear that unions are intimidating teachers into stopping doing extracurriculars with the threat of fines and shaming them if they do actually contribute to extracurriculars. I can't even tell you how many teachers I've spoken to over the past several months who want to do extracurricular activities but don't want to be fined and don't want to be shamed by their peers. So they're actually shamed into not doing what's right for the kids. Stand there in your spot, look me in the eye and tell me that you believe that is a good thing. Tell me that that's achieving peace.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's bullying.

Mr. Rod Jackson: What it is is bullying, as the member from Northumberland—Quinte West mentions. It is bullying.

And you know what? Here's the thing: Every teacher I talk to—just about every one of them; and by the way, they're not all supportive of the unions' position on this—actually wants to be involved in extracurriculars. They actually want to get out there and help coach the basketball team or the hockey team. My daughter plays on her school hockey team; she goes to a Catholic school. Her hockey team actually had a tournament cancelled after all her friends in the public school that they were supposed to play against—they only played one game because if they let the kids play one game—they took all their sweaters back and everything after that first game—they got their standard for their contribution to extracurriculars filled—one game.

Who lives that pain? Those kids made a team, they fought for it, they got on it and were there for one game—not right.

The foundation of our government and legal system is based on the freedom of individuals. If teachers choose to dedicate themselves to the future of Ontario by helping lead extracurricular activities, then no union, no person, no government should stand in their way—none.

I have many teachers who have come to me and have been upset about, like I said, the fines that they have that are going to be levied upon them and the shame that they have for actually helping kids. Fining a teacher for their commitment to their students is just unethical and, frankly, should be illegal.

Further, we need to break down barriers in our parental community and involvement in delivering these programs as well, if teachers can't or won't, in order to further insulate students from political disputes. How many parents have actually put up their hands and said, "Okay. Teachers aren't going to do extracurriculars. We'll do them," only to get kiboshed by the school boards or principals because it causes labour problems? So now we have parents who are willing to give up their time—that is very valuable, as well—to volunteer to do extracurriculars, and they're being told no, they can't do it.

1720

Mr. Bill Walker: There's something wrong.

Mr. Rod Jackson: There's absolutely something wrong.

So it seems that the Premier's inaction on this subject demonstrates her willingness to continue the McGuinty-Wynne legacy of throwing more money towards union leaders to keep them happy.

As former education minister, Premier Wynne's decisions have left the province spending \$8.5 billion more than only a decade ago, even though Ontario has 250,000 less students in our system. Test scores have actually gone down in key areas like math, so to say that we have the best education system in the world is absolutely inaccurate. Are we proud of it? Yes. Can it be better? Absolutely.

Where does the extra money go for less students? Why are scores declining? In a sentence: the epic Liberal bureaucracy. Under the Liberal government, 300,000 public sector jobs were added while 300,000 manufacturing jobs were lost. In fact, the only industry to see growth is the public sector. Other sectors are stagnant or declining, just like our economy—which is no coincidence, I might add.

In my own riding, a constituent, a high school science teacher, tells me how, in the last few years, her high school has had to make significant budget cuts, shrinking the science program and the supplies that she's able to use to teach her students. How is this possible with all the education investment for fewer students? I'll explain, using my own riding as an example. The bureaucracy has built themselves a beautiful Taj Mahal, otherwise known as the Simcoe County District School Board. It's just

outside of Barrie, and they've done this at a time when they're talking about closing the oldest high school in Barrie, Barrie Central Collegiate, because they can't afford to fix the HVAC system there.

Where are your priorities when you build a gorgeous brand new building—by the way, that needed to be retrofitted with its own HVAC system only five or six years after being built, just last year—at the same time when they're talking about closing a school because they can't afford to keep the HVAC system going? This school, by the way, is in the downtown core of Barrie, which has been decimated by a job shortage and manufacturing losses.

