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of Ontario

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 9 April 2013

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des débats
(Hansard)**

Mardi 9 avril 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 9 April 2013

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

LOCAL FOOD ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR
LES ALIMENTS LOCAUX

Ms. Wynne moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 /
Projet de loi 36, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur les
aliments locaux.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. Wynne has moved second reading of the act. Ms. Wynne?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that I'll be sharing my time with the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

I'm very pleased to be able to rise today to speak to second reading of the Local Food Act. I think that local food is something we can all agree sustains people in communities, rural and urban, across the province.

I just want to ask us all to reflect a little bit on our experiences of local food. If I think about a time before it was conscious to me that I was eating local food or not, I can remember being really very excited in the summer when August would come, because that was the time when we could get corn. We could get Ontario-grown corn. We would go to pick up—or my dad would pick up on the way home from his office—local corn at Mr. Topper's farm in Richmond Hill. That was his name, and he was just north of Elgin Mills. We only ate corn in August. We didn't eat corn any other time of the year. I don't even know if it was available in stores, but certainly my father had a complete prejudice about Ontario corn: That was the best-tasting corn, and that's the only corn we should eat.

When my own kids came along, we would wait for the spring to go to the berry picking farms and pick strawberries. I can remember my middle child when she was about two and a half. I can see her in the berry patch with strawberries all over her face. I'm not sure how many went in the basket. Those experiences, I think, need to inform the way we think about the abundance of local Ontario food.

Just a final piece: There was a story on the CBC this morning—Metro Morning, in the Toronto area—about a

young man who is setting up a website, foodstory.ca. He wants to connect people who wouldn't normally go to farmers' markets to farmers' markets. So he's setting up a website to allow people in the urban centre of downtown Toronto to connect with farmers who are bringing their food into farmers' markets but aren't able to connect with some of the younger generation who don't have the habit of going to farmers' markets.

I think that's what the Local Food Act is about. It's about finding ways of raising people's consciousness about accessing that great Ontario food.

Je suis heureuse de prendre la parole aujourd'hui pour la deuxième lecture du projet de loi sur les aliments locaux. Les aliments locaux assurent la subsistance des gens et des collectivités rurales et urbaines dans toute la province.

Wherever I go, I see that more and more people are joining the local food movement, and it's doing great things for Ontario: It's supporting our farmers, it's strengthening our communities and it's building our economy. From my perspective, that's what the agri-food sector is about. It's about making sure that we understand how important the agri-food industry is to Ontario. We want to give that movement some added momentum. We want to celebrate and support all of the good things that grow in Ontario. That's why last fall my colleague Minister McMeekin proposed a Local Food Act. We said that we were going to do that, and he proposed it. I want to thank him for his commitment to our agri-food sector and all the effort and good work that he put into that act.

Hon. Jeff Leal: A great minister.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's right, he's an excellent minister.

Last month, I was pleased to carry that commitment forward with the introduction of our new Local Food Act. If passed, the act would increase local food awareness, access and sales by enabling the government to set local food goals and targets, in consultation with stakeholders. That's an important aspect of this. We really believe that working with the sector—working with people who produce food, working with people who process food—we can find a way to set those targets in a realistic way.

One of the concerns I heard at the time that the Local Food Act was introduced in the first place—I was the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and I heard from municipalities that there was some concern that if we were too prescriptive as a provincial government, we would put in place an undue burden on local communities, on municipalities and on producers. We don't want

to do that. This has to be about a partnership; it has to be about working together.

What this would do is it would enable, as I say, the government to work with the public sector organizations towards those goals and to share information on their progress and results. Because we know that if we can shine a light on progress, then we can enhance that progress. It would also celebrate local food by proclaiming a local food week that would begin the Monday before Thanksgiving, and it would require the government to produce a local food report on the activities it has undertaken to support local food. I think that's a significant aspect of the legislation, Madam Speaker, because requiring that the minister actually gather that information and report it is another way of sharing information and making it clear that we're taking this seriously.

In order for it to work, the local food bill has to have a strategy that works beyond the sector. That's why we've been talking to stakeholders and families about how we can encourage the people of Ontario to ask for and buy local food. This is where I really believe the public is ahead of us on this. I think the public is already going into stores and is already wanting to know where the local food is, wanting to know, "Why can't I find Ontario lettuce? Why can't I find Ontario potatoes? How do I do that?" I think we can encourage that and we can support people in that.

Last summer, in fact, we hosted regional round tables across Ontario, in Ottawa, Ancaster, Toronto, Thunder Bay, Sudbury and London. L'été dernier, nous avons organisé des tables rondes régionales un peu partout en Ontario : à Ottawa, Ancaster, Toronto, Thunder Bay, Sudbury et London. We talked with a variety of stakeholders across multiple sectors during those meetings, from the farming and food processing sectors to the retail and the broader public sectors. We took the conversation right down into our communities, talking with families at farmers' markets and agricultural fair grounds too. We began these conversations by asking a number of questions: "How do we best increase demand for and access to local food across the province?" So we've got perceptions on how we could do that; and, "What role can government, industry and communities play?" Comment pouvons-nous le mieux accroître la demande et l'accès aux produits locaux à l'échelle de la province, et quel est le rôle que le gouvernement, l'industrie et les collectivités doivent jouer?

The feedback that we received was invaluable as we drafted the Local Food Act and created our broader local food strategy. So we didn't just introduce the bill and not continue to talk to people. We continued to have that conversation to improve the bill and the strategy outside of the legislation.

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With input from the agri-food sector, we made sure that the act allows the minister to set goals and targets that we can realistically work towards, because we want our farmers, food processors and public sector institutions to experience benefits, not burdens, from this act.

That was my point from earlier: We don't want this to be onerous, and we don't want this to be a prescription from Queen's Park on food processors, on farmers, on municipalities; we want this to be something that supports what local producers are already trying to do.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Grassroots

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Exactly.

Ensuring that success is about working together: It's about collaboration across the value chain; it's about coming up with ways that will increase the demand and supply of Ontario food from the farm gate to the dinner plate. As I said, the Local Food Act is just one part of that broader local food strategy.

Beyond the legislation, we're also proposing more education about the benefits of local food. If I go back to that first story I was telling about my family and eating corn and tomatoes in August—end of July and August—I want to make sure that young people understand the difference in flavour between a strawberry grown in Ontario and a strawberry that's imported from far away, and understand that if you can get corn—I have a bit of a passion about corn that's picked on the same day. We can't always get it picked on the same day, but if you can, it tastes totally different than corn that has been sitting around for a while. I know there are local markets in Peterborough where you can get corn picked on the same day.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Every Saturday.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There you go.

Hon. Reza Moridi: The best corn comes from Richmond Hill.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You see? Everywhere: The best corn comes from Richmond Hill, the best corn comes from Peterborough, from Brampton. Really, the best corn comes from Ontario.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I tried to grow my own last year, but the racoons got to it.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Apparently some of my colleagues have tried to grow their own. Maybe they shouldn't give up their day jobs; they can leave that to the farmers in their community.

We're proposing more education about the benefits of local food, more support for communities and regions to work on local food initiatives, and a commitment to consult with stakeholders on the best ways to promote local food. Madam Speaker, I know that in Simcoe county there's a Simcoe food strategy now, and I know you're aware of that. That's the kind of local initiative that brings people together and helps everyone understand what they can do to advance the local food cause. Those kinds of strategies are the good ideas we want to share across the province.

But we'll lead by example too. We'll lead through an Ontario government policy requiring ministries to consider local food procurements under \$25,000. Again, we think that's very doable. When there's going to be a procurement, we want that to be a local food procurement. We'll continue to promote the good things that grow in Ontario through our Foodland Ontario food pro-

gram. I want to emphasize that this is not a notion that would take the place of the existing program, but would enhance it.

Another part of our local food strategy is a really exciting new industry-led risk management fund that supports Ontario corn-fed beef. I had the privilege of visiting the Conlin family farm a few weeks ago to announce this initiative, and I was lucky enough to see how a top-notch cattle feedlot operates. There were three generations of Conlins on the farm, thousands of cattle and a cheeky goat named Manny. It's operations like this that really provide the backbone of rural Ontario.

That's why we are investing \$10 million towards this new type of risk management fund, so that we can help stabilize pricing and stimulate growth for people like the Conlins so they can market more of their local food onto our plates and so that their farm operation can be sustainable and the next generation can take over that farm operation. That is something that is a real concern to farmers in the province—that they're able to have an operation that their children can take over.

C'est pourquoi nous investissons 10 millions de dollars dans ce nouveau type de fonds de gestion des risques : nous voulons stabiliser les prix et stimuler la croissance pour des gens comme les Conlin afin qu'ils puissent mettre encore plus d'aliments locaux dans nos assiettes.

The fund will be run by farmers, for farmers, and will help them manage their own risks and take control of their businesses. It's really a new way of looking at business risk management, and I want to commend the vision shown by Ontario Corn Fed Beef in pursuing this initiative and working with my predecessor to put this in place. They did the hard work, they came together and they came up with this idea.

It's a great opportunity, I think, to grow and strengthen the entire beef industry, which supports more than 11,000 jobs and contributes approximately \$4 billion to the provincial economy.

Initiatives like these are so important to our government because we know that when we can help people buy locally grown food, we're supporting our farmers; we're boosting food production and processing, which help job growth and economic growth; and we're strengthening our environment.

One of the things that I've been saying in my role as Minister of Agriculture and Food as I travel the province and I meet with food processing and producer organizations is that I'm not sure that the general public understands the impact of the agri-food sector on Ontario's economy. I'm not sure that people understand generally that the agri-food sector is the second-largest manufacturing sector in the province—a \$34-billion contribution to the GDP, more than 700,000 direct and indirect jobs.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It's number one.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm hearing from my Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment that it's number one. It goes back and forth between

number one and number two, but today it's number one; today it's the largest manufacturing sector.

I think that's a badly understood reality about Ontario's economy, Madam Speaker, and part of this discussion around the Local Food Act is making that better understood, helping people to understand that as we grow Ontario's economy, as we put the conditions in place to create jobs, part of that is putting the conditions in place for the agri-food sector to grow and flourish. By doing this, we are strengthening the economy and we're strengthening the environment.

Our proposed legislation highlights the strong contribution that Ontario's agri-food sector makes to our province, to our way of life and, as I've said, to our economy.

Ontario's farmers grow and raise more than 200 commodities. We're home to about 3,000 food and beverage manufacturing establishments—more than any other province—and our agri-food sector, as I said, accounts for \$34 billion of the provincial GDP and supports 700,000 jobs.

I chose to take on the role of Minister of Agriculture and Food because I wanted to raise the profile of this important industry. I'm very fortunate to be in a position to shine a light on the wonderful work that this industry does, the contributions that they make to a strong Ontario, and the foundations for their success.

I'm also aware that every member of this Legislature has people who are working in farming, working in food processing; working in the agri-food sector in one way or another. I really do see this as one of these issues about which there really isn't a partisan disagreement. I know that the members of the opposition will speak today about the specifics of the legislation, but I also know that at the fundamental root of their concerns are exactly the same concerns that we share: that we support the agri-food sector in Ontario.

Ontario is home to a lucrative marketplace, with more than 80% of primary grocery shoppers intending to buy fresh, local Ontario food. That's the piece that I was saying that people are ahead of us on. They want to buy Ontario food. There's more retail interest than ever, with many restaurants and grocery stores highlighting local food on menus and in the aisles.

Le marché du détail est plus intéressé que jamais aux produits locaux, et de nombreux restaurants et épiceries mettent en vedette les aliments locaux sur leurs menus et sur les tablettes.

There's an additional element to success that trumps most others: Ontario's innovative farmers, who are willing to grow the food that people want, from bok choy to purple carrots. For example, look at From Farm to Table Canada, a leading-edge Cambridge food processor that provides consumers with farm-fresh products right from Ontario farms. As a strong proponent of buying local and healthy eating, Becky Smollett, the company's founder, worked with local Ontario corn growers to produce a popcorn snack that meets the nutrition standards under the Ontario School Food and Beverage Policy. Having received approval to use the Foodland Ontario logo on

their packaging in 2010, the company initially sold their product through schools and cafeterias. But as the demand increased, they expanded into the retail market. So they went beyond that initial narrow market.

Then there's Willowgrove Hill Farms from Mitchell, Ontario. Owners Paul and Rosie Hill are innovative pork producers who offer consumers Ontario pork products enhanced with omega 3 fatty acids. These nutrients are essential for the maintenance of general human health, normal growth and development. The pork is also enhanced with organic selenium, an antioxidant.

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Seeing the success of omega-3 in eggs and milk products and recognizing the health benefits, Paul and Rosie began the process of introducing omega-3 fatty acids into their feed back in 2007. In 2008, they started using the Foodland Ontario logo to identify to consumers their locally grown pork products. And in 2011, the Hill family farm was recognized as the Premier's Award recipients for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence. They took a great idea and they grew it. I'm happy to say that Willowgrove Hill has seen demand for their enriched pork product jump in the last couple of years. Starting out in smaller markets, they've recently launched their products in Ontario FreshCo stores across the province.

Longo Brothers Fruit Markets is another local food champion. They won a newly introduced Vision Award at the 2012 Foodland retailer awards ceremony a few weeks ago. The award was introduced to recognize outstanding corporate support for promoting Ontario foods under the Foodland Ontario brand.

Longo's is definitely a huge supporter of local food. They source a great variety of Ontario meats and have chosen to promote their selection at store level through co-branding with Foodland Ontario. When a customer ventures into the meat department at Longo's, there's no doubt that Ontario products dominate.

These are the kinds of initiatives that we want to promote, that we want to support, and I know that retailers and consumers want this to happen.

I also want to acknowledge Loblaw, Canada's largest food retailer and the host of our announcement for the introduction of this legislation. They're another very strong supporter of Ontario foods through initiatives like their Grown Close to Home program, which sources products from Ontario farmers. They also participate in Foodland Ontario's retail services program to boost awareness of Ontario products on their shelves. More than 200 of their stores also prominently feature Ontario corn-fed beef, and they're committed to sourcing even more local products.

Nous voulons mettre encore plus de bons produits de chez nous sur votre table, que cette table soit dans votre demeure, les écoles, les garderies, les hôpitaux ou les édifices gouvernementaux. C'est pourquoi nous avons fait des investissements afin d'accroître la quantité d'aliments locaux frais, sains et délicieux offerts par les organismes du secteur public élargi.

We want to bring more of the good things that grow in Ontario to your table, whether that table is in our kitch-

ens, at home, in our schools, daycares, hospitals or government buildings. That's why we've made investments to help increase the amount of fresh, healthy and delicious local foods in our broader public sector organizations.

We've done this in a variety of ways. We've done it by supporting programming through the Greenbelt Fund to connect buyers, including our public institutions, with local food producers. In fact, the Greenbelt Fund's ontariofresh.ca website serves as an electronic marketplace for more than 1,200 buyers and sellers of Ontario foods.

Sysco Ontario is a great example of how our support for the Greenbelt Fund is getting more local food into our institutions. The reality is that it's not always going to be possible for someone to find a farmers' market, or find that local farmer, without some of the modern technologies. We acknowledge that, and so we're using those. With support through the fund, Sysco has worked with producers and operators to feature and promote Ontario cheeses on their menus and successfully increased Ontario cheese sales by just over \$5 million. Their sales staff now look to fill customer orders with Ontario cheese first.

So it's a change in culture, a change in focus. Institutions that previously overlooked local cheese have now made the shift. I know that the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell is going to be talking about local cheese in his remarks.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: St-Albert.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: St-Albert, oui.

They now have the marketing tools to continue to promote local cheese to their consumer base. Sysco is also using the Foodland Ontario logo to help promote Ontario foods to their clients. According to the company, they're proud to work with the farming community to help them provide Ontario restaurants with safe and sustainable produce.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Headquartered in Peterborough.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There you go: in Peterborough.

My point, Madam Speaker, is that industry and retailers want this to happen. They want to work with government, and they want to work with producers.

Our total investment toward this broader sector programming has resulted in \$26 million in additional Ontario food in daycares, schools, universities and colleges, or a 5-to-1 return on investment for every public dollar spent. It's a good investment.

We remain committed to bringing more local food into Ontario's municipalities, long-term-care homes, hospitals and schools. That's why we're providing an additional \$5 million to the Greenbelt Fund to continue their good work in making it easier for public institutions to buy local.

As I travel around the province, meeting with different groups in the agri-food industry, I always emphasize how interconnected we are as rural and urban Ontario. I think the debate that sometimes creeps into this discussion is

whether rural Ontario has the interests of urban Ontario and urban Ontario has the interests of rural Ontario at heart. I believe that we are interconnected, that we have to think of ourselves as one Ontario and that we need to find ways to make that connection real. One of those ways is through the local food initiative. Farmers feed us all; we know that. We all have a stake in their success. To pretend that somehow we're separate is not helpful.

En voyageant dans la province et en rencontrant différents groupes de l'industrie agroalimentaire, je remarque souvent à quel point l'Ontario rural et l'Ontario urbain sont reliés.

From ethnically diverse foods to foods that address special dietary needs like nut-free and gluten-free, the province's agri-food industry is responding to consumer demand right across the spectrum. But we recognize there's always more that we can do, and today's consumers are more engaged in learning about food. They're reading labels. They're asking about where their food comes from. They want to know what they're feeding their children, how it was grown or produced. They also care who is behind the production of their food. They want to support their local farmers. What we're going to do with this act is to help them to do that—and with our broader local food strategy. We want to help the agri-food industry continue to meet consumer demands.

I'd like to just close by reminding everyone that when we choose foods that are grown and made here at home, it's good for our families, it's good for our communities, and it's good for Ontario farmers. It strengthens us as an entity, as a province. This proposed legislation will help people find, buy and eat food and beverages that are grown, harvested and made in Ontario wherever they are. I encourage Ontario consumers to choose Ontario foods first whenever they can, and I salute the hard-working farmers and food processors and all of the businesses connected to our agri-food industry for the great work that they continue to do each and every day.

J'encourage les consommateurs ontariens à choisir des aliments de l'Ontario en premier chaque fois que c'est possible. Je rends hommage à tous les agriculteurs et transformateurs alimentaires qui travaillent si fort, ainsi que toutes les entreprises associées à notre industrie agroalimentaire, pour tous leurs efforts quotidiens.

Because when we work together, we can find ways to grow this great industry.

I'll just close by saying I had the opportunity to be at the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival this past weekend. It's going to be a great maple syrup season, I believe, because the cold nights and the sunnier days—although today may not be a good example—the cooler nights and warmer days are going to produce a great harvest. So if you can, get to a maple sugar bush and buy Ontario maple syrup. It's another one of those great seasonal food products that make Ontario agriculture the best in the world.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Mr. Grant Crack: It's certainly a pleasure for me to rise in the House and follow the Premier and Minister of

Agriculture on what I consider to be a very important component of what we do as a government to support our local businesses. I'm pleased to rise and also to support the good things that grow right here in Ontario.

If passed, this bill would be part of a larger food strategy. As the Premier has said, the public is already ahead of us on this one.

Je suis heureux de prendre la parole aujourd'hui pour démontrer mon appui des bons produits cultivés en Ontario. Si le projet de loi est adopté, il deviendra un des éléments d'une stratégie globale sur les aliments locaux, et comme l'a mentionné la première ministre, le grand public a déjà de l'avance dans ce domaine.

I'll be talking about what this bill will do, and then I'll take the opportunity to talk about some of the wonderful local food initiatives that are already on the go on the ground in my riding and in surrounding areas. I'll also talk about how the agri-food industry has an innovative and creative approach to growth.

As the Minister of Agriculture has said, the agri-food industry contributed \$34 billion to the Ontario economy. That's significant. Ontario's local food isn't just produce bought at farmers markets; it's also food processed right here in Ontario as well. The agri-food industry supports more than 700,000 jobs across the province, and we have a food processing sector that, with almost 3,000 manufacturing businesses, contributes almost \$10 billion to our GDP and employs more than 94,000 people.

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L'industrie agroalimentaire a contribué 34 milliards de dollars à notre économie. Les aliments locaux de l'Ontario ne comprennent pas seulement les fruits et légumes achetés dans les marchés de producteurs. Il s'agit aussi des aliments qui sont transformés dans notre province. L'industrie agroalimentaire appuie plus de 700 000 emplois dans la province. En Ontario, nous avons un secteur de la transformation des aliments qui, avec près de 3 000 entreprises de fabrication, contribue presque 10 milliards de dollars à notre produit intérieur brut et fournit de l'emploi à plus de 94 000 personnes.

This bill is designed to work with local communities, not to add to cumbersome regulation and red tape. We know that every community and region in Ontario is unique, and this bill will capitalize on and promote the wonderful initiatives that are already in place.

The local food bill will allow for the establishment of goals and targets for local food through consultation. We listened when stakeholders told us that they didn't want targets imposed on them.

As a government, we will work with public sector organizations towards these goals and share the information on successes and best practices. We'll also celebrate local food with a local food week. We'll have the minister prepare a local food report on government activities that support local food, every three years.

As has been said, this bill is just one part of our comprehensive strategy. Beyond this legislation, we will lead by example, through an Ontario public-service-wide policy requiring ministries to consider local food for

procurements under \$25,000. We'll do what we can to educate about the benefits of local food. We'll support communities and regions working on local food. We're going to consult with stakeholders on a provincial designation system. We're going to continue to promote the things that grow in Ontario through our Foodland Ontario program.

I can tell you, last month I was very honoured to represent the Minister of Agriculture at the 2012 Foodland Ontario Retailer Awards in downtown Toronto. It was a great experience for me to basically reconnect with an industry that I'm quite familiar with. In my past, I served seven years as a regional manager of sales and operations for a company called Boulangerie Lanthier—Lanthier Bakery—based out of Alexandria, with production also out of Baie-d'Urfé in Quebec. Lanthier Bakery produces breads, hot dog and hamburger buns, and probably the best raisin bread made in Ontario. On many occasions, I'd be in the stores, working with purchasing agents to try to maximize our shelf space, creating planograms, trying to get as many SKUs into the stores as we possibly could.

One of our greatest accomplishments has been being the major distributor and supplier for Dollarama. Just last month, I was up at the Dollarama on Bloor Street. I look in and there's Lanthier Bakery bread, right here in Toronto.

We're expanding across the province—Betty Bread. It was certainly a privilege and an honour for me to work for such a great company, a family-owned business that has depots in Montreal, Ottawa, Alexandria, Brockville and Oshawa. I just wanted to make sure that—as we move forward with this type of initiative, that I'm quite familiar with what needs to be done in order to assist our retailers, our producers and our processors across the province.

As part of the local food bill, we're also going to help to fund local food projects across this province. The more appreciation and demand we have for local food and locally produced food, the more we can strengthen Ontario's agriculture and food industry.

Without local food, we wouldn't have as many food processing success stories to tell. These companies help contribute to Ontario's economy.

I'll give you a few examples. Ottawa's HoneyBar is the largest processor of honey east of Toronto. You could say that their HoneyBar trail mix is literally out of this world. That's because Canada's space agency has included it in the snacks enjoyed by astronaut Chris Hadfield and two other astronauts on board.

Hon. Jeff Leal: That's good news.

Mr. Grant Crack: It certainly is.

Voortman Cookies, headquartered in Burlington, has been baking and exporting premium baked goods since 1951. They have produced over 60 unique varieties of cookies, including an extensive line of sugar-free and low-sugar products. Voortman employs about 400 production workers and distributes their cookies throughout North America and overseas.

Chapman's Ice Cream—I'm sure everyone has heard of Chapman's Ice Cream. After a fire destroyed their facilities, Chapman's committed to rebuilding stronger than ever in their rural community. Their Project Phoenix included a huge \$100-million investment for building a state-of-the-art production facility with a test kitchen, research facilities, new product development and a separate, nut-free line for its ice cream production facilities. Today, Chapman's has successfully risen from the ashes and is now Canada's largest independent ice cream manufacturer. It's still Markdale's largest employer, employing almost 600 dedicated people.

Dr. Oetker chose London for its first North American frozen pizza factory. Its 200,000-square-foot facility will produce 50 million frozen pizzas a year for the North American market, providing up to 300 new jobs in the London region. The company will also buy about 11,000 metric tonnes of Ontario food ingredients worth \$20 million in the first year.

We know that food production and processing create jobs and economic growth, Madam Speaker. It is also a field where being creative and innovative is necessary to compete in the global market, and something that government works towards supporting.

Research and innovation is an important catalyst for agriculture and food, and something I want to take time to highlight. From current research into milk with cancer-fighting mineral supplements to healthier starches for everyday diets, agri-food scientists are coming up with new ways to provide healthier food for the people of Ontario.

La recherche et l'innovation sont des agents catalyseurs importants de l'agriculture et de l'agroalimentaire. C'est un point que je veux faire ressortir. Qu'il s'agisse des recherches actuelles sur le lait enrichi de suppléments minéraux pour lutter contre le cancer ou d'amidons plus sains pour l'alimentation quotidienne, les scientifiques agroalimentaires proposent de nouvelles façons d'offrir des aliments plus sains aux gens de l'Ontario.

This is an amazing area where the opportunities for the agri-food industry to get involved are endless. Currently, researchers are trying to improve the nutrition uptake for residents of health care and long-term-care facilities through inclusion of local food into residence diets. Science is helping the agri-food sector advance in other ways, like the intelligent vegetable-harvesting robots that researchers at the university have developed. This could emerge as a revolutionary technology for the Canadian greenhouse industry, giving growers a competitive edge. On all fronts, people are working together to enhance and strengthen Ontario's agricultural and food industry and move forward into the next century. Working together is key.

La science aide le secteur agroalimentaire à aller de l'avant d'autres façons, comme avec les robots récolteurs intelligents de légumes qui ont été développés par des chercheurs universitaires. Ceci pourrait se révéler une technologie révolutionnaire pour l'industrie canadienne des serres et donner aux producteurs un avantage

concurrentiel. Sur tous les fronts, les gens collaborent pour améliorer et renforcer l'industrie agroalimentaire ontarienne et nous propulser dans le prochain siècle. La collaboration est essentielle.

We need to remember and value what is at the heart of it all: our land and the people who grow our food. Because without them, we don't have any other great innovations, science developments and businesses that grow from it. There are so many more new ideas, new technologies and approaches that are helping to move our agricultural and food sectors forward.

Each year, we take the time to proudly recognize these achievements in research and innovation through the Premier's Award for Agri-food Innovation. Last year alone, we congratulated 50 award recipients at events held throughout the province.

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The top-ranked Premier's Award went to Philip Short, a tender-fruit grower from Niagara region. He wanted to add value to the products currently sold in the marketplace and he wanted to develop innovative packaging solutions to meet the needs of retailers, consumers and growers. So Phillip landed on a simple idea: build a better basket that keeps fruit fresher longer, with less damage from transport.

This basket helps the standards of product quality; it transports product easily; it's more attractive to consumers, who can see what they're buying; and it's good for food safety. Because the fruit is sealed—it has a lid—no hands touch it as it moves from the packaging shed to the consumer's home. It even stores well in the fridge since the lid keeps the food fresh.

It's easy to see why today this innovator supplies most of Niagara's tender-fruit growers. In fact, almost half of the peaches grown in Ontario in 2010 and beyond were packed in these containers. They were all used by Loblaw's vendors nationally, including in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec and the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Right across Canada.

Mr. Grant Crack: Right across Canada. The fruit of one man's idea and labour has enjoyed tremendous success.

The Minister's Award went to Burning Kiln Winery. This group's story began in 2006 when they planted high-quality French vinifera varieties on 23 acres of land that were previously tobacco.

The winery has converted displaced tobacco kilns into high-tech award-winning wine-making machines. The result is great-tasting Ontario wine that shows innovation thriving in Norfolk.

I can tell you that everywhere I go, I encourage my family and friends to buy Ontario wines. I can't understand why anyone would go into the local LCBO and buy a wine that's not an Ontario. I think everybody has to—

Interjection.

Mr. Grant Crack: Buy Ontario wine. The Premier and the Minister of Agriculture is just indicating that she

was at Burning Kiln Winery and says it's one of the greatest wines.

We also recognize three Leaders in Innovation Award recipients:

—Mariposa Dairy in Kawartha Lakes county worked with community partners to come up with a mega-press machine that separate curds and whey so quickly and efficiently that it has reduced the separation time cycle from four days to just 24 hours;

—Nicholyn Farms in Simcoe county, which offers daily nutritious local food lunches to their community. The Van Casteren family prepares 600 lunches weekly, and they have expanded their own vegetable crop by five acres in addition to drawing the production of fellow farmers in the area;

—Victory Organic in the Niagara region came up with the "bob wash," an affordable small-scale system for ensuring that salad greens and root vegetables are washed and packaged safely right on the farm.

There are a dozen more innovation stories that are recognized with regional awards each year. Many of them demonstrate the passion that our farmers, our food processors and our communities have for local food. We look forward to recognizing more innovations later this year under this awards program.

I truly believe that the people of Ontario want to eat local food not only because of the quality and freshness, but because they want to support this innovative sector. Supporting local food and local producers is something we feel passionate about and something that many regions are already working towards.

Premier Wynne speaks about how rural and urban Ontario are interconnected. Local food is a great example of how this province works. I am so proud to come from eastern Ontario, from the great riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. On November 22, I was able to attend the second annual Bilingual Eastern Ontario Local Food Conference that was held in Kemptville, where we shared a lot of great ideas and collaborated on how we can move forward with regard to our local food bill. The input that was received and the ideas that are being presented out there are just great and encouraging and help us as a government to know, as we move forward with the local food bill, that we're on the right track.

The theme chosen for the conference was "Collaborating for Success." There were over 175 producers and processors who attended the conference, with an additional number participating via Agriwebinar. The conference works towards facilitating stronger relationships among eastern Ontario stakeholders to provide technical information in key areas where development is needed to encourage economic growth; and further expanding local foods in eastern Ontario. A wide variety of local food topics were covered, including value-chain development, regulatory requirements, consumer-driven co-operative models, and many more.

To name a few, Savour Ottawa is an initiative spearheaded by Ottawa Tourism, Just Food and the city of Ottawa. This group boasts over 125 members, including

approximately 80 farmers and 30 food service providers, retailers, microprocessors and supporters. Savour Ottawa works to develop and promote Ottawa and the area as a premier year-round culinary destination, with robust offerings of local foods and experiences for both locals and visitors to the area.

In my own riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, we have an amazing little town or village called St-Albert. Fromagerie St-Albert enjoys worldwide renown for exceptional quality cheeses which have been made for more than a century. Five generations of farmers and craftsmen have worked to maintain St-Albert's long tradition of quality. St-Albert's is owned by 50 producers. St-Albert Cheese manufacturing employs more than 100 people, who are guided by a common concern for quality and freshness to ensure success.

The wider community stands behind and supports the Fromagerie St-Albert. We almost lost this gem in a fire, but the community pulled together, and everyone in this Legislature can agree that the cheese curds that St-Albert's produces—and my predecessor, Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde, former MPP, in a tradition followed by myself in bringing St-Albert's cheese to Glengarry–Prescott–Russell Day—goes unnoticed by all the MPPs, as I've been told that St-Albert's cheese is the best cheese in the province of Ontario.

Each year, we have le Festival de la Curd in St-Albert, and I attend this each year with my family. This year, I would like to invite all MPPs to come to Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for this festival—it's a special year—because we need to show our support for Fromagerie St-Albert, after a terrible fire this year that destroyed much of the plant. I'd particularly like to invite the member from Leeds–Grenville. He's not far, and he can come down and see me there. This year we're celebrating our 20th anniversary, and it will be bigger than ever, so come to Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and enjoy some of the best cheese in the world.

Each year, I also attend le Festival de la Bine de Plantagenet. This is a family festival by la Binerie de Plantagenet that is celebrated in the fall and recognizes a local dietary staple: the bean. Folks from across my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell bring samples of their family bean recipes, and there's even a contest voted upon by the tasters. Last year, there were over 1,250 participants—very, very exciting.

People in my riding love to support our local food producers and processors, and this legislation that we've just tabled for second reading hopes to illustrate that without local food, we wouldn't have as many food-processing success stories to tell. And these companies help contribute to Ontario's economy.

I would be remiss not to talk about the craft brewers' reception last night, where I was able to enjoy one of my favourite craft beers, made by Beau's Brewery. Tim and Steve Beauchesne from Vankleek Hill have created one of the greatest-tasting specialty beers in Ontario. It's great to see them getting their listings and being stocked in the local LCBOs. I would encourage anyone to go and

try out this fantastic beer. I know that, from across the province of Ontario, there were other craft brewers there that are very good, high quality as well, but it's important for me to make sure that I put my plug in for my residents right out of Vankleek Hill.

Interjection.

Mr. Grant Crack: It certainly is.

There are many other initiatives—la Foire Gourmande out of Lefavre. This is quite an initiative that was started a couple of years back, where there's a partnership between Quebec and Ontario. We have residents taking the ferry from Quebec, coming over to the Ontario side in Lefavre and enjoying the local foods, beers and wines that are created in our region. In return, people take the ferry over to Quebec and they also do the same thing.