When scarce resources get clogged because of a level of bureaucracy, the front line is the first to suffer. This has been very evident in special education, something that's been close to my heart. We see that, while the budget goes up for the school board—which, by the way you do oversee. To abdicate any responsibility for that is absolutely ridiculous when you actually are cutting back on front-end spending for building things like Taj Mahals and cutting back on science spending; when there are kids out there with education assistants that are ill-equipped to deal with children on the front line, so much so that they're being forced to use first-response tools that are meant as a last resort, like blocker pads and padded cells.

My own old school, when I went to elementary school, Portage View Public School in Barrie, had a six-by-six padded cell installed in their old janitor's closet—an old janitor's closet was actually transformed into a calming room. I don't know about you, but getting put in a six-by-six-foot cell with padded walls and no windows, it's not calm. If you want to talk about calming rooms, the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound could probably tell you what a calm room looks like; that's not it. Herding kids around with blocker pads also is inappropriate.

You need to pay attention to what's going on in your school boards, and to abdicate your responsibility in making sure that school boards are doing what's right is absolutely wrong.

Education spending and quality do not necessarily go hand in hand, as the Liberal government may have led you to believe. Today, we're here because another mistake on the education file has further compromised the quality of our children's education and their school experience: no extracurriculars. These extracurricular activities are incredibly important and beneficial for our students. That's why we need this motion today: to ensure that our children always have these options available to them, despite the rancour between government and the unions. Ultimately, children are paying for a labour dispute between the government and its unions, and we need to make sure this never happens again.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, let's begin with the easy points. First and foremost, we absolutely do not

support this motion. I think that should be said, first and foremost. But again, like my colleague, I think we have to understand a bit of context to understand how simplistic a solution this motion is and how in fact it's illogical. It has no merits and, in fact, it's contradictory to many of the comments that have just been made.

Let's put it into context. Bill 115 was enacted by the Liberals, which was supposed to create stability in the classrooms and clearly did not; in fact, it created chaos in the classrooms. So by enforcing contracts, by legislating contracts on teachers, it created chaos. But somehow, a motion to legislate the job description—that's going to get rid of that chaos. That's absolutely illogical, and I'd like to extend that to say that's ridiculous. How can you take that leap and say that this approach was bad, that this approach to legislate contracts, creating conflict and chaos in our schools was bad, but that the PC approach to legislate the job description and force teachers to do extracurriculars somehow makes a lot of sense? If you just reflect on that for a moment, you can see through it. I hope the viewers at home, I hope the citizens of Ontario can see through this motion and say, "It makes no sense."

We've just heard members of the PC Party stand up and criticize the Liberal bill that they supported, which also doesn't make a lot of sense. They criticize a bill that they stood up and voted for, and then they create a motion which is very similar to the bill that they're criticizing. There's a lot of illogic here. There's a lot of lack of logic here.

What we have here are a motion and a bill which are very linked. What happened with Bill 115 is that it wasn't simply an attack on teachers—and I applaud the teachers for expanding the message. They say that Bill 115 was an attack on workers in the province. I take that a bit further. It's actually an attack on democracy. It's an attack on our human rights.

In the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in Canada, section 2 outlines some of the fundamental freedoms that we all enjoy as Canadians. Of those fundamental freedoms, one of the essential fundamental freedoms is our fundamental freedom of association. Section 2 reads, "Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms...." Section 2(d) is "freedom of association." That freedom was the difference between people enjoying their democratic freedoms and living under totalitarian regimes.

The freedom to associate was one of the key hallmarks of society moving towards progressive societies, an example of people getting together and organizing to oppose regressive regimes. That freedom of association is intrinsically tied to collective bargaining, the rights of people to get together and form associations. So an attack on the collective bargaining rights is an attack on people's right to associate.

What we're seeing here is that the bill that was passed by the Liberals, supported by the PCs, and a motion presented by the PCs—which are both undemocratic, which are attacks on our freedoms—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Like the social contract.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Very much like the social contract.