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This is a success story that has been going on for a number of years. I have attended that on two occasions in the last two years, and I look forward to being able to attend that.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: And the winery—are you going to talk about the winery in Prescott-Russell?

Mr. Grant Crack: Madame Meilleur, the Honourable Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, is a great fan of Domaine Perrault. Domaine Perrault is a winery just outside of Navan, again in my great riding. I encourage anyone who comes into our area to look them up. They're always willing hosts, willing to invite you to show how they make their wine—a very good price. I would imagine—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I raise my glass to them.

Mr. Grant Crack: The minister is raising her glass to Domaine Perrault as well. It's owned by Denis Perrault and his wife, out of Navan.

In closing, I've given a number of occasions of how proud I am of those who produce products in Ontario in my riding. Je suis très fier de tous les producteurs et processeurs dans ma région de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. It reflects the feedback that we've heard through five separate consultations on what they're doing out there. We need to build on their success stories that I've just described earlier.

Pour terminer, ce projet de loi reflète les commentaires recueillis lors de cinq différentes consultations et vise à multiplier les succès déjà obtenus dans ce domaine. Notre projet de loi sur les aliments locaux et la stratégie globale connexe aideront encore plus de gens à trouver, acheter et manger des aliments et boissons cultivés, récoltés et transformés en Ontario, quel que soit leur lieu de résidence. Our local food bill and broader strategy will help more people find, buy and eat Ontario-grown, -harvested and -made food and beverages right here in Ontario, wherever they live.

J'encourage les membres de ma circonscription et tous les résidents de la province à choisir d'abord les aliments de l'Ontario lorsque cela est possible. I encourage people in my riding and from across this great province to choose Ontario first whenever they can.

Continuons à appuyer ensemble les aliments locaux. Lorsque nous collaborons, nous renforçons l'Ontario.

Let's continue to support local food together, because when we work together we make Ontario stronger.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to address the Minister of Agriculture and the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Thanks for the shout-out to Chapman's Ice Cream in the great town of Markdale from the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, the heart of agriculture.

Of course we support anything from an agricultural perspective that's going to ensure that our agricultural industry is going to be viable down the road. Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound was built from an agricultural perspective. That's how our whole community evolved, and it's still a key, key industry in the heart of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

We definitely agree with the Premier/ag minister's comments that we need to be mutually inclusive for both rural and urban. She made some comments about corn-fed beef, the Risk Management Program, the \$25,000 preference, but you know what? There's nothing in the bill that actually addresses the three of these. It's again just a whole lot of lip service. It sounds good in a media interview, it's a sound bite that sounds really good, and we're supportive, but where's the detail? We need to understand that.

Speaker, I really have to ask the Premier—to ask the ag minister—if she's so supportive of all of this stuff, how could she have allowed her Minister of the Environment to put these absolutely exorbitant and punitive fees on tractor tires and all of the off-road machinery? How can she stand on one side and say, "I'm very supportive and it's wonderful," yet she puts these fees in that will drive jobs and tax revenue out of our great province? It's ludicrous.

In the House last week when I asked her this question, she said that she was going to address it, but those fees are in place right now. What's she truly doing before those jobs and those economic impacts are gone out of this province again? We just can't continue to go down this road.

We need to have an agriculture minister who's standing up and saying, "No, we can't do these things because it is punitive. It is going to drive jobs and tax revenues out of our great rural areas." We want you to step up and take action.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up and talk about the importance of local food on the general economy at large and on the rural economy. In my riding in particular, Kitchener–Waterloo, we are surrounded by some of the richest, most prosperous soil and farming conditions in the province of Ontario, and yet there are some real barriers that farmers are facing in their field—not literally, and figuratively as well. I think that's one aspect of this act that I think that if we get it to committee, we can actually build some mechanisms and some tools in to truly support farmers.

There is also a missed opportunity here in the act to truly connect the education system with moving forward with local food. We have a lot of partnerships that are microscopic in the grand scheme of things, between schools and school boards and the farming industry, and I think that we can do a lot to connect those two elements in society so that we build future people in this province who are looking to the local food in their communities as a real option—actually, as the only option.

I know that genetically modified foods are a real issue in the province of Ontario, and I think that this is something that can be strengthened in support of our local and rural economy.

Certainly, I'm looking forward to Herrle's, which is the local farm in my riding, to open up. It's actually the big signal for spring, that spring is here. We make an extra effort to go there to support that family and that farm because farmers feed cities.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It gives me great pleasure to speak on this Local Food Act that was introduced by the Minister of Agriculture.

In my riding, I don't have any farmers who are established because I represent downtown Ottawa, but I have a wonderful farmers' market. Of course, it's a place where people in Ottawa gather every day of the week, but especially on Saturday and Sunday, because we want to buy fresh food and we want to know where these fruits and vegetables and meats come from. So I wanted to pay tribute to the farmers in my area, who work very hard to provide us with this very tasty and good food, and we know where it's from.

But I want to take the opportunity to talk about St-Albert cheese factory, because on February 3, they had the misfortune of a big fire which razed their factory. I want to pay tribute to them because, instead of saying, "Poor us. What's happening? Are we going to get money from the government to rebuild?", the next day, Regent Ouimet got up in front of the microphone at a press conference and said, "We are going to rebuild. We're going to rebuild because this factory hired more than 100 people." They are so well known, not just in the area but on the Quebec side and on the Ontario side, for the best curds. I take the opportunity to invite all of you at the Festival de la Curd next August to help them, to give them a boost, because they are rebuilding. In no time, they have found a partner to help them to produce in the meantime.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: Good morning. I'm pleased to provide a couple of minutes' worth of comments and questions on the Local Food Act.

The feedback that I've received so far is that—obviously, we're all champions of local food in our area. I have a number of farms in Leeds and Grenville, and I think we've got a great network. When the Premier

speaks about the local food movement, I'm very pleased that I have such an active movement in Leeds–Grenville.

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One thing that they have expressed concern about—and I will read from the definitions of the bill. It says:

“‘Local food’ means,

“(a) food produced or harvested in Ontario, and

“(b) subject to any limitations in the regulations, food and beverages made in Ontario if they include ingredients produced or harvested in Ontario.”

The concern that some of my local food movement members have expressed to me is that they want to allow for regional promotion and not just be a provincial designation. I think that was one of the concerns, that when we talk local food in eastern Ontario—and I know we have some of my colleagues from eastern Ontario that spoke earlier—we talk about it from a regional level. I know that in my riding, my local health unit has been very active in working on a local food charter.

I was just at our OFA meeting in Leeds county and we had a wonderful presentation by one of the champions of local food in Leeds–Grenville, Wendy Banks. I just want to do a quick shout-out to Wendy Banks and Rick Trudeau of Wendy's Mobile Market and Wendy's Country Market in Lyndhurst. They have developed not just a door-to-door delivery service but also a partnership with some 70 regional food producers and regional farmers. Wendy is a sixth-generation farmer, and they do a great job.

I look forward to the debate. I look forward to getting some more meat on the bones when it comes to this legislation, because it is bit of a photo op bill; it doesn't have much substance. But I look forward to the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to thank the honourable member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who spoke briefly about the Local Food Act but then, of course, had to bring in another subject, which was the Ontario Tire Stewardship. I'm very pleased that you support the Local Food Act and that your party will be supporting the Local Food Act.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo: You made a great comment and I thank you for your input. Yes, farmers feed cities, but we also have to acknowledge the fact that, as the Premier had indicated, farmers need cities and cities need farmers. That's why this bill has been introduced, to try to bridge some of the gaps and encourage collaboration between the two important aspects of our economy.

The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services: Merci beaucoup. She talked about St. Albert's cheese, Fromagerie St-Albert, dans ma circonscription. It's a very important employer, and we hope to see them being rebuilt and back to full production within the next year.

Thank you for your comments as well, the member from Leeds–Grenville. I know he's supportive, Madam Speaker, of this particular bill.

I'd just like to summarize and say I know there has been concern about the Local Food Act and some of the contents and the direction that we're taking, but rest assured that we have, as a government, listened.

In section 4, under the scope of the proposed bill, one of the concerns that was raised was that there's not any indication that local initiatives could be entertained, but under that section 4, under “Scope,” geographical areas are taken into consideration. That means that local communities can come up with local initiatives and local solutions for their local food.

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

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to make a point of order. I'd like to introduce my guest today. She's here visiting from Perth–Wellington. Her name is Romyne Smith Fullerton. I'd like to wish her a warm welcome here in the House today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): That's not a point of order, but we welcome her to the House.

The member for Oxford has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading debate adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further business, government House leader?

Hon. John Milloy: No further business, Madam Speaker.

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

The House recessed from 1005 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce, from my riding of Perth–Wellington, Ben Dobben, who is the father of page Jarrod Dobben. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'd like to introduce page Addison's father, August Arone, and his sister Chiara Arone, to the chamber today to see their brother and son be page captain today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm very pleased this morning to be able to introduce, in the east gallery here—sitting here with us today is Christie Hartley. Christie is the mother of page Kamryn Hartley, from my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. I'd like to welcome her to Queen's Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Joining us shortly will be members of the Equal Pay Coalition; also, an invitation for all MPPs to join them right after question period in rooms 228 and 230.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guests.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today Ajax page Rabail Waseem's mother, Rubeen

Chauhen; her father, Waseem Sheikh; and younger brothers Hasnaat Waseem and Aayan Waseem. They're sitting in the gallery to my right. I'm sure that our page is honoured to have her mother and father here.

Hon. Michael Chan: The individual may not be here yet, but I still want to welcome him. His name is Zhehang Deng, a fourth-year political science student visiting from China.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? I shall offer one of my own. In the Speaker's gallery today is my other brother, the oldest brother, my brother Pat, and his wife, Ida. Welcome to Queen's Park. Being the patriarch of the family, he's going to give me a report card today.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would now like all of us to observe as the pages assemble to be introduced. Our new pages are here today. Here they come. Right here.

I would ask all the members to join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages serving in the second session of the 40th Parliament: Jason Ahrens from York-Simcoe; Callum Arnold from Algoma-Manitoulin; Addison Arone from Barrie; Amina Bangura from Scarborough Centre; Sophia Carney from Ottawa-Vanier; Jarrod Dobben from Perth-Wellington; wait for it—Rosalin Dubois from Brant; Madelyn Elliott from Kitchener-Waterloo; Stacey Fernandes from Pickering-Scarborough East; Jack Greenberg from Halton; Kamryn Hartley from Thunder Bay-Atikokan; Annie Lloyd from Simcoe North; Morgan Palmer from Elgin-Middlesex-London; Nicholas Raponi De Roia from Ottawa South; Louis Riel-Brockie from Mississauga South; Glory Samouel from Oak Ridges-Markham; Madeline Smart-Reed from Etobicoke Centre; Theodore Vaidhyan from Mississauga-Erindale; Rabail Waseem from Ajax-Pickering; and Bonnie Wu from Richmond Hill. These are our pages. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question this morning is for the Premier. Premier, yesterday we learned that the cost of your gas plant cancellation is now showing up on the hydro bills of hard-working Ontarians. Today we have proof of millions more. We have a letter from the government's OPA authorizing the hiring of a \$600-an-hour lawyer. This is "with respect to witness preparation" for the power plant scandal testimony of their staff.

Premier, whatever happened to just going into a hearing, putting your hand on the Bible, taking an oath and then standing up and telling the truth?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I apologize for my voice.

It's interesting that the member talks about accuracy in front of the committee. I think all of us are waiting for an apology to the committee and this House for a document that he tabled in the committee, PC document number 5, which he, over and over again, said was redacted. We actually printed off the document from the USB key that was provided to him. It was not redacted. The area that he made such outrageous claims about was, in fact, simply shaded. Perhaps the PC Party needs a new photocopy machine and perhaps the honourable member needs to apologize to this House for making those claims.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will be moving right into identifying ridings, and I will be very terse today—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —including the person who just gave me a compliment.

Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I can tell you that in my role as Honorary Colonel with the Algonquin Regiment we have a sentence: When you're taking flack, you must be over the target, so thank you.

Here's another document, this time from the sole-sourced procurement of outside legal counsel to assist the government with the Mississauga plant cancellation. The cost was \$500,000. I would wonder if this is part of the total cost we keep hearing from the government or if this too will be added on the hydro bills of Ontarians.

Premier, I ask you: How much money is your government spending on outside lawyers for your gas plants cancellation scandal?

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member is not going to get away with it by simply dismissing it. This is PC document number 5, which was tabled with the committee. It comes from a USB key that was provided to every party in this House. There is a sentence—I'll give you one example: "Are you moving the gas plant back to Mississauga? Or elsewhere in the GTA?"

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The honourable member claims that it was redacted. He claimed it in the committee. We printed it out off the USB key that was given to the PCs and it says, in shading, "No. There are no plans to locate the plant in Mississauga or elsewhere in the GTA. We are currently..." and I could go on. It is shading. I cannot help that the Progressive Conservative Party does not have money for a new photocopy machine, but that member owes this House and the committee an apology for making those claims.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: When we did go through the hundreds—

Interjections.

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

Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: As we go through the hundreds of pages of redacted documents, I did find one that wasn't redacted. This is the same firm that was retained in Mississauga. It was also retained for the Oakville cancellation. This document says that the same rates will apply—the same billing rates. That means yet another—a second \$500,000.

Today we disclosed a \$600-an-hour contract and two \$500,000 contracts. Congratulations, another \$1 million-plus day for the Liberals, all that to be added to the hydro bills of hard-working Ontarians, seniors, families, and businesses.

Premier, you don't need the entire government to lawyer up. You just need to fess up. Will you do that here today and tell us the full cost—

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, it doesn't work this way. You can't just ignore the fact that the honourable member went to the committee—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Grenville will come to order. Second and only time. Thank you.

Answer?

Hon. John Milloy: You can't simply come to committee and produce a document which was provided by the government which simply had some highlighting, photocopy it and claim it's redacted. It was not that long ago the honourable member stood up and said there were no Vapour-lock documents; I produced a pile of them. He goes before the committee and says this document was redacted and it was not.

It is time that member apologized to this Legislature and to the committee for what he is claiming.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. Your secret deal with the teachers' unions has come with a \$63-million price tag on retirement gratuities. Yesterday, you admitted, "The money has been moved around," so you could pay for the perks. That's \$63 million that could have gone into four schools, technology or textbooks for our students but was instead diverted to unions. This comes at a cost to students in Ontario who have had to suffer through the loss of extracurricular activities and some had to lose school days and even report-card-writing.

So, by "moving the money around," you just rewarded the same unions who jeopardized the future of these same students. The question is quite simple: Why did this Premier sell out our students in this province to the unions at a cost of \$63 million?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Both I and the Minister of Education were clear yesterday that the money that was in the contracts when I came into this office is exactly the same money that is in the contracts today. The savings that was found, \$1.8 billion, is the same money that was saved at the end of this contract.

What we did was we worked with the federations on implementation. There was money that was applied to

different areas within the contract, but the money is the same. There is no additional money in these contracts. The reality is that we want to work with the education sector. We want to make sure that our students have access to extracurricular activities, and we want a respectful relationship with the teachers, the support staff and the school boards. That's our priority.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Wow. It's just wow that she says that doesn't have any money attached to it. Then, I also say that the eHealth system is working just perfectly in this province if she believes this.

Back to the Premier: Yesterday you also came close to admitting that you did in fact reopen the collective agreements that just eight months ago you supported. You said, "We have reopened our respective dialogue," but in your rush for an OSSTF do-over you didn't have a "respective dialogue" with our school boards. In fact, you had no dialogue with them at all. With regulation 274, you usurped and stripped them of their power. Now you're signing on the dotted line for them.

If this agreement is so good for parents and for students and the school boards in this province, why was it not signed by the school boards in Ontario, who are going to have to pay for and implement your new deal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand the politics of division that the member opposite is playing, Mr. Speaker. I understand that she believes it's in her best interests to continue to drive wedges. That's not what I believe. I really believe that's it's very important that we have that respectful dialogue with the education sector, that we work with our teachers and our support staff, and that kids have access to excellent education, including extracurriculars.

School boards were at the table, Mr. Speaker. School boards were part of this process. I've been very clear that the process going forward, the collective bargaining process going forward, must have all of the partners at the table. I agree with the member opposite that school boards need to be a part of that dialogue. One of the problems over the last year was that they were not enough a part of the dialogue, and they need to be, going forward.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They were not part of the dialogue at all; you just have to ask them. But let me tell you one thing: If you want to talk about the best interests of the education system, it has been Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus who have stood up for students, parents and teachers who want to teach during the last eight months. We did not cave—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to take a moment to remind members of a couple of things. The first one is, when somebody is putting the question, hearing somebody from the same side yelling out is not help-

ful to the debate, and people answering and having other people on the same side yelling out is not helpful.