So Bill 115 wasn't simply an attack on workers, wasn't simply an attack on teachers, an attack on our fundamental freedoms. Le projet de loi 115 n'était pas seulement une attaque contre les droits des syndicats; c'était une attaque contre les droits de la personne. It was an attack on the rights of human beings, the rights that we all enjoy and that we should protect here in this Legislature, instead of legislating against and instead of attacking.

1730

When I look at the education system in Ontario, there are certainly some issues that we have. There are certainly some problems we have that we could tackle. I mean, of all the issues that we could have tackled—we have special-needs funding concerns, classroom size issues. There are certain community schools which are closing, leaving communities without a school. There are many issues that could have been raised, and the thought that the PC Party chose their opposition day to create this illogical argument, this self-contradictory motion, just seems like a waste of time.

There are so many other issues that could have been addressed: looking at mental health issues in the schools, looking at special needs. I had indicated earlier, in May, that People for Education reported that 80% of elementary schools in eastern Ontario have caps on the number of students that can be assessed with special needs. Student-teacher ratios for special education have increased by 50% since 2001. I mean, there are such serious issues that we could be talking about today that would work towards creating a better province.

One of the issues that has been raised recently—we talk about inequality, and inequality exists in our society; disparity of income exists in our society. An issue that is particularly concerning is the inequality of opportunity, that even opportunities are unequal, depending on where you live. If students from particular communities do not have the same resources, the same access to resources as other students, literally, their abilities to access opportunities are different. Their abilities to succeed in society are different, based on where they live. These are some serious, pressing issues that we could talk about. This inequality of opportunity, the fact that where you live and what school you go to will impact your ability to access higher education, access further employment, is a serious concern we should be looking at. Let's work on addressing the inequality of opportunity and have some more meaningful opposition day motions, as opposed to self-contradictory motions that are absolutely illogical.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a great privilege to have the opportunity to address this issue this afternoon.

I want to reflect for a bit on the great education experience I've had in Peterborough. I think it was somewhat unique. I went to the public system for kindergarten. I

then went to St. John the Baptist Elementary School at the south end of Peterborough, and then, after that, I went to Kenner Collegiate.

Of course, one of the unique things about those two experiences was certainly the provision of extracurricular activities. Madam Speaker, I always found it very interesting, as I was taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph in elementary school particularly, that they were phenomenal sports coaches, because I think they used to have divine intervention from time to time in order for us to succeed. I'll always remember the saying of those rosaries to help us out.

Then I got to Kenner Collegiate and of course experienced wonderful teachers. Many of them I still see in Peterborough today. They've retired and they are still contributing to the community because of that sense of passion that they developed in providing extracurricular activities during my high school days.

But, you know, I'm very familiar with teaching. I want to talk about a very special teacher in my life, who is my wife, Karan. She taught in the classroom for some 22 years. She spent her summers going to Queen's University on a part-time basis to get her master's degree in education, and when she completed her master's degree in education, she then went to the University of Ottawa to do her principal papers and her supervisory papers, and of course we're very pleased today that she went on to a position of vice-principal, and now she's a principal at St. Patrick school in Peterborough, doing an incredible job providing that great framework for her students to prosper in that kind of environment. What time is it? It's 5:30. I know she's home. She has probably just left school two minutes ago, so she's now tuning in to the Legislature. I hope she is watching this afternoon.

Madam Speaker, when you look at the kind of progress that we've made in the last decade in Ontario, it's phenomenal. You know, Arne Duncan, Barack Obama's education secretary, came to Ontario on three occasions to see what we're doing right here in the province of Ontario. Arne Duncan looked at small class sizes. He looked at full-day kindergarten. You know what, Madam Speaker? Those elements were put into the Democratic platform during the most recent presidential election because the president said that full-day kindergarten and small class sizes achieve success in a public education system.

Our collective work with all our partners over the last decade has made Ontario's two families of publicly funded education in the top five in the OECD countries, something that we can all be proud of, something we should all be proud of on all sides of this House, because we made such progress together.

I look at the kinds of agreements that we've achieved over the last 10 months in the province of Ontario. We got agreements with college professors and lecturers in the province of Ontario. We got agreements with AMAPCEO, which is the management group of the Ontario public service. We got agreements with the OMA, the Ontario Medical Association. We got agree-

ments with OPSEU, those phenomenal men and women who provide public services each and every day to the people of the province of Ontario.

We were able to get agreements with the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, and indeed the French-language teachers' association. And now there's some talk about secret backroom deals? The Premier and the Minister of Education have been very upfront. We're engaging OSSTF, we're engaging ETFO, because we know how important extracurricular activities are to the full education experience for people in the province of Ontario. We'll continue to have those talks, and we'll continue to make progress because that's what's so important right here in the province of Ontario.

Indeed, as I said, when people are looking for good ideas in public education today, they don't go to British Columbia; they don't go to Alberta; they don't go to Saskatchewan. Where do they come, ladies and gentlemen? They come to Ontario. As a former great Premier of this province would say—William Grenville Davis—a place to stand, a place to grow, and when it comes to education, everybody comes to Ontari-ari-ari-o, and that's so important. That's so important.

I hear from my NDP friend—let's have a little history there. I remember them talking about some teachers back in 1995. Remember that social contract? Twelve unpaid days of leave. Madam Speaker, here's what they did to collective agreements in the province of Ontario, just like that. They were done. They ripped them up.

Our process was to negotiate and continue to negotiate to get those kinds of collective agreements.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Continue.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I think my time is up, so thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm pleased to have this short opportunity to speak to the motion by the member for Nepean–Carleton. She has done an excellent job, providing a voice to students—in fact, the only voice on behalf of parents and students in this province who are unfortunately left out of the unions' decision to remove extracurriculars from our schools.

What troubles me and my colleagues most about this issue is that the unions decided to deprive students of their after-school sports and clubs without even considering the effect it would have on their educational experience.

Many of the students in my community—I want to commend two, in fact, who came to me when this unsettling dispute arose. Erica Boer and Taylor Cloutier, both students at Huron Heights high school, did everything that they could do to bring their favourite sports and activities back. Unfortunately, it was only the Ontario PC caucus, under the leadership of Lisa MacLeod, that was truly the only one speaking up for those students and parents.

So I'm proud to stand up today on behalf of Erica and Taylor to say yes to this motion. I thank the member for bringing it forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

1740

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, the day is ending and the moon is nearing full and today is an opposition day motion, so you know that something unworkable and political is coming, and the question is whether it drifts into the realm of the ridiculous.

Now, I have to say, Speaker, that I thank our colleague from Nepean–Carleton for having brought this motion forward. I thank her because it's a chance for our government to keep talking with our teachers. I thank her because it gives Ontarians a chance to see, up close and personal, what the Ontario PC Party now stands for.

In the US states that have adopted the very right-to-work, anti-labour legislation that the Hudak PCs are advocating, skilled workers are on their way out and the GDP in those states is dropping, even as America begins its economic recovery.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask the member to stay within the context of today's motion.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, that's where the Hudak PCs propose to take Ontario. They'll start by slashing 2,000 teaching jobs as class sizes rise, and they'll fire 10,000 early childhood educators, and as many as 10,000 staff support jobs are going to be lost in Ontario's schools. But that's just a start, and it's in their Conservative white paper on education.

Whenever Conservatives really need to shore up their political base, they know that they can do it by just poking a sharp stick at Ontario's teachers. It has always worked for them and they think that it always will.

Liberals have a different approach. Liberals think that Ontario is in a race for the top and that education, to us, is an investment whose returns we want to maximize. To Conservatives, education is an expense that they want to minimize, cut or, even better, privatize.

Speaker, where in the English-speaking world can you get the best quality education? It isn't in any right-to-work state and it's not even in the private school system. You get the best-quality primary and secondary school education in the English-speaking world in Ontario public and Catholic schools, English or French, and you get that world-class education from Ontario teachers—Ontario teachers who bargain collectively with their government.