The second thing is, I continue to hear members using each other's names, which is not the condition here. It helps to lower the debate instead of raise it. I'm going to remind that you either remark about their title or their riding. Let's leave it at that. It helps with the debate.

Finish, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I simply have this question for the Premier. Her previous leader and the former education minister said there was no new money; we needed Bill 115. Now you're trying to tell us we have lots of money and we can buy off the unions. I want to know: Who's telling the truth—Dalton McGuinty and Laurel Broten, or you and Liz Sandals? I can tell you one thing: The only people who have suffered for the last eight months are kids in elementary schools and secondary schools in this province. We'll continue to stand on their behalf. You won't do it; we will.

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There's no new money in the contracts, Mr. Speaker. It's exactly the same money.

For better or worse, I am standing here because of the actions of that party in education. I'm standing here because I have fought for publicly funded education throughout my whole career. I really believe that government should work with education. There were 26 million student days lost under the previous government, Mr. Speaker, because of strikes, because of the hostile environment between the Legislature and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm getting my workout today, and I'm more than earning my money today, actually. What I'm asking for is the civility that everyone else seems to want me to bring, and I can't do it without you. Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Speaker, what moved me to run provincially was because I believe so deeply in publicly funded education and I was so upset about what was happening under the previous government.

We have worked tirelessly for the last nine and a half years and we're going to continue to work to improve our education system, and we're going to do it in partnership with the teachers, with the support staff and school boards in our system.

Interjections.

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

New question.

1050

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday in her speech—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry. The member from Nepean–Carleton has had enough, and it stops.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Premier—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member is warned.

Please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Three times lucky, Speaker.

My question is to the Premier. Yesterday in her speech to the board of trade, the Premier spoke about the tight fiscal constraints that are currently facing our province. Would she agree that \$1.3 billion annually is a lot of money for Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Absolutely, \$1.3 billion is a lot of money. I'm not sure where the leader of the third party is going with this, but I will say, in my remarks to the Toronto board of trade, what I was talking about is the absolute need to make sure that we have investment in infrastructure, particularly in transit in the GTHA, but beyond the GTHA, in roads and in bridges, because that transportation infrastructure is a fundamental priority and condition for economic growth in the province. That's what I was talking about at the Toronto Region Board of Trade.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Over the last decade, the government has invested a lot in no-strings-attached corporate giveaways. Today's combined corporate income tax rate is nearly 50% lower than the average between 1960 and 1990. The HST has dramatically reduced the taxes businesses pay, as has the elimination of capital taxes.

If times are tight, why is the government again planning to help Ontario's largest corporations with yet another writeoff of \$1.3 billion in sales taxes every year?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the Minister of Finance has been very clear that some of the suggestions that the leader of the third party has put forward in terms of closing loopholes and making sure compliance is in place—that we need to look at those.

But that does not negate the need to have a serious discussion about finding revenue streams and building transit in the GTHA. We cannot continue to deal with the loss of productivity that is engendered by the congestion and the near-gridlock that we're confronting in the GTHA.

I really would have thought that the third party would have been interested in working with us on this. It does not make sense to me, Mr. Speaker, that the people who travel to work, who want to get home, who are commuting and want a better way to travel—that the third party wouldn't be interested in finding a way to make that happen. That's what needs to take place.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Eglinton–Lawrence will come to order.

Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I seem to recall something about a \$4-billion withdrawal from Transit City, Speaker, but maybe that's just confusion.

This is what is confusing a lot of people, though—it's confusing a lot of people. They're being told that the cupboards are bare. They're going to have to accept layoffs at hospitals, they're going to have to accept chaos in classrooms and they should also get ready to have their household budgets get hit yet again with another sales tax. While their government is asking them to pay more and more and more, they're telling the biggest corporations in the province that they're going to get yet another tax break.

Does the Premier think it makes sense to ask a working mom to pay more while telling corporations like the Royal Bank of Canada that they actually get a break?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I think what doesn't make sense is to ask the working mum to commute for three hours from Scarborough to downtown to her job or to drop off her child at daycare and not have a decent way of getting to her workplace and getting home. That's what doesn't make sense.

I want that mum to be able to have a convenient way of getting to work, a convenient way of getting her child to daycare and a convenient way of getting home so she can spend some time with that child at home. That's what I want. That's what this is about.

The \$4 billion that the leader of the opposition was talking about, that's not money that was taken out. That money is being spent right now on the Eglinton cross-town line. We're building that line.

Again, I implore the member for Toronto–Danforth, the member for Beaches–East York, the member for Parkdale–High Park, the member for Trinity–Spadina and the member for Davenport to join with us. Your constituents want this transit to be built.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've made a final decision: I'll be switching to decaf.

Please, give us the opportunity to get through this professionally.

New question. The leader of the third party.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thanks, Speaker. I would dare say, though, that that working mom's life has become a lot more difficult in the last 10 years while the government in power has been in place.

My next question is to the Premier. The government argues that corporate giveaways are somehow creating jobs. The Premier seems to think that the crisis in manufacturing is a myth, but another 350 jobs were lost last week in Fergus. For people who are losing their household income, the Liberals' job plan is the real fairy tale here in Ontario.

Can the Premier point to the jobs that are actually being created by corporate giveaways?

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

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the question as well.

We had the opportunity to speak about Fergus yesterday and the upcoming closure of A.O. Smith. The government has been very proactive on that in terms of—I know that both the Premier and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities have spoken with the leadership and the local member in that riding. We've opened up an action centre to respond to the crisis that that community is experiencing, to make sure that those individuals and the families that they represent are able to have full opportunity going forward.

It's never good news when a closure of this type happens. I've mentioned as well that this is a company with a long, long history in Fergus. It will be difficult for the community, but we're there with them to make sure that we can help them transition as best as we can in this difficult time.

In terms of manufacturing specifically, I'm happy to address that in the supplementary.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think it's only my second supplementary, Speaker. I think it's only my second supplementary. It's not my final.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Second, sorry.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thanks, Speaker.

The reality is, the people of Ontario want jobs, not action centres. The government has invested billions of dollars in corporate giveaways, and they seem to be plowing ahead with plans for over a billion more. These new tax breaks will go to some of the biggest financial institutions in the country. The government's giveaways will not help workers in Fergus, but they will help the Royal Bank of Canada, who will be getting a massive tax break while they outsource Canadian jobs. Is this the sort of job creation that our Premier in this province is actually proud of?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: With regard to the part of the question that deals specifically with the Royal Bank and the temporary foreign workers, I know that the leader of the third party understands very clearly—as the PCs do—that it's the PCs' federal cousins in Ottawa and it's the federal government that's responsible for our Temporary Foreign Worker Program. I was certainly pleased to see that Diane Finley, the minister responsible for that program, has—not only has the government committed, federally, to review that program, as they mentioned in their budget, but they're also looking specifically at this question of the RBC issue, of the replacement of RBC employees with temporary foreign workers through outsourcing.

I was looking forward to the opportunity, of course, to speak to the issue of manufacturing. The truth is that we have been creating manufacturing jobs in this province.

We've created 32,000 jobs since the recessionary low. Also, manufacturing is doing much, much better. The sales in manufacturing were up by 6.5% in 2012 compared to the same period in 2011.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary. And I apologize to the leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, people want to see a plan that works with companies that are actually ready to put people back to work. They want a plan that ties government support to job creation, especially for young people, who are struggling to get started. Instead, they see tax breaks getting handed to Ontario's biggest banks, who aren't hiring people; they're outsourcing jobs.

Is the Premier ready to stop this giveaway and instead invest in a smart strategy that actually helps people looking for jobs in Ontario and not people looking to send those jobs away?

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Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, we are investing in new jobs. The truth is that nearly 400,000 jobs have been created since the bottom of the recession in June 2009. Many of those, as I mentioned, are in the manufacturing sector. Despite what the opposition might like Ontarians to believe, the manufacturing sector is alive and well in Ontario, and we're committed as a government to continue to support it going forward.

In fact, when you compare it with other jurisdictions, whether it's in Canada or around the world, we're doing better. We've brought back all of the jobs that were lost during the recession, and 50% more. We're doing better than the United Kingdom. We're doing better than the United States.

Through the jobs round tables that the Premier has been holding across the province—I think she has had 11 of them so far since becoming Premier—we're hearing from Ontarians, many of them manufacturers and other employers, small and medium- and large-sized businesses, to learn how this province can continue to support these important businesses.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Premier. Premier, the Ontario PC Party has been clear where we stand when it comes to Ontario's finances: You must control spending if you want to bring down your ballooning deficit and control debt. Controlling your finances means you stop spending money that you don't have.

Your spineless move to pacify the teachers' unions on the backs of everyday Ontarians is deplorable. Your job is to treat everyone fairly—organized labour and ordinary taxpayers in Ontario—but you've buckled under the teachers' union barrage and thrown every other Ontarian under the bus. The seven-month-long siege is evidence of a widening fairness gap in the Ontario workplace. Thousands of public sector workers enjoy higher salaries, guaranteed pensions and special perks that other Ontarians just don't get.

Premier, based on your current education budget, what are the long-term ramifications? Will you stand in your place and pledge that next year the restored perks you've just swallowed won't be at the expense of ordinary taxpayers?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think I've been clear on what we believe is an imperative: to work with the education sector and make sure that the students in our schools have access to extracurricular activities and that we have a respectful dialogue with the people who work in our schools. We really believe that that is the way to improve the education system. I also know that the party opposite does not hold the same belief in publicly funded education that we do, which is evidenced by their previous actions.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to talk about our economic progress. We are on track—in fact, we're ahead of schedule—to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18. We've restricted overall spending increases. We're supporting small business. We're building a 21st-century workforce. We're ensuring that small and medium businesses have access to capital. We just contributed \$50 million to the \$300-million Venture Capital Fund. All of those are things we're doing to grow the economy and to constrain our spending.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Premier, you don't have to answer me, but you do need to address the millions of Ontarians who can never expect the same perks as those you've given your union cronies. This is a critical time for our province. Your next moves inform nearly 4,000 public sector contracts still up for negotiation. Setting this precedent and collapsing under the guerrilla warfare of organized labour sends a clear message to everyone in this province: The Liberal government is a puppet of the labour unions.

Premier, again, will you state that there will be zero impact as a result of this agreement when the books are opened next year, or will we be in another one of your now-infamous McGuinty-Wynne "oopses"? Premier, tell us now and tell us all: How many education workers, teachers and/or new positions will have to go to pay for these additional perks?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Once again I will just repeat what I have said, which is that the money that was in the contracts when I came into this office is the same money that's there now, Mr. Speaker. The \$1.8 billion that we have saved as a result of the contracts that were dealt with by the previous minister and by the previous Premier are the same savings that we are able to realize today.

What has changed, and I talked about it during the leadership, is that I really believe that it's very important that we have a respectful dialogue with the people who teach the children and grandchildren of everyone in this province. I think the only way that we can continue to improve our education system—and remember, our educated workforce is an important condition of economic growth. That's one of the things I never hear the party opposite talk about: how important it is that we have the best education system in the world in order to be able to

grow our economy. That's our priority on this side of the House.

CASINOS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Premier. Speaker, yesterday Mayor Ford said that Toronto has a deal with the province for \$150 million on casino revenue-sharing. The same day, the Premier said that the province does not have a deal at all. They both can't be right. Will the Premier come clean today with Ontarians on the \$150-million sweetheart deal for Toronto?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I do appreciate the member asking this question again, but I am going to give him the same answer, Mr. Speaker, and that is that there is no agreement on \$150 million with the city of Toronto. You will have to talk to Mayor Ford about that number. That is not a number I'm familiar with. It's not a number that has anything to do with our conversation with any of the municipalities about casinos.

We've been very clear: The formula across the province is going to be the same formula. There will be no special deals for any jurisdiction, and every jurisdiction is going to have to decide, based on that fair formula, whether they want a casino or not. Municipalities are going to decide that, in conversation, in consultation, with their constituents. That's how it's going to work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: If the Premier can't answer on the \$150 million, perhaps she can answer whether or not the government has a plan for OLG privatization, and does she want to share that plan with the people of Ontario?

We keep hearing of Toronto getting a special deal to be a host site for a casino in downtown Toronto. My question is a very simple one. If there is a sweetheart deal and it's not for \$150 million, how much is the Premier prepared to spend?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite has been a mayor of East York. He is a former mayor of East York. He knows perfectly well that the Premier of the province—he knows this very well, because I have sat with him. I know that he knows that the Premier of the province cannot control what mayors of jurisdictions and mayors of municipalities say.

I have no control over what Mayor Ford or any other mayor in the province chooses to say, so he will really have to speak to the mayor about the numbers that the mayor has put in his letter. I cannot control that, Mr. Speaker.

What I can tell you is there is no special deal for any municipality in the province. Municipalities will be dealing with a fair formula across the province, and they will decide, in consultation with their constituents, whether they want a casino or not, based on that formula.

ACCESSIBILITY TO EMPLOYMENT FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. Kim Craitor: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. Re-

cently, Minister, media has taken focus on the apparent skill gap that is evident in the Ontario and the Canadian economies. While too many people are underemployed and unemployed, some businesses are reporting they can't find workers to fill jobs that they have. Recently, at the jobs round table, it was noted that some companies are having difficulty finding employees with the right skills they require.

I, like many Ontarians, believe we need to do more to ensure that we're producing workers with the skills we need at home. The article also points to the fact that in order to address the labour and skill shortages, Canada should be doing more to address participation rates among key demographics in our own country, including people with disabilities.

Can the minister explain what Ontario is doing to increase the labour force participation among Ontarians with disabilities?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question from the member representing Niagara Falls. We need to ensure that we're developing and using the full range of talents we have in our workforce. That's why, in the throne speech, when it was announced that my ministry would take on responsibility for the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the AODA, that was a very important decision that was taken at that time.

We know that currently, about one in every seven Ontarians has a disability. Quite frankly, as the population ages, that number is going to increase to nearly 20%, or one in five. That's why we introduced the AODA in 2005, to ensure that Ontario becomes fully accessible by 2025.

We're proud to be one of the first jurisdictions to move from a complaints-based system to a modern regulatory regime that addresses mandated accessibility. We've moved it over to economic development because this is an important issue not only of accessibility and inclusiveness but economic development as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kim Craitor: Thank you, Minister. In my riding of Niagara Falls, and in Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie, the disability community, led by people such as Sandy Bird, is pleased the government is moving in the right direction by making Ontario fully accessible.

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Ensuring everyone can participate in the community and the workforce is important, as many people with disabilities make great employees and actually are often more productive than their able-bodied counterparts. Studies have shown that people with disabilities are actually less likely to miss work and tend to demonstrate real loyalty and commitment. Yet businesses tend to be reluctant to hire people with disabilities, fearing the high cost of implementation will have a negative impact on their bottom line.

Minister, can you please explain why the changes are necessary and how Ontario plans to benefit by becoming even more accessible?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Of course, greater accessibility means greater opportunities for Ontario and obviously greater employment opportunities for everyone, including people with disabilities.

This is about creating an inclusive society, an inclusive workforce and inclusive employment opportunities for all. That's why Ontario is moving forward with implementing the AODA so that not only Ontarians with disabilities will have better access to employment but, as the member points out, employers will benefit from their skills and their talents.

We know of many employers who have created inclusive workplaces, and cost is not the issue. It's actually good for business. Our government is committed to continuing to provide support to help even more businesses and more employers attract and maintain employees of all abilities.

The economics are clear. The Martin Prosperity Institute estimates that by implementing the AODA, it could bring an additional \$1.6 billion into the province in tourism alone, and revenue in the retail sector amounting to almost 10 billion new dollars.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Premier. Premier, last time you and I had a conversation in this House, you were kind enough to give me an A for creativity. In return, I think you deserve an A in your mastery of backroom deals.

Last week, we found out your can-do attitude will cost Ontario students at least \$63 million in classroom funding. You've deprived those students to ensure that Working Families's two largest donors, OSSTF and ETFO, have 63 million more reasons to spend another \$3 million in election advertising.

Premier, can you tell us exactly what the \$63 million was earmarked for that has now been redirected to the unions' pockets?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, as I've said before, Mr. Speaker, there is no new money being redirected into these contracts. It's money within the contracts that was found that has been able to be applied to some of the implementation of the different parts of the agreement.

I would have thought that the member opposite would have been able to talk to some of his constituents and would have realized that, actually, parents and kids are very pleased that their teachers and support staff are delivering extracurriculars, that there's a different tone in the schools, that the feeling among teachers is changing and they understand that this government, as we have for the last nine and a half years, really wants to work with them to improve the education system. I would have thought he might have had a chance to talk to some constituents about that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Back to the Premier: Clearly arithmetic wasn't your strong suit.