While Ontario and its teachers have had their issues in the most recent round of collective bargaining, this Conservative vision of a second-class, third-rate education system reminds all of us of what we've worked together to build in the past decade. And here's what we've been working to build: accepting schools, where every type of student can study in peace and security; a school system that the rest of the world comes to Ontario to study and to emulate—the Americans are asking themselves in their education system, "What is going on

in Ontario, and how do we do what they're doing?"—the ability of families to give their youngest children a head start through full-day kindergarten; new schools, and schools that in the past decade have been upgraded to 21st-century standards.

Over and above what goes on in the classroom, teachers want to impart their values and their skills to their students outside school hours. This motion would make such extracurricular activities mandatory and force them down teachers' throats. That's not how people like to be treated. That's not the way this province has dealt with teachers. That's not the way Ontario has built the best public school system in the English-speaking world. That's not why kids come here to get an education. We wouldn't take extracurricular activities, as a government, and force them down teachers' throats. That's why this province and its teachers are able to come back together again and remember what brought us together and what we came together to build in the first place.

Extracurriculars work best when they come from the heart. Now they can come again voluntarily and come from the heart again, right here in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, one of the most enlightening things in the last two weeks has been to watch President Obama's State of the Union address. To hear that, it sounds as if parts of it were simply lifted right from the government of Ontario's agenda in the past decade. What would President Obama like to see in America's schools? He'd like to see Ontario's school system. He'd like to see full-day kindergarten. He'd like to see the kind of education system that Ontario has been building here for the past 10 years; the kind that has kids abroad asking their parents, "Can I go abroad and do my high school in Ontario?"; the kind that has parents calling our school boards and saying, "Can I have my son or daughter come to Ontario and study here among your kids?"; the kind that's made our school system the envy of the world.

Now, Speaker, the difference here between this motion and the policy of our government is that this government won't be cutting hundreds of teaching jobs in Toronto—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Point of order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I just want the member maybe to perhaps withdraw the comment, because it just came across CTV that, indeed, his government is cutting hundreds of jobs at the Toronto District School Board to deal with—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Member, continue.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm not exactly sure what the member from Nepean-Carleton is talking about, because I'm here speaking to an important motion that she raised, and I'm not in the backroom watching television. I'm here talking about education in Ontario, and I'm here talking about why our teachers are the best teachers in

the world, why they'll voluntarily come back to doing their extracurricular activities, and that's what this motion is about.

They may want to fudge the issue. They may want to get sidetracked but, to us, it's about one thing. It's about just one thing. It's about the best possible education in the province of Ontario. That's what this government has delivered for eight years. That's what this government will continue to deliver, and whatever decision school boards may make, that's what our government's focus is—the best possible school system that this province can deliver. It depends on goodwill with the men and women who make up the teaching profession; goodwill that we've worked hard to engender, build, foster and nurture for nine years; goodwill that we have a chance to rebuild, a chance to come back together again.

That's what's made education in the province of Ontario great. That's why one of the great education ministers in this province's history, Bill Davis, is one of our biggest fans. That's why he supported us in some of the things that we've done here in the province of Ontario. I believe in that vision that Bill Davis started. I believe in that vision that Dalton McGuinty continued, and I believe in the vision that a great Minister of Education, the new Premier Kathleen Wynne, will continue, now and for a long time in the future. Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

Ms. MacLeod has moved opposition day motion number one. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members please take their seats.

Ms. MacLeod has moved opposition day number one. All those in favour of the motion please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

| | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Arnott, Ted | Jackson, Rod | O'Toole, John |
| Bailey, Robert | Jones, Sylvia | Ouellette, Jerry J. |
| Barrett, Toby | Leone, Rob | Pettapiece, Randy |
| Chudleigh, Ted | MacLaren, Jack | Scott, Laurie |
| Clark, Steve | MacLeod, Lisa | Shurman, Peter |
| Dunlop, Garfield | McDonell, Jim | Smith, Todd |
| Elliott, Christine | McKenna, Jane | Thompson, Lisa M. |
| Fedeli, Victor | McNaughton, Monte | Walker, Bill |
| Hardeman, Ernie | Miller, Norm | Wilson, Jim |
| Harris, Michael | Milligan, Rob E. | Yakabuski, John |
| Hillier, Randy | Munro, Julia | Yurek, Jeff |
| Hudak, Tim | Nicholls, Rick | |

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

Nays

Albanese, Laura
 Armstrong, Teresa J.
 Balkissoon, Bas
 Bartolucci, Rick
 Berardinetti, Lorenzo
 Bisson, Gilles
 Bradley, James J.
 Broten, Laurel C.
 Cansfield, Donna H.
 Chan, Michael
 Colle, Mike
 Coteau, Michael
 Crack, Grant
 Damerla, Dipika
 Del Duca, Steven
 Delaney, Bob
 Dhillon, Vic

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
 Forster, Cindy
 Gerretsen, John
 Gélinas, France
 Horwath, Andrea
 Hoskins, Eric
 Jaczek, Helena
 Jeffrey, Linda
 Kwinter, Monte
 Leal, Jeff
 MacCharles, Tracy
 Mangat, Amrit
 Mantha, Michael
 Marchese, Rosario
 Matthews, Deborah
 Mauro, Bill
 McMeekin, Ted

Moridi, Reza
 Murray, Glen R.
 Naqvi, Yasir
 Natyshak, Taras
 Oraziotti, David
 Piruzza, Teresa
 Prue, Michael
 Qaadri, Shafiq
 Sandals, Liz
 Schein, Jonah
 Sergio, Mario
 Singh, Jagmeet
 Sousa, Charles
 Tabuns, Peter
 Takhar, Harinder S.
 Taylor, Monique
 Vanthof, John

Dickson, Joe
 DiNovo, Cheri
 Duguid, Brad
 Fife, Catherine

McNeely, Phil
 Meilleur, Madeleine
 Miller, Paul
 Milloy, John

Wong, Soo
 Wynne, Kathleen O.
 Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
 The ayes are 35; the nays are 62.

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

Motion negatived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There's no further business this evening. This House is adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1803.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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|---|--|---|
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| Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP) | London–Fanshawe | |
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| Balkissoon, Bas (LIB) | Scarborough–Rouge River | Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président |
| Barrett, Toby (PC) | Haldimand–Norfolk | |
| Bartolucci, Rick (LIB) | Sudbury | |
| Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB) | Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest | |
| Best, Margaret R. (LIB) | Scarborough–Guildwood | |
| Bisson, Gilles (NDP) | Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James | House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu |
| Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB) | St. Catharines | Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement |
| Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB) | Etobicoke–Lakeshore | Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine |
| Campbell, Sarah (NDP) | Kenora–Rainy River | |
| Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB) | Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre | |
| Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB) | Markham–Unionville | Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015 |
| Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB) | Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean | Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie |
| Chudleigh, Ted (PC) | Halton | |
| Clark, Steve (PC) | Leeds–Grenville | Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle |
| Colle, Mike (LIB) | Eglinton–Lawrence | |
| Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB) | Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est | Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration |
| Crack, Grant (LIB) | Glengarry–Prescott–Russell | |
| Craiton, Kim (LIB) | Niagara Falls | |
| Damerla, Dipika (LIB) | Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville | |
| Del Duca, Steven (LIB) | Vaughan | |
| Delaney, Bob (LIB) | Mississauga–Streetsville | |
| Dhillon, Vic (LIB) | Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest | |
| Dickson, Joe (LIB) | Ajax–Pickering | |
| DiNovo, Cheri (NDP) | Parkdale–High Park | |
| Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB) | Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre | Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités |
| Dunlop, Garfield (PC) | Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord | |
| Elliott, Christine (PC) | Whitby–Oshawa | Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle |
| Fedeli, Victor (PC) | Nipissing | |
| Fife, Catherine (NDP) | Kitchener–Waterloo | |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|--|---|
| Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) | Oakville | |
| Forster, Cindy (NDP) | Welland | Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu |
| Gélinas, France (NDP) | Nickel Belt | |
| Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB) | Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles | Attorney General / Procureur général |
| Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB) | Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord | Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines |
| Hardeman, Ernie (PC) | Oxford | |
| 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 Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi |
| 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 | |
| Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB) | Brampton–Springdale | Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement |
| Jones, Sylvia (PC) | Dufferin–Caledon | |
| Klees, Frank (PC) | Newmarket–Aurora | |
| Kwinter, Monte (LIB) | York Centre / York-Centre | |
| Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB) | Peterborough | Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales |
| Leone, Rob (PC) | Cambridge | |
| Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB) | Brant | Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative |
| MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB) | Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est | Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs |
| 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 | Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée |
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| McDonell, Jim (PC) | Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry | |
| McGuinty, Dalton (LIB) | Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud | |
| McKenna, Jane (PC) | Burlington | |
| McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB) | Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale | Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires |
| McNaughton, Monte (PC) | Lambton–Kent–Middlesex | |
| McNeely, Phil (LIB) | Ottawa–Orléans | |
| Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB) | Ottawa–Vanier | Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones |
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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 |
| Milligan, Rob E. (PC) | Northumberland–Quinte West | |
| Millroy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB) | Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre | Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement |

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|--|---|--|
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| Nicholls, Rick (PC) | Chatham–Kent–Essex | |
| O'Toole, John (PC) | Durham | |
| Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB) | Sault Ste. Marie | Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles |
| Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC) | Oshawa | |
| Pettapiece, Randy (PC) | Perth–Wellington | |
| Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB) | Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest | Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse |
| Prue, Michael (NDP) | Beaches–East York | |
| Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB) | Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord | |
| Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB) | Guelph | Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation |
| Schein, Jonah (NDP) | Davenport | |
| Scott, Laurie (PC) | Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock | |
| Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB) | York West / York-Ouest | Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille |
| Shurman, Peter (PC) | Thornhill | |
| Singh, Jagmeet (NDP) | Bramalea–Gore–Malton | |
| Smith, Todd (PC) | Prince Edward–Hastings | |
| Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB) | Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud | Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances |
| Tabuns, Peter (NDP) | Toronto–Danforth | |
| Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB) | Mississauga–Erindale | Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux |
| Taylor, Monique (NDP) | Hamilton Mountain | |
| Thompson, Lisa M. (PC) | Huron–Bruce | |
| Vanthof, John (NDP) | Timiskaming–Cochrane | |
| Walker, Bill (PC) | Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound | |
| Wilson, Jim (PC) | Simcoe–Grey | Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle |
| Wong, Soo (LIB) | Scarborough–Agincourt | |
| Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB) | Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest | Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario |
| Yakabuski, John (PC) | Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke | |
| Yurek, Jeff (PC) | Elgin–Middlesex–London | |
| Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB) | Willowdale | Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones |
| Vacant | London West / London-Ouest | |
| Vacant | Windsor–Tecumseh | |

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COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Grant Crack, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Bill Mauro
Taras Natyshak, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Monte McNaughton
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Bas Balkissoon, Rick Bartolucci
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Mike Colle, Rosario Marchese
Laurie Scott, Todd Smith
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Laura Albanese, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Joe Dickson, Jim McDonell
Phil McNeely, Paul Miller
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Vacant
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Steven Del Duca, Bob Delaney
Frank Klees, Jack MacLaren
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Vacant
Bas Balkissoon, Gilles Bisson
Steve Clark, Mike Colle
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Bill Mauro
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Vacant
Toby Barrett, Dipika Damerla
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Jerry J. Ouellette, Shafiq Qaadri
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Vacant
Margaret R. Best, Vic Dhillon
Joe Dickson, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Monte Kwinter
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Margaret R. Best
Ted Chudleigh, Cheri DiNovo
Ernie Hardeman, Helena Jaczek
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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