I can tell you what the \$63 million should have been earmarked for—and further to your response, I did speak with a young teacher here in Toronto just the other day who teaches at an inner-city school. I was shocked when he told me that for his mandatory civics class of 30 students, there were only 10 textbooks. I was astonished when he also told me that there was not a single computer nor a single Internet connection in any of the classrooms.

These inner-city students are suffering the consequences of your extracurricular political activities. Premier, how do you expect these students to get an A when your failed leadership only provides them with an F in resources?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite knows that for the last nine and a half years, we have put hundreds of millions of dollars into resources for teachers, that there is more money for classroom supplies.

I'm not suggesting that there isn't more to do. I'm not suggesting that there can't continue to be improvements. There absolutely do need to. But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This is the second time, which means it's the last time before the warning, for the member from Renfrew.

The member from Lanark, you asked the question. I want you to listen to the answer.

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes, listen. Be a good student.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the member from Eglinton–Lawrence does not help me one bit by doing what he's doing.

Premier?

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

The bottom line is that we really believe that it is in the best interests of the children of this province that their teachers are able to work with the government, that they have a respectful dialogue with the government, because if that doesn't happen, then we see what happened under the previous government where the communication broke down, where there were 26 million days lost because of labour action because there was no respectful discussion.

Our priority is to improve our school system.

TIRE RECYCLING

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: And Food.

Mr. John Vanthof: —and Food. The minister says she is making it her business to get to understand what goes on in rural Ontario and in the agriculture community. Based on comments from farmers at the Earlton Farm Show last weekend, farmers like Jason Robert, increasing eco fees on agricultural tires from \$15 to \$35 and more without consultation is not a good way to start that conversation, especially when fees in Quebec are \$3.

Not only are we risking costs on eco fees but we're also risking tire businesses all along the border. In fact, it shows a continued lack of understanding and respect for the struggles of Ontario's food producers and businesses along the border.

Will the minister call a halt now to these unfair eco fee charges?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm going to ask the Minister of the Environment to speak to the supplementary, but I want the member opposite to know—because he and I have had conversations. As my critic, I want him to know that I was aware that the agriculture community was having concerns about the recent increases to the tire recycling costs. I spoke with the Minister of the Environment, and I know the Ontario Tire Stewardship and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture have been in conversation. I know that the minister will want to speak to that.

But I was acutely aware that there needed to be a mitigation in this situation, that it was not acceptable in the agriculture community and that the recycling costs were higher than in other jurisdictions, which is exactly why the Minister of the Environment has been working with OTS and the OFA.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again to the Minister of Agriculture and Food, it's strange that producers weren't aware at all. There was no consultation at all with producers before it happened.

Speaker, the Ontario government says it supports extended producer responsibility. That means that tire companies shouldn't be allowed to pass the cost of recycling tires to farmers. It wasn't \$35; it's \$350 for a tire or more. Even the Minister of the Environment says he's deeply disappointed that the use of eco fees by some producers continues. We know there's a problem. Premier, Minister, will you commit to fixing it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I can tell the member that as soon as the Premier asked me to meet with the OTS chairman and CEO, I was absolutely delighted to do so. I'm happy to say to the member—there's another note coming in—that, first of all, the Ontario Tire Stewardship assured me that, even though they're arm's length, they're private sector, they're independent, they did consult.

When I met with them, I said there are some major challenges for the farming community. The Premier has indicated that. They sat down with me and said, "We're prepared to go back to the agricultural community to consult once again," and my understanding is that those talks have been very productive and that a lot of people are very optimistic that this matter can be resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned.

So I think we'll have a good-news answer to this eventually. Time will tell, but I want to assure the member that action—

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

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COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES

Mr. Phil McNeely: This question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, community health care is important for my constituents and for all Ontarians. Making local decisions about local health care is critical to planning effectively and ensuring the best outcomes. While the other parties were in power, cuts were made and hospitals were closed. These are not the kinds of changes that put families' minds at ease. When I talk to Ontarians, especially my constituents, they want to be assured that if they need health services they will be locally available.

Through you, Speaker, to the minister: Could the minister please inform the House about some of the ways the new Ontario government is working to strengthen community health care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Ottawa–Orléans, the very hard-working member from Ottawa–Orléans, for this important question.

I can assure you that our government is committed to community health centres. That's why I was very pleased to announce, just last week, community capital funding projects that will benefit 17 community projects, including community health centres and aboriginal health access centres. This fulfills another element of our action plan and our efforts to provide Ontarians with the right care at the right time in the right place. It also reinforces our commitment to health equity.

CHCs help strengthen Ontario communities by serving people who face barriers to access in health care, including geography, child care, housing and poverty. CHCs bring together teams of physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, counsellors, community workers and dietitians to provide a comprehensive range of services.

We have almost doubled the number of community health centres, and I am very excited that we will continue to improve access.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Minister, for your response. I'm glad to hear that the new Ontario government takes community health care seriously. These investments will certainly help make it easier for families to access the right care at the right time in the right place.

Our rural communities face unique challenges when it comes to providing care. I want to be assured that this government has taken these into consideration. Speaker, through you to the minister: What is being done to strengthen health care in rural communities across the province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member for his supplementary.

In fact, just yesterday I had the opportunity to be out and about. I was in Tweed, Ontario, and I was in Lind-

say, Ontario, to announce funding for the creation of a new community health centre in the city of Kawartha Lakes. I was joined by the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

I was in Tweed; I was joined by the member for Prince Edward–Hastings.

I was particularly pleased, when I was in Lindsay, to announce the funding for the centre. In fact, the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, in her former role as a nurse, took my blood pressure and did an excellent job.

Interjection: Are you okay?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I just want to assure you that there was a great pulse there. We'll move on from there.

In fact, the member had this to say about our government—very kind words: “Thank you for forging ahead with great plans. You have a whole community certainly behind these efforts. Thank you for coming to the riding and making such a great announcement.”

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

You'll notice I didn't do anything about that because you brought that one on by yourself.

Anyway, the member from Cambridge.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the energy minister. New revelations this morning point to the fact that it is not only elected officials and their political staff telling us as little as possible, but government agencies are as well. Just weeks before the OPA released its third batch of documents, we have learned that it hired expensive lawyers to help make the Ontario Power Authority understand what it could say and what it couldn't say.

Mr. Speaker, all we want on this side of the House is the truth. The problem is that the Liberals have consistently been pointing the finger at the OPA, knowing full well that it is the Ontario Liberal Party driving the bus on these cancelled power plants. Ontarians now learn they are out another \$500,000 for more Liberal mistakes.

Will the minister own up to being responsible for this \$500,000 price tag? And while he's at it, will he own up to the \$800-million power plant scandal?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, first of all, it's the responsibility of the different agencies to hire their own counsel; it's not the responsibility of the government.

What I do want to say is, we keep hearing question after question coming up as a result of evidence that's going before the committee. The committee's work is not done yet. The Provincial Auditor is getting ready to report in the foreseeable future, Mr. Speaker. But what we don't hear are any positive policies with respect to energy from the opposition. They did issue a white paper. In their white paper, they wanted to privatize OPG. They want to privatize Hydro One. This is what the Toronto Sun says: “Hudak should keep in mind the last Tory government in Ontario that tried to do that with electri-

city generation, promising it would lead to lower hydro rates.

“Instead, it led to the exact opposite—rates skyrocketed amid rampant Tory patronage....”

Mr. Speaker, I want to hear what their policy is. I want them to be accountable for their policy. What they're promising to do now in energy they've tried before. It was a complete disaster and rates went up by 30%.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Well, Mr. Speaker, the energy minister is actually incorrect. The question that I just asked wasn't about committee testimony; it was about a leaked document the OPA produced to us, so let's be honest about that.

We have listened intently to the Ontario Power Authority's press conference on February 21 of this year, and what a train wreck that was. Jim Hinds and Colin Andersen evaded questions for the better part of an hour and felt that \$500,000 of taxpayer money gave them the right to label questions they didn't like as inappropriate. Can you believe that, Mr. Speaker? They thought that media questions posed to them were inappropriate.

We are here on this side of the House in pursuit of accountability and transparency while you are spending more and more money on lawyers that get us further and further away from the truth.

Minister, why is this government insistent on telling us so little every step of the way when your Premier made such a production of your new-found pursuit of openness and transparency?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the Premier's position on the gas plants and on the committees on this side of the House. The Premier led the initiative to expand the mandate. The Premier has offered to go and be at committee. The Premier has offered to open up every ministry to be available to provide documentation. That's something that they have not taken advantage of.

What I will say, Mr. Speaker, is that we have been open, we have been transparent, and we have directed the Auditor General to come forward. The Auditor General will be independent. He will be neutral. He has access to all the documents. He has access to witnesses under oath. Let's await his report, because I would rather listen to what the Auditor General has to say about the truthfulness of what went on, the veracity of what went on, rather than these people, who are trying to count the number of angels on the head of a pin, and they're misdirecting all the facts, misrepresenting all the facts when they come into this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister will withdraw.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I withdraw.

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

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Two hundred and ninety cancer patients have been losing

sleep in Windsor since finding out that their chemotherapy drugs were watered down, and so have their families and friends. Facing cancer is hard enough. Facing uncertainty like this makes it worse.

When will this government allow Ontario's Ombudsman, a truly independent third party—in fact, I think the Minister of Energy was just talking about the independence and transparency of our legislative officers. The Ombudsman is one of those officers. So why won't the Premier, or will the Premier, have the Ombudsman investigate what went wrong so that we can assure that it never happens again?

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for this question. It gives me an opportunity to update the House on our moving forward on understanding exactly what happened. This is a completely unacceptable situation. It is imperative that we understand what happened and how we can make sure it never happens again.

Speaker, yesterday the working group met. It includes representatives from London Health Sciences Centre, Windsor Regional Hospital, Lakeridge Health, Peterborough Regional Health Centre, the Ontario Hospital Association, Cancer Care Ontario, the Ontario College of Pharmacists, Health Canada and our ministry. In addition, we will be adding representation from New Brunswick because they too are affected by this.

Speaker, I can assure you that everyone in the health care sector is determined to understand what happened, and we will be appointing an independent third party person to review the entire cancer supply—

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

1130

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, not only did this mistake put lives in jeopardy, including that of a seven-year-old Windsor boy, but it shook public confidence in our health care system. Windsorites deserve peace of mind, and they need answers. Only a completely transparent and completely independent investigation will satisfy them.

Why won't this government allow Ontario's Ombudsman—Ontario's neutral, unbiased, independent Ombudsman, who already has all of the resources in his office to do this work—to get to the bottom of what happened?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have the same goal. I think we are on completely common ground when we want to understand what happened, and we must restore the confidence of Ontario's patients.

Ontario has one of the finest, if not the finest, cancer care systems in the world. We are internationally recognized as having excellent cancer care, the best survival outcomes, but we must continue to be ever-vigilant. I think it's very important that the person who leads this review must have expertise specific to this problem. This is an issue that requires that expertise, and that's why we will be shortly moving forward, announcing that third-party reviewer.

ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Sports fans and all hockey fans in my riding were pleased to hear recently that Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, through its MLSE Foundation, has partnered with a great organization called Right to Play through their Promoting Life-skills in Aboriginal Youth initiative called the PLAY initiative. I know that our government, the Ontario government, is one of the founding partners of the PLAY initiative and has contributed to the expansion of this great program in Ontario.

Now, we've all heard about the success of this initiative and how it's had a very positive effect on First Nations youth in Ontario, who are learning important life skills through both sport and recreation.

So would the minister please inform this House as to how the current government is continuing to support the program?

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for that question. The Right to Play is a foundation that was founded by John Koss, who, interestingly, was an Olympic gold medal power skater. He recognized the need to teach aboriginal children discipline, ambition and all of those skills that would enable them to really become better participants in life later on.

He set up the foundation. The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs has contributed \$3 million to it, and we went out and found a private partner, Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment. Larry Tanenbaum, who is the CEO of Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, stepped forward and has contributed that amount of money.

What it does is it helps aboriginal students learn those—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. You have a certain amount of time to answer your question.

Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you. It's great to hear about the difference this program is making in First Nations communities all across Ontario.

My constituents will also be pleased to hear that PLAY is helping aboriginal youth improve their health, their self-esteem and their leadership skills through participation in sports and play activities. It sounds like such a great program, I'm sure many of us would like to see this expanded, and what we'd like to see is kids in all 133 First Nations communities in Ontario have the same access to this program.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, what is our government going to do to build on this success, and how is it going to expand this program to make it available to more communities across the province of Ontario?

Hon. David Zimmer: I was in Manitoulin Island on Friday and we set up one of the Right to Play projects. What we're doing now is we've got 42 First Nations communities in which Right to Play is participating and we've got three urban aboriginal organizations in which Right to Play is participating. We've created 44 jobs for

aboriginal leaders in those communities to develop coaching skills and the like. We're putting about 1,000 aboriginal children a week through these programs. I can tell you, I was up there with Larry Tanenbaum; Wendel Clark, the Toronto Maple Leafs hockey player; Bruce Kidd; Sammi Jo Small, the female Olympic hockey player; and John Koss. The four of us sat down. We opened up a facility on Manitoulin Island, and you would not believe the looks that you saw on those aboriginal children's faces. They were happy. They had a taste for ambition.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do want to remind the members that on both questions and answers, when I stand, you sit. There is a certain amount of time that you are allotted to put the question; there's a certain amount of time allotted to put the answer. Some of you have got that down to a really fine art, to the second. Others seem to want to continue to do the things that—when I sat in the opposition benches and the back benches of the government, I learned how to play that game, so I know how it's played. As far as the decorum, my concern is again the fact that you are personalizing these kinds of discussions that are taking place, and it races to the bottom, and I'm not going to participate in that.

I'm challenging you at all times to race to the top. The way you treat each other is a good way in which we can show decorum in this place. It's my job and my responsibility as the Speaker to do that, but I can't do it alone.

All right; new question.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is for the Premier. Premier, six days ago you stated that Ontario's manufacturing job losses were a myth. Four days ago we learned that Ontario lost 15,000 private sector jobs during the month of March alone. Some 5,700 of these jobs were good, well-paying manufacturing jobs being chased from Ontario by the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal legacy of high energy rates and unnecessary, job-killing red tape.

Premier, other than conversations, what have you done with your time steering Dalton McGuinty's sinking Liberal ship?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As always, I appreciate a question from my esteemed colleague across the way, my critic. I don't know why, though, he insists on continuing to beat down Ontario employers, including our manufacturers. He knows as well as I do that job creation is variable. We did lose some jobs last month, of course. The month before we actually gained 35,000 jobs. I know he knows as well as I do that of the almost 400,000 jobs that

had been created in this province, many of them manufacturing jobs—out of those 400,000 jobs created since June 2009 more than 90% of those jobs are full-time positions. They are meaningful, important jobs. I know that, as I do, he wants to continue to support these industries and appreciate—

Interjections.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There's a rather elevated discussion taking place by two members. I'd like them to take it outside; continue it somewhere else.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The fact—I know he knows this—that Ontario is outpacing almost every other jurisdiction, not only in North America but around the world. We got back all those jobs that were lost. Like me, why isn't he proud of Ontario's businesses, our manufacturing sector—and boost them and talk them up and help us find the supports that they need to succeed?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Here is a fact: This Premier—like her predecessor—and this government have made Ontario a have-not province where 600,000 men and women are unemployed today. The only myth is that the Wynne Liberals have any sort of a plan to grow our economy.

With Peterborough, London, St. Catharines, Brantford and Kitchener-Waterloo all experiencing some of the highest unemployment rates in the country, it is time for urgent action. Premier, stop the digging and stop the nonsense. Some 600,000 unemployed men and women across Ontario don't want to hear the same old McGuinty answers that we have heard 100 times before. I'm proud that Tim Hudak and the PC Party have put forward a dozen policy papers while you've done nothing.

Will your budget include any real measures to help grow our economy and actually create jobs in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know he has his figure; I have my figure of nearly 400,000 jobs created. That's the path that we're on as the government. It's important that we support that.

When it comes to manufacturing, I don't need to say it again but I have to say that—even in his own riding with Lambton Conveyor, that great manufacturing facility. In fact, it was the first project approved by the new Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, in your riding—I'm sure you were there supporting it—creating 110 new jobs in the manufacturing sector. I can't understand why the member opposite voted against the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, as did his party.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I stand on an point of order under section 23(h), allegations against member. The House leader has made an allegation against another member: me. Speaker, I stand here and say to you that I did not

present the same document at committee that he presented here today. I tabled a document from Carolyn Calwell that when viewed on the computer is completely blacked out. It is completely redacted. I challenge—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for his point of order. If there was an allegation made by the member, I would hold them responsible because I did not know the details of what he is talking about. So, therefore, I would offer any member at any time to either correct their record or not to do that. I did not interpret it as such. So thank you to the member.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Wellington–Halton Hills on a point of order.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I believe I heard the Minister of Economic Development and Trade say that the action centre at A.O. Smith, formerly GSW, was “open,” present tense. I believe that the company has not yet even been contacted by the provincial government and I would ask—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm standing. I have heard enough of what the member was saying, that I was going to make a ruling. So when I stand, you sit.

Number two, the member will withdraw what he said, the one word he used, he will withdraw.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I would ask the government to—

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do acknowledge the member's point of order, however, any member that makes a statement that needs to be corrected, they have to correct the record themselves. I would hold all members honourable enough to do so if their record is not correct in a statement.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: In regard to question period this morning, the member from Oakville asked a question to which—I think we can all support what that program is trying to do. I don't think there's any argument on the benefit of the program, but clearly what was being set up was a ministerial statement. As in section 37 of the standing orders, it wasn't urgent public business that was being dealt with; what you had was a set-up for a statement.

I would argue that if this House at times gets out of order, that does not help. I would ask you to be more vigilant in not allowing those types of questions to be asked.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for his point of order. My commitment is that I will be as vigilant as I always am with ensuring that the

“speak” in terms of the government is directed to government policy. As such, I would remind all members that that is their responsibility. Thank you very much.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There is another point of order. The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane on a point of order.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to take this opportunity to correct the record. In a question that I directed to the Minister of Agriculture and Food, I stated that eco fees had risen to \$35 a tire. That should have been \$350 a tire.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is a point of order. The member can correct his record, and I thank him. This—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Holy mackerel. I really do think that that's a little bit over the top. When I'm trying my best, I would hope that you would too.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1147 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ABORIGINAL LAND CLAIMS

Mr. John Yakabuski: Last Saturday, the township of South Algonquin hosted a meeting on the Algonquin land claim agreement in principle, which involved a presentation from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. Municipalities were invited to share their input, as were citizens from the affected areas.

A number of concerns were raised, such as what criteria were used in the selection of each parcel of the 117,000 acres of crown land slated for transfer? Landowners adjacent to the affected parcels are worried how their right to enjoy the land and access to their properties will be impacted.

One parcel of land within the township of South Algonquin contains eight lakes currently being stocked by the ministry. Would these programs continue to operate once that land is transferred to private ownership? It was made clear that hunting and fishing is as much a part of the cultural heritage of non-Algonquins as it is the culture of the Algonquins.

The repeated refrain of all there was that of the absolute lack of any real consultations with the people who will be affected most when this agreement is finalized. Eighty per cent of the lands being transferred are within my riding, and I share their concerns as their elected official that I was never consulted in any way of the inequitable affect this agreement would have on the people of my riding.

This agreement has taken 20 years of negotiations to get this far. Rushing it through now without giving those

affected more input is not the way to go. As the old saying goes, measure twice, cut once.

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure, as always, to rise. I'm wearing red today—sort of red; kind of an orangey red—which, of course, is not an easy thing for a New Democrat to do. I'm doing it because today is equal pay for equal work day, and the Equal Pay Coalition was in the House.

Sadly, years later, the situation is still the same: Women make 72 cents for every dollar that men make. In fact, the reason that I tabled a motion to call for today as equal pay for equal work day is that it takes women till April 9 to make as much money as men make January 1. That's wrong.

Here's what they're calling for: They're calling for closing the gap as a human rights priority; raising awareness through annual equal pay days and education; closing the gender pay gap; enforce and expand pay equity laws; implement employment equity laws and policies; promote access to collective bargaining; increase the minimum wage—a favourite; provide affordable and accessible child care; and mainstream equity compliance into government laws and policies as well as workplaces and businesses. This is what they're calling for.

We're asking for this government to act. At the very least, make a day every year, like other jurisdictions around the world, equal pay for equal work day so we raise awareness among employers. That's the very least we can do, Mr. Speaker, don't you think?

JAMES "FERGY" BROWN

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I rise in the House today to honour the memory of Mr. James Fergus Brown, who passed away late last week. Fergy Brown gave decades of his life to representing and improving his community.

Mr. Brown grew up in the Mount Dennis neighbourhood in York South–Weston and served this country as a member of the RCAF Bomber Command during the Second World War. After the war, he owned a local pharmacy that became a neighbourhood institution.

Fergy Brown was first elected to York city council in 1969 and over the course of his career would serve as a member of the Metro Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, a member of the city of York's board of control and Metro Toronto council, head of Metro Toronto's social service committee, a member of the Toronto Transit Commission, and mayor of the city of York.

Mr. Brown demonstrated his commitment to the community by founding Children First, an initiative to highlight the importance of early education and care, as well as serving for three decades on the board of the Learning Enrichment Foundation, including serving as president. He also served on the board of York Community Services and the Harold and Grace Baker Centre for seniors.

He had a motto that I share: "It's amazing how much you can get done if you don't care about who gets the credit," he would say.

Mr. Brown was a dedicated public servant who always gave back to the community, and I was honoured to award him a Diamond Jubilee Medal last year. On behalf of my constituents, I extend my sympathies to his family and friends and my thanks for his many years of service to the community and the lives he impacted.

MARGARET THATCHER

Mr. Toby Barrett: We recognize the passing of one of the most important and influential politicians of the 20th century. Across the globe, people are recalling the impact and far-reaching international legacy of a shopkeeper's daughter, the iron-willed Margaret Thatcher.

As the first British female Prime Minister, in 1979 Thatcher took the reins and guided Britain, then the sick man of Europe, to economic and international heights, ruling the Conservative Party and Great Britain itself through three successive elections with grassroots Conservative values—tax cuts, deficit reduction and international strength.

Thatcherism boosted the free market and reduced the role of the state. On the home front, Margaret Thatcher curbed union militancy and privatized state industries. Millions who previously had little stake in the economy found themselves able to own their council houses and buy shares in former state businesses.

Along with Ronald Reagan, Prime Minister Thatcher was instrumental in ending the Cold War. She narrowly escaped death in an IRA attack. She achieved victory in the Falklands. She was, as Richard Longworth of the Chicago Tribune reported in 1989, "perhaps the most admired, hated, fascinating, boring, radical and conservative leader in the Western world."

We shall not see her like again.

BOB OLDFIELD

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today I want to tell you about a super-nice man from my riding. His name is Robert John Oldfield, but we call him Bob. Bob is a nice-looking man with a big heart. He is quick with a joke and a smile and knows how to have a good time. No matter what you need, Bob is there to help out.

The door to my office came off; Bob dropped by and fixed it. Disaster struck in the bathroom—water all over the floor. Who do you call? Bob to the rescue. Our float on the Santa Claus parade needed more light. Wouldn't you know it? Bob just happened to have a generator and a bigger set of speakers, so not only could the kids see us better, they could hear us as well.

For the last 20 years, Bob has worked every election campaign. He has loaded and unloaded more trucks than you can count and put up more signs than you can imagine. If we needed him, he was there. The minute you met Bob, you wanted to be his friend.

I guess that explained why over 250 of us gathered last weekend to celebrate his life.

Bob is my co-worker Lynne Oldfield's husband. To Lynne, Glenn and Nigelle, Kevin and Melanie, Melissa and Andrew, Abrielle and Owen, thank you for sharing Bob with us. Bob, you left us way too soon. May you rest in peace.

GARY SHEPHERD

Mr. Grant Crack: Last week I, along with the residents of my hometown of Alexandria and the township of North Glengarry, was deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Gary Shepherd on Wednesday, April 3, 2013, at the age of 68. Gary was a well-respected, successful local businessman, having operated a school bus business, a local sports shop and a Honda dealership. In partnership with his brother Rodney, Shepherd's, as the business was known locally, was a gathering point every day where locals would come in and chat about local issues or just hang out. It became well known that if it was news, Shepherd's heard it first.

Gary was also a community leader, having been active in the early years of the local Junior B hockey club, the Alexandria Glens, but perhaps is most remembered for his commitments to his community, having served on the local municipal council for almost 22 years.

I had the privilege to serve as mayor with Gary Shepherd for 11 years on the Alexandria and then North Glengarry municipal councils, and his well-rounded approach to issues resulted in him being acclaimed to council many times. Gary was unbeatable.

1510

During these difficult times, my thoughts and prayers go out to his wife, Colleen, their son, Lee, daughter, Wendy, and their families, and also to Gary's brother, Rodney, and his wife, Darlene. Rest in peace, my friend.

TRAFFIC SAFETY

Ms. Laurie Scott: On March 28, I had the privilege of attending a ceremony at Alexandra Public School in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. It's located in Lindsay. The event was to mark the donation of a new Elmer the Safety Elephant costume to the Kawartha Lakes Police Service. The costume is used extensively at school and community events and parades in Kawartha Lakes.

The costume was donated by Ruth Barrett and her family. In 1947, Ruth's father, Toronto police traffic inspector Charles J. Lytle, created Elmer the Safety Elephant as a tool in Toronto public schools for teaching traffic safety to children. Incredibly, just one year later, traffic accidents involving children under the age of 16 had dropped by an astonishing 40% in Toronto.

Other communities quickly requested that the program come to their towns and cities through the Ontario Safety League. In 66 years, the Elmer flag and his famous seven safety rules have become a standard fixture of public

schools throughout Ontario. Amazingly, other communities experienced the same dramatic improvement in child traffic safety as Toronto did in that first year. Many of us learned the basic rules of traffic safety from Elmer, and, like an elephant, we hopefully have never forgotten.

I'd like to congratulate Ruth Barrett and her family for the legacy which her father has left Ontario, which has undoubtedly saved countless lives, and for the family's generosity in donating a new Elmer costume to the Kawartha Lakes Police Service. I'm honoured to have been part of that memorable occasion.

CYSTIC FIBROSIS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Today I would like to recognize the hard work of a family in Schomberg in the township of King in my great riding of Oak Ridges-Markham for their fundraising efforts on behalf of their daughter Rebecca, who has cystic fibrosis.

Katherine Edwards and Stephen Ruppert have raised \$11,612.72 for Cystic Fibrosis Canada over three annual fundraisers. This year's fundraiser drew 120 community members to Schomberg Community Hall.

Cystic Fibrosis Canada has helped to improve the lives of those living with the disease by working to develop new therapies and expand access to high-quality care, greater advocacy and increased life expectancy for those with the disease.

Katherine and Stephen found out that their daughter Rebecca, known as Bexx, had cystic fibrosis when she was three months old. At nine months, she lost the function of her pancreas. Now, at age three, she takes enzyme capsules to digest her food and needs physiotherapy treatments to keep her lungs clear.

Katherine and Stephen want to do all they can to help other families who experience even greater difficulties in coping with the disease. One in 3,600 Canadians is born with cystic fibrosis, making it the most common potentially fatal genetic disease affecting Canadian children.

Thank you, Katherine and Stephen, for your efforts in raising awareness in our community and for helping to make a difference in the lives of those living with cystic fibrosis.

DON MACKINNON

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise in the House today to recognize Don MacKinnon, president of the Power Workers' Union, who has been named to the Order of Ontario and who hails from the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Don MacKinnon of Chatsworth has been a lifelong advocate of Ontario's energy industry and authority on its electricity system who has devoted his career to creating safe, quality jobs for Ontarians.

Don has a reputation as a skilled and innovative negotiator. He uses mutual-gains approaches to achieve settlements that address business needs while fully respecting the rights and values of employees. His innova-

tive approach to labour relations has become a model for effective labour management.

MacKinnon began his career at Ontario Hydro in 1971 and is a lineman by trade. For over a decade, he served as the Power Workers' Union vice-president, before becoming president in 2000.

Created in 1986, the Order of Ontario, the province's highest official honour, recognizes the highest level of individual excellence and achievement in any field. The Order of Ontario recognizes extraordinary Ontarians who have made a lasting mark on the province, the country and the world. This group of remarkable citizens has made a difference in the lives of so many people over the course of a lifetime, and I'm proud to be standing up here, congratulating and recognizing Don MacKinnon on this noble achievement.

Mr. MacKinnon's dedication to Ontario's energy industry, along with work in labour relations, is to be commended. I'd like the House to join me in congratulating Don MacKinnon on his extraordinary achievement and wishing him all the best in future endeavours.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BEECHWOOD CEMETERY COMPANY ACT, 2013

Mr. McNeely moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr8, An Act respecting The Beechwood Cemetery Company.

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.

CHILDREN'S LAW REFORM AMENDMENT ACT (RELATIONSHIP WITH GRANDPARENTS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI PORTANT RÉFORME DU DROIT DE L'ENFANCE (RELATION AVEC LES GRANDS-PARENTS)

Mr. Craitor moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 48, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act with respect to the relationship between a child and the child's grandparents / Projet de loi 48, Loi modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance en ce qui concerne la relation entre un enfant et ses grands-parents.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Kim Craitor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to read from the explanatory notes.

The bill amends the Children's Law Reform Act. Currently, subsection 21(1) of the act provides that a parent of a child or any other person may apply to the court for certain orders respecting custody or access to a child. An amendment to that subsection specifies that a grandparent may apply for such an order.

Secondly, currently subsection 24(2)(a)(i) provides that where a court makes a determination relating to certain applications in respect of custody or access to a child, the court shall consider, among other things, the love, affection and emotional ties between the child and each person entitled to or claiming custody of or access to the child. An amendment of that subclause specifies that that includes a grandparent.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my two co-sponsors of this bill. The member from Parkdale-High Park, from the NDP, thank you very much; and the member from Whitby-Oshawa riding, thank you very much for co-sponsoring the bill.

MOTIONS

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I believe we have the unanimous consent of all the hard-working members on all sides of the House to put forward a motion without notice. It's regarding late shows.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General is asking for unanimous consent on the motion. Do we agree? Agreed.

Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I move that the late show requested by the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, directed to the Minister of the Environment, scheduled for tonight, be rescheduled to 6 p.m. on Wednesday, April 17, 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's now time for petitions. I think I'll go back to a rotation I'm very familiar with. The member from Durham.

PETITIONS

WATER QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's a distinct pleasure today, having been working the other few days that I wasn't here.

"Whereas under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario regulation 319/08, public health inspectors

are required to undertake risk assessments of small drinking water systems;

“Whereas many of these small drinking water systems are located in homes operating bed and breakfasts in rural Ontario;

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“Whereas private homes that are the sites of bed and breakfasts already have potable drinking water used by the homeowners and their families every day;

“Whereas many of these bed and breakfasts have established the quality of their drinking water through years of regular testing;

“Whereas these home-based businesses are facing high costs”—and red tape—“to comply with the new requirements”—by the Wynne government—“of regulation 319/08;

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

“That the Minister of Health amend Ontario regulation 319/08 to give the testing track record of a small drinking water system greater weight in the risk assessment process. Furthermore we, the undersigned, ask that bed and breakfasts operated within a private home with a drinking water supply meeting all the requirements of a private home not be subject to regulation 319/08. Furthermore we ask the minister to work with the bed and breakfast industry to find simplified, safe solutions for smaller operations (three or four guests.)”

I sign this with the greatest respect, asking the Minister of Health to endorse—

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

GREENWATER PARK

Mr. John Vanthof: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the present government of Ontario should reverse the closure of Greenwater provincial park in Cochrane, Ontario;

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

“That the government of Ontario reverse the closure of Greenwater provincial park, to allow the park to remain fully operational and open enabling people from all over to enjoy camping and visiting on its grounds....”

I fully agree, affix my signature, and give it to the page.

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES

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

“Whereas Agincourt is historically recognized as north Scarborough’s oldest and most well-established community; and

“Whereas the residents of the community of Scarborough–Agincourt share unique interests; and

“Whereas historically Agincourt’s electoral voice has always been found in an electoral district north of Ontario Highway 401; and

“Whereas communities, such as Scarborough–Agincourt, with historical significance should be protected and not divided; and

“Whereas the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario has recently released proposals to redraw the federal riding map of Scarborough–Agincourt; and

“Whereas ‘community of interest’ is a mandated consideration of the federal Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act; and

“Whereas the original proposal from the commission included a unified Scarborough–Agincourt riding; and

“Whereas the commission’s report would inexplicably divide the Scarborough–Agincourt community; and

“Whereas the residents of Scarborough–Agincourt should not be divided and the electoral riding should remain, in its entirety;

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

“To call upon the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario to recognize the historical and demographic context of the Scarborough–Agincourt community and to preserve riding boundaries that include a protected Scarborough–Agincourt community north of Ontario Highway 401.”

I fully support this petition, and I will sign it and give it to page Annie.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Mr. Randy Hillier: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

“Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

“Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

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

“To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners’ Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types.”

I agree with this petition and will affix my name to it.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from the people of Sudbury and Nickel Belt:

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

“Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently don’t complain because they fear

repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

“Whereas Ontario is one of only two provinces in Canada where the Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes. We need accountability, transparency and consistency in our long-term-care home system;...”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand the Ombudsman’s oversight mandate to include Ontario’s long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors.”

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

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, I’ve got a petition this afternoon from the people of Agincourt. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Agincourt is historically recognized as north Scarborough’s oldest and most well-established community; and

“Whereas the residents of the community of Scarborough–Agincourt share unique interests; and

“Whereas historically Agincourt’s electoral voice has always been found in an electoral district north of Ontario Highway 401; and

“Whereas communities, such as Scarborough–Agincourt, with historical significance should be protected and not divided; and

“Whereas the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario has recently released proposals to redraw the federal riding map of Scarborough–Agincourt; and

“Whereas ‘community of interest’ is a mandated consideration of the federal Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act; and

“Whereas the original proposal from the commission included a unified Scarborough–Agincourt riding; and

“Whereas the commission’s report would inexplicably divide the Scarborough–Agincourt community; and

“Whereas the residents of Scarborough–Agincourt should not be divided and the electoral riding should remain, in its entirety;

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

“To call upon the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Ontario to recognize the historical and demographic context of the Scarborough–Agincourt community and to preserve riding boundaries that include a protected Scarborough–Agincourt community north of Ontario Highway 401.”

I agree with this, Speaker, and will sign it and send it down with Sophia.

HOSPITAL PARKING FEES

Mr. John O’Toole: I have a petition on behalf of the constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the United Senior Citizens of Ontario has expressed its concerns over the high costs of parking at hospitals in Ontario on behalf of its more than 300,000 members; and

“Whereas thousands of Ontario seniors find it difficult to live on their fixed income” in the McGuinty-Wynne government today “and cannot afford these extra hospital parking fees added to their daily living costs; and

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association Journal has said in an editorial that parking fees are a barrier to health care and add additional stress to patients who have enough to deal with;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario” and the Minister of Health “as follows:

“That Ontario’s members of provincial Parliament and the Kathleen Wynne government take action to abolish parking fees for all seniors when visiting hospitals.”

I’m pleased to sign and support it on behalf of seniors in my riding.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

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

“Whereas agencies that support individuals with a developmental disability and their families have for several years (beginning in 2010) faced a decline in provincial funding for programs that support people with developmental and other related disabilities; and

“Whereas because this level of provincial funding is far less than the rate of inflation and operational costs, and does not account for providing services to a growing and aging number of individuals with complex needs, developmental service agencies are being forced into deficit; and

“Whereas today over 30% of developmental service agencies are in deficit; and

“Whereas lowered provincial funding has resulted in agencies being forced to cut programs and services that enable people with a developmental disability to participate in their community and enjoy the best quality of life possible; and

“Whereas in some cases services once focused on community inclusion and quality of life for individuals have been reduced to a ‘custodial’ care arrangement; and

“Whereas lower provincial funding means a poorer quality of life for people with a developmental disability and their families and increasingly difficult working conditions for the direct care staff who support them; and

“Whereas there are thousands of people waiting for residential supports, day program supports and other programs province-wide;

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

“(1) To eliminate the deficits of developmental service agencies and provide adequate new funding to restore services and programs that have in effect been cut;

“(2) To protect existing services and supports by providing an overall increase in funding for agencies that is at least equal to inflationary costs that include among other operational costs, utilities, food and compensation increases to ensure staff retention;

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“(3) To fund pay equity obligations for a predominantly female workforce;

“(4) To provide adequate new funding to agencies to ensure that the growing number of families on wait lists have access to accommodation supports and day supports and services.”

I couldn't agree more. I am going to sign this. I'm going to give it to Kamryn to be—

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

WIND TURBINES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition and I'll affix my name to it.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24;

“Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces” in Canada;

“Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75;....

“Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

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

To “suspend the decision to ... increase Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs.”

I gladly affix my name to this petition.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

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

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'll be quick, Cheri.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario's newly created Ontario College of Trades is planning to hit hard-working tradespeople with membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year; and

“Whereas the Ontario College of Trades has no clear benefit and no accountability as tradespeople already pay for licences and countless other fees to government; and

“Whereas Ontario has struggled for years to attract people to skilled trades and the planned tax grab will kill jobs, and drive people out of trades;

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

“To stop the job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately.”

I'm pleased to affix my signature and send it with Jason to the table.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “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 up to 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;

“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 couldn't agree more. I'm going to give it to Louis and sign it to be delivered to the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The time for petitions has ended.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT (AIR AMBULANCES), 2013

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 8, 2013, on the motion for second 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 Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm feeling a little under the weather today, so I'm going to use my quiet voice. I ask you to bear with me, and I hope the wonderful people who are working in the booth there translating don't have their ears blown out from a couple of hacks and coughs along the way. Nevertheless I'm very pleased to contribute to this discussion.

I'm pleased to be able to rise and add some comments on the debate on Bill 11, which is intended to remedy some of the causes of the Ornge air ambulance scandal.

As my caucus's critic pointed out in her initial remarks of this debate, this is not the first time that this bill has been brought before us. We debated this very same bill during the last session of the House. At that time, it was known as Bill 50. Unfortunately, it died on the order paper when the House was prorogued unnecessarily in October. But I don't want to dwell on prorogation, just like I don't want to dwell on the tens of millions of dollars that were wasted by Ornge because of the government's failure to ensure proper accountability measures were in place in the first place.

The problem with this House is that, too often, important debates have become politicized, and instead of getting answers that taxpayers deserve, we end up with grandstanding and, dare I say, witch hunts. The goals

shift from looking for what went wrong to scoring political points, and in the end that does not serve the taxpayers' best interests.

Unfortunately, this bill doesn't correct the problems that exist, it doesn't restore the public's faith in our province's air ambulance system, and it does not properly close the door to the abuses that have already happened. As the member from Nickel Belt pointed out, this bill falls short in some pretty important areas, the two biggest being the failure to give the province's Ombudsman oversight powers for this agency, and the second is the fact that it continues to shield Ornge from Government Agencies, both of which are very important tools for holding the board, management, staff and the government accountable for the decisions that are made.

A minute ago, I spoke about witch hunts and the over-politicization of scandals. One tool that we have in Ontario is an impartial arbitrator known as the Ombudsman. His job is to find out what actually happened, not to lay blame. Why aren't we doing everything in our power to ensure that we can get actual answers and not political answers? It just does not make sense.

I've said it before, but it bears repeating: We, as legislators, are dealing with taxpayers' dollars. It's not our money to do with however we choose. The money we manage belongs to the people of this province. It's dollars collected from hard-working families in Red Lake, from seniors struggling to pay their bills in the Rainy River valley and from people who are seeing their property taxes rise in Dryden and in other communities across the north. These people have sent us here to use those dollars in their best interests, but I don't see their interests being represented in this bill.

Each and every dollar that was wasted on this and every other scandal is a dollar out of their pockets, a dollar out of their bank accounts and one less dollar to feed their families with. I'm sure they would understand if that dollar were going to put a new health centre in Ignace, a dialysis machine in a local hospital or to clear up the waiting list for home care, but it's not. It's going to buy motorcycles to decorate offices. It's going to in-appropriate loans for CEOs. It's going everywhere but where it needs to go, and we're not taking every step that we possibly can to ensure that this type of waste, this type of wanton disregard for people's hard-earned dollars, never happens again.

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These omissions were understandable last year, when the government scrambled to put this bill in place. We could understand it then, and I think we were all willing to give the government the benefit of the doubt when we voted to send this bill to committee, to have these shortcomings pointed out and to address them. But that didn't happen. There were months and months of time when officials could have reviewed this bill and its serious shortcomings and brought a vastly improved bill forward to us today.

Instead, we have virtually the same bill that was initially introduced about a year ago, and that is very dis-

appointing. It's almost as though the government is more committed to finding a way to safeguard itself from political fallout if something goes wrong than it is to providing the citizens of this province with value for their money, with services they can trust, and with the oversight and accountability they deserve.

I am of the belief that when our money is spent by governments of all political stripes, it needs to be transparent. If a government can't stand behind each decision it has made, maybe that decision should not have been made. As I've said, the money being used so freely belongs to the people of this province, and this is their government. We have an obligation to ensure that we get value for each and every penny. As it presently stands, this is not happening, so it means we're not doing a lot of things correctly.

Maybe what we need to do is pause, examine the system, examine the accountability mechanisms that are in place and see what we can do to ensure that someone is held responsible, because this mess with Ornge can't all be at the hands of Chris Mazza. Certainly, he is the person being demonized by the media and by our elected officials, but somewhere along the line there has to be an enabler. And I don't think the processes are in place right now, or will be—you know, they're not included in this bill as proposed—to cure the ills of our air ambulance system or fix health care in the province of Ontario. Maybe that's the problem.

We have created a system that is so big and so complex that no one can monitor it effectively. One of the criticisms of Don Drummond, the economist who was hired at great expense to the province, was that we have a tendency in Ontario to deal with faulty programs by just creating another one, just layering on another program, service or department. The end result is that not only does this not make sense, because it is terribly inefficient and expensive, but it makes a confusing mess to regulate and monitor.

As I said, this is advice we paid dearly for in this province. I think we need to listen to this advice and we need to start to implement it. I'm not suggesting that we necessarily implement every single thing that was recommended, but there are some very key things here that we can implement that will ultimately save us as taxpayers a lot of money.

In summary, there are three main issues that are not addressed by this bill. They are the fact that there is no oversight by the provincial Ombudsman, or there won't be. It still will not be granted. Ornge will continue to operate as an organization that cannot be called before Government Agencies. And this bill cannot obscure the fact that the Ministry of Health has refused to look at their own role in this, and the reality is that this bill will do nothing to prevent future scandals from occurring at other government-funded organizations.

This is nothing more than feel-good legislation. It does nothing to prevent future scandals. That's a point that bears repeating. There's no substance to this. It's really terrible. We expected a more substantive bill to come

back. We wanted a better, stronger iteration of this bill. After all, the government has had a number of months to improve it. That being said, I believe that the discussion we're having around respect for taxpayers' money, around what we can do differently, what kinds of checks and balances need to be in place to make sure this doesn't happen again—these are very worthwhile discussions. I do believe that we need to continue these discussions. The best place for that would be sending this bill, however weak it is, to committee so that we can have something stronger come forward. For that reason, I'll be supporting it going to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Let me say at the onset that I thought the member from Kenora–Rainy River made a very thoughtful presentation this afternoon on this particular bill, Bill 11. She did it making a speech when she's not feeling up to par, but I want to assure her constituents in Kenora–Rainy River that she did a very admirable job this afternoon.

Let's get to the substance of the discussion here today. I think it's about time we wind up this debate and get it off to committee. The member clearly said in her words that this is a weak edition of the bill. Okay, I accept her observation about the bill. So let's wind up debate this afternoon, and let's get this bill off to committee.

We're in a minority government. There are all kinds of opportunities to make amendments, to strengthen it from their perspective. But this ongoing discussion—we can keep talking all we want, but we really need to get this bill on to committee and make the changes that the opposition are suggesting. I think that's very important.

What do we have here? Amongst other things that we're going to do in Bill 11 as proposed, before it gets amended, as it will in committee—Ornge has appointed a new patient advocate. We've installed new medical interiors in the helicopters—much better than the Sea Kings that are operating in Ottawa, and hopefully Minister MacKay will make some changes there soon. We've expanded the service in Thunder Bay. We've established a dedicated patient flight service in northern Ontario; northern Ontario residents deserve this, and they're now getting it. We've created a whistle-blower policy. We've submitted the first quality improvement plan.

Madam Speaker, with these elements now in position, we can take the time, get it to committee, wind up the debate and get those kinds of amendments that they're talking about. I think that's the way this bill should go in the not-too-distant future.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I did listen, and I commend the member for Kenora–Rainy River, who is standing up for her community and putting a voice to something that she knows is wrong. The hearings that are occurring in Ontario are just one example of the waste and scandalous reputation of the existing Ornge air ambulance system.

Our concern remains on this side. There needs to be a discussion on this. The member from Peterborough, who just spoke, is trying to shut that discussion down. That is shameful—completely.

I can tell you this: The suggestion at the very end of his remarks was to say there's whistle-blower protection. Well, it's clear to us that there isn't whistle-blower protection. In fact, as we understand it, it limits the scope of that protection. The bill does not provide across-the-board protection for whistle-blowers.

It's one more example of saying one thing and doing something else. In fact, the minister, who's here today—and I don't say that with any indication except that she's here—knows that she has the power already to do almost everything that's in this bill.

What it really demonstrates is that there's a lack of leadership. This is an attempt to sort of change the channel, to change the channel to say, "If we pass this, it will be better." It's a broken system designed by a broken government that already has the tools to control it and a system that clearly even the Auditor General said was completely out of control.

Chris Mazza, the former CEO, I think he may still be on the payroll. I'm pretty sure, if you check, there's some kind of clauses that—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: The minister, in her two minutes, may want to respond to that, but it's my impression that he probably is still being paid. I'm concerned that—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I just remind the member to keep his comments to the speech we heard.

Mr. John O'Toole: The bill, Bill 11, of course, is the bill that we are talking to. I was talking about the administrative structure that was—

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

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Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to comment on the speech made by my esteemed colleague from Kenora–Rainy River. It shows her commitment to her constituents. She's not feeling too well today and she's still here talking about health care for her constituents. I think that shows her mettle.

She brought up some very salient points. I think one of the most important ones is regarding oversight. It's a weak bill; the Minister of Rural Affairs agreed with my colleague from Rainy River that this is potentially a very weak bill. We're wondering why they drafted it like that, but if you know it's a weak bill, you'd think you could—especially because this is the rerun; this is the rerun of the bill, so it could have been a lot stronger.

I think the one thing that we're all left wondering and the people at home and the people of my riding are all left wondering is, what do the folks on the other side have against the Ombudsman? Because really, everyone who has spoken, everyone in my riding and in the riding of Kenora–Rainy River knows that if you have a problem with a government agency, you call the Ombudsman.

What is the problem with the Ombudsman? You're creating government inspectors. Well, people don't know who those people are; they know what the Ombudsman's office is.

Why not make it simpler? Everyone who's spoken on this side of the House has said let's let Ombudsman oversight handle this issue. What have you got against the Ombudsman?

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

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Certainly I'm pleased to make a few remarks in relation to the comments from our colleague from Kenora–Rainy River.

I think it's quite clear that there's agreement on all sides of the House that what happened at Ornge was unacceptable and better oversight is needed. The minister has made this comment many, many times, and in fact she has done some very important work and made many positive changes. There's a new performance agreement, new procedures and policies, a quality improvement plan, a new board and a new CEO.

What we need in this bill is to ensure that Ornge never happens again. It is modelled on the Public Hospitals Act. That's an act that has served the people of Ontario very well in terms of public safety. I never heard any objections to the provisions within that bill.

We've had something like 16 hours of debate at this point, and really, I'm not hearing anything new. I think it's clearly time to get to committee. One of the remarks that I get from my constituents when they actually watch the proceedings of this House is about the repetition, the redundancies, what they perceive as a complete waste of time. Those are the sorts of comments I get.

It's clear that this bill needs to go to committee. We're very anxious to hear the good ideas from all sides of the House, to debate them in committee and to move forward. This kind of delay is not allowing us to proceed in a timely fashion, so I'm calling on the opposition parties to move on and take this particular bill to committee for appropriate debate. It's possible that there are some good ideas that the opposition wants to bring forward, though I'm beginning to wonder about that, hearing what I'm hearing—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Order.

The member for Kenora–Rainy River has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I want to thank the members who stood up and commented on some of my comments and some of the views that I brought to this debate.

One of the things that I heard from a number of speakers is that there are a lot of deficiencies in this bill and we really can do better. We really can bring something forward that would help. My seatmate mentioned that just having the Ombudsman of Ontario look after Ornge would be a huge help, because the Ombudsman is somebody who is known across the province, someone who's trusted and someone who has done a lot of great work since he has come to office.

I really do believe that we have a lot of good ideas about how we can improve this bill and this legislation going forward. I think there are a lot of great ideas in this House from MPPs, and I think that there are a lot of great ideas across the province.

People wake up, they listen to the news, they read the newspaper, and they get upset. People are really upset that so much money can be wasted when there's so much need.

Certainly, if you look at my riding alone, there is a tremendous amount of need, whether it's bringing down hydro bills or—I talked about the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre in Ignace. They need some assistance. The municipalities need assistance with their MPAC bills.

People have some good ideas. Let's bring it to committee; let's hear from people.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Speak from the heart.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'll speak with my heart, yes.

This is a very important issue across the province and especially in my riding of Sarnia–Lambton, Madam Speaker. The operations of our provincial air ambulance system regularly impact the health and safety of Ontario residents. As such, fixing the broken structure at Ornge and instituting a reliable practice of transparency and accountability is one of the most important issues that we can address here in the Legislature.

Unfortunately, with the way this government has handled this important issue so far, it appears that the government is less concerned about the actual health and safety of the residents of Ontario and more concerned about the health and safety of its seats in this Legislature.

I want to commend the members on this side of the House, like my colleague the member for Whitby–Oshawa and my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora, for their tireless work to get to the bottom of the fiasco otherwise known as Ornge. They have repeatedly demanded in this Legislature that this government get to work and make real changes to the dysfunctional operational structure at Ornge.

Bill 11 should have been an example of how this government and Deputy Premier would demonstrate that in fact this new government has learned from its mistakes and is ready to take the advice of this Legislature and act in a meaningful way. However, this is not the case.

Interjections.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Madam Speaker, I see that the members are quite motivated and quite interested in my speech.

Rather, this bill is a copy of the hastily cobbled-together document that the Minister of Health tried to rush through this Legislature in the aftermath of the Ornge scandal.

In fact, just a few minutes ago, we heard one of the Liberal members say, "Hurry up. Get this passed. Let's

move on. We don't want to hear debate"—taking away our democratic right, and I know the Minister of the Environment wouldn't want to see that. He has been here for too many years and done too good a job here, representing his constituents, to want to see that happen. I'm sure the Attorney General feels the same way.

When it was Bill 50, Madam Speaker, it was considered nothing more than a tool for the Minister of Health and the ministry itself to gain political cover from their failure to do their job and to provide oversight of Ornge; as Bill 11, it's more of the same. To date, we have learned quite a bit more about the things that the administration at Ornge were doing.

The public accounts committee has done an excellent job of shining a light on the sort of wild mismanagement that was going on at Ornge under this minister's watch and this government's watch. However, we still don't know the full extent of the waste at Ornge because this government and this minister have repeatedly refused to strike a select committee and they have been unwilling to open the agency up to a full and transparent review, as has been called for many times in this House by members of both opposition parties. That is why it is more than passing strange that this piece of legislation, which the government claims will cure all the ills at Ornge, was put together and tabled in this Legislature without first hearing from all the witnesses at the committee or having a fully formed understanding of what was going on at the agency.

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This government, Madam Speaker, continues to claim two things, as they do with most of the scandals that have occurred on their watch. They continue to plead that there was nothing they could have done to stop what was happening at Ornge, and, two, they claim that since the Liberal government handed over the operation of the province's entire air ambulance service to Ornge, the Minister of Health has been powerless to intervene and stop this rogue agency from doing just about anything they wanted.

This assertion, of course, is completely incorrect and factually incorrect. The Minister of Health has always held the authority to intervene at Ornge under the original performance agreement, as well as the Independent Health Facilities Act. As has been pointed out by my colleagues in this Legislature, article 15 of the original performance agreement between Ornge and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care gives the minister the powers of this intervention, and it always has.

Madam Speaker, the fact is that almost as soon as Ornge was created, it started to drift off course, and, inconceivably, the Minister of Health and the ministry were asleep at the wheel. We are here today because this government got caught not paying attention to what was happening right under their nose, on their watch, and now they are working overtime at damage control.

Going all the way back to 2005, eight years ago, the Auditor General, a man we all know and revere and look to for nonpartisan analysis, recommended that this min-

istry conduct unannounced reviews of this agency. Let me reiterate: That was eight years ago. Red flags were raised by the Auditor General, who thought it was in the best interests of the health and safety of Ontario residents that unannounced checks be conducted at Ornge. And despite the fact that the ministry actually gave Ornge 90 days' notice to clean up its act before it conducted spot checks, the ministry still found that about one third of the aircraft were not properly stocked and equipment was not properly maintained.

After the story behind the gross misconduct at Ornge made it into the media, we learned that the agency had purchased helicopters that were essentially useless for patient transfer. Unbelievably, these multi-million-dollar helicopters were too small inside to allow emergency response personnel to perform the most basic of life-saving procedures. What a gross oversight. How that sort of mistake could be missed by the people at Ornge and the Ministry of Health—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: What about the \$6-million kick-back?

Mr. Robert Bailey: That's right. It's just mind-boggling. The member for Halton reminds me about the alleged kickbacks to AgustaWestland. For \$6 million they purchased two more helicopters that were needed, apparently—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: And maybe there's more than that we don't know about.

This sort of mistake is the very thing that leads to people mistrusting government and our important public service. And of course, Madam Speaker, it's very concerning for residents who live outside of the highly populated communities of the GTA, as emergency transfer to larger medical facilities is a reality of health care in rural Ontario for these people. My community of Sarnia-Lambton is one of those places that must rely on Ornge air ambulance service for a number of reasons.

The scandal at Ornge is far from the first issue that people in my community have dealt with this year. In fact, in March 2011, almost a year before this whole scandal at Ornge broke, I wrote the Minister of Health asking that her ministry review the patient transfer procedures in the province, especially when air transport is required. In my riding of Sarnia-Lambton, there have been a number of poorly executed transfers and missed opportunities to provide the sort of care that we'd all want for ourselves or any of our loved ones. However, unfortunately, the ministry and the Minister of Health have sat on their hands rather than look into the concerns that were raised. Again, this is representative of how this minister and ministry have handled concerns for several years. In fact, I didn't hear anything from the minister's office until more than a year later, after the Ornge scandal broke, when my office again tried to bring forth the issue of patient transfer in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton. This time, the minister's staff made a show of looking into these issues. Frankly, the whole experience has left myself and my staff and the residents of Sarnia-

Lambton very concerned about the Ministry of Health and the way it has handled its operations.

Madam Speaker, I had hoped that after the many hours of debate that we have had in this House and the hundreds of hours of committee hearings that have been conducted into Ornge, this government would have actually tabled legislation that would create a process to ensure this sort of fiasco would not happen again. Bill 11, however, is not that piece of legislation. There's nothing substantive in the legislation. Even to the casual observer, this bill appears to be nothing more than a means of providing cover for the last eight years of a failed Liberal government that has failed to maintain proper oversight. Despite the recommendations of the members of this Legislature that the ministry personally maintain extensive oversight of Ornge, this legislation maintains the same failed structure that got us in the mess in the first place.

Moreover, Bill 11 does nothing to strengthen whistleblower protection for those front-line health care workers who are tired of being treated as an afterthought by the administration. Unfortunately, what the minister has prescribed as whistle-blower protection is laughable, and employees are only protected if they report to the administration at Ornge, the very same people they may be blowing the whistle on in the first place. This is like having the fox guard the henhouse.

There's nothing of substance in Bill 11 that will prevent what took place at Ornge from happening at Ornge again. The only way to ensure that is to have the Minister of Health and the Ministry of Health finally take responsibility for this oversight.

Madam Speaker, this minister and this government owe it to the people of Ontario to finally stand up and do what is right: Put in place real reforms that will prevent this type of reckless behaviour at Ornge or any other provincial agency.

I'd like to thank the members of the House for listening so intently to my speech, and at this time I look forward to the rest of the debate and a number of comments.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, a point that was raised by the recent speaker and also by my colleague from Kenora-Rainy River was the issue of whistle-blower protection. I agree with the member that there is a gaping hole in this legislation when it comes to whistle-blower protection, because one of the key issues is that, as previously indicated, the way it's framed currently is that the whistle-blower has to report to the administrators of Ornge itself.

Now, when we look at some of the best oversight that has gone on in this province, much of that has been because there are conscientious workers, people who are in a particular agency or a particular industry who notice that something wrong is going on and raise that concern. So there is great merit and great benefit in whistle-blower protection. We've seen time and time again that some-

times what someone can see on the front line, on the ground in a particular agency, is the best vantage point to find a problem. If we don't protect those people and don't support them and encourage them to come forward—they're actually acting as conscientious, civic-minded folks who see a problem in their agency and want it to be fixed, because they want the betterment of their agency but also the betterment of the community they live in.

Many of the folks who came forward with respect to Ornge's problems were people who cared about Ontario, cared about health care, cared about the well-being of fellow members of their community and wanted something to change and improve. The fact that they're not protected is a big fault of ours. We have to ensure that all whistle-blowers are protected, not just at Ornge but across the province at any agency that receives public funding. They should be supported and encouraged to come forward, find any problems and any faults and express those. I support my friend's comments with respect to that issue, and I think it's an important issue.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: You know, the government keeps on talking: "Let's get on with this. Let's pass this bill. Let's get it into committee." We in the opposition are somewhat suspect of that line of questioning, because this is the same bill that was introduced in front of the House prior to its being prorogued. They had an opportunity in the 127 days, was it, of prorogation? They had an opportunity—

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: One hundred and eighty days, you say? Whatever. A long prorogation—118 days, 127 days?

This bill could have been changed. It could have been adjusted with all the comments we made prior to being prorogued, and yet it wasn't. Not one comma was changed; not one word was changed. When the government says, "Let's get it into committee and talk about the changes," we're a little suspicious that maybe there won't be any changes. Maybe you'll use your majority in the committee, which you don't have in the House, to make sure there are no changes to this bill. So it would be a little suspicious.

Now, if you were to guarantee us that there were some amendments to be made—if you make the proper amendments to this bill, we could even support it. And why do you want to move on, anyway? Look at the things that are on the order paper. The Great Lakes Protection Act—that's not going to solve the unemployment problem in Ontario, as important as it might be for the Great Lakes. What about the non-profit housing corporation act? It's not going to solve the economic issues that are facing Ontario. It might be very important for the non-profit housing units, but it's not going to do anything substantive for the economy of Ontario.

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What about the employment standards amendment? Now there's a good one. That's going to increase red tape

for all the businesses in Ontario. Holding that one up in the House has a real purpose: It makes business easier in Ontario without the red tape that bill's going to create, and—

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, let's get down to brass tacks. This bill has been given 15 hours of debate in this House—15 hours of debate. As Hazel McCallion so well put it at the committee level, let's talk about the real issues that Ontarians are interested in. Let's deal with all of the employment situations that you talked about etc. Why are you holding this bill up?

Interjections.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'm obviously touching a raw nerve, because they can't stop from shouting—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would just remind everyone that questions and comments are to be directed according to the speech just heard, so I'd ask you to frame your comments in that context.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you very much for your intervention, Speaker.

They talked about the whistle-blower-protection aspects of this bill, and I would just ask the members to take a look at section 7.7, which clearly states that "no person shall retaliate against another person, whether by action or omission, or threaten to do so because,

"(a) anything has been disclosed to an inspector, investigator or special investigator in connection with a designated air ambulance service provider...."

Interjection.

Hon. John Gerretsen: There are consequences. This is a good piece of legislation. It may need some more work, and we all know in this House that where the work really gets done on a bill and deals with all the specific aspects of a bill is in committee. Let's get the bill to committee. After 15 hours of debate in this House, let's talk about some of the other issues that are affecting Ontarians on a day-to-day basis, and let's get on with it. This is a good bill that will solve a lot of the situations that have previously arisen—

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

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I've only been here a year and a half, but I have to say that the member from Sarnia-Lambton has so eloquently put forth his argument, you would have to go back to the days of Sir John A. and such great orators to actually appreciate the quality of what Mr. Bailey has done here regarding Bill 11. I'm just proud of the fact that I'm a member of the PC Party, which the member from Sarnia-Lambton is a part of as well.

Again, we're hearing this afternoon that this government wants to hurry up the process of getting Bill 11 into committee, and as I stated yesterday, we are looking forward to this bill getting to committee, but more importantly, this is about democracy. This is about the expression and freedoms that we as Ontarians and Canadians have come to know and love, and when this

government wants to stymie that and hinder the process, it's a little disheartening to myself, because when you sift through, this is what this government has done the last nine years: They've bullied, they've pushed forward an agenda that the people of Ontario do not want to have, and I think it's a shame that we don't get to—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I remind the member to refer to the speech that was given and keep his comments consistent with those.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, I just want to congratulate the member from Sarnia–Lambton for doing a fine job.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Sarnia–Lambton has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I would like to thank the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton; the member from Halton; the Attorney General, of course, for his fine remarks; and the member from Northumberland–Quinte. I think he may have had a tendency to gild the lily a bit there. I know that was a great speech, well delivered, but I don't know whether it was quite the equivalency of Sir John A. Macdonald—I wouldn't want to say that.

What I will say is that they've elucidated about the bill. We feel that the air Ornge scandal is a textbook example of why people are cynical about politics, politicians and bureaucrats, and the role of the private sector in trying to deliver this health care. This is one file where we've seen how a well-intentioned plan to divest delivery of essential health care services to an external, non-profit health care agency resulted in the waste of millions and millions of scarce health care dollars, put patients at risk, compromised the ability of dedicated health care providers to provide that service and may have, I say, contributed even to the deaths of some patients. That's a matter that still has to be decided upon.

Anyway, Madam Speaker, it is an opportunity here to point out what we feel are the shortcomings of that bill. After months and months of hearings and witnesses and thousands of pages of documentary evidence, we still don't have the bottom line in this case here. We think that the structure at Ornge itself is dysfunctional, and it was right from the start. It has not met the goals that were set for it. They've got some great staff who are trying their best to do their job, the front-line workers, and they've been let down by the minister, the minister's staff and the government, trying to—I don't want to use the word “cover-up”; I can't use that word—but anyway, the failure of this government to come clean on this and to tell us what we need to know to move forward so that Ornges can't happen in the future.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: As the Attorney General mentioned, this bill has been debated for 15 hours. Again, the Attorney General is a Liberal, and it's not entirely accurate because this bill was debated in the first session of the 40th Parliament as well. I'm not sure how many

hours it had there, but I think it had a substantive number of hours there as well. It was reintroduced after prorogation and the speech from the throne.

We got into the second session of the 40th Parliament, and this bill was reintroduced, and it was reintroduced exactly the same way it was in the first session. All of the concerns that were expressed by the opposition and the third party were totally ignored. The whistle-blower protection, which is no protection at all, was ignored. The only way you can have whistle-blower protection for someone is to work it through the Ombudsman, who has the power to follow up and protect people. One of the pilots for Ornge had some concerns and expressed those concerns. He was here at a committee meeting; he expressed his concerns to the committee on Thursday and he was laid off on Monday for no apparent reason. They had a bunch of trumped-up reasons, but he was laid off four days after he made testimony in front of a committee here.

There is absolutely no protection for whistle-blowers, and from what we've seen, the government has no interest in putting any protection for whistle-blowers in this act, and yet we pointed that out prior to being prorogued. The government did absolutely nothing about that very serious part of this bill.

Now, we could pass this bill, or it could go down to defeat and things in Ontario would not change. There's nothing in this bill that allows the minister to do anything that she can't do now. This is a piece of fluff legislation which covers up some of the things that happened in the Ornge fiasco. This bill doesn't change any of those things. The same things could happen again even with this legislation in place. If the government doesn't want to continue to debate this bill, it has the option of not calling the bill.

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The government does call this legislation. If you don't want to debate this bill anymore, if you want to debate some of the other tremendously important bills before the House—I say that sarcastically, and I apologize; sarcasm isn't always a very enviable trait. But it's frustrating sitting in the opposition benches watching unemployment in Ontario go into its 75th month as being higher than the provincial average. It's frustrating in watching the job loss again last month, when over 50,000 jobs disappeared in Ontario, watching companies move out of Ontario to other jurisdictions, mostly right-to-work jurisdictions. It's frustrating sitting here and watching the government do absolutely nothing concerning any issue that those businesses and companies have to try and make it even a little bit better.

This government has nothing. They have five or six bills in front of the Legislature. None of them deal with an economic issue. None of them deal with unemployment. None of them deal in areas that would help businesses do better in Ontario or even consider moving to Ontario. None of them would have any influence on any of those. Some of them have some social merit, but none of them are going to make any economic difference to

the province of Ontario, and that is a great shame, because Ontario is a great province. In order to remain that great province, it needs to have growth in jobs, not the demise of jobs, but growth in jobs, and that's not happening in Ontario today.

As I say, this is the second time this bill has come before the House. It's exactly the same bill as it was before. You know, there are some substantive amendments that could be introduced for this bill, such as the whistle-blower protection. And if the whistle-blower protection was enhanced and put into place, I think some of the opposition members could start to support this legislation.

It would also be a tremendous strengthening of the bill if the Ombudsman was given the authority to investigate Ornge or any of the issues that were to occur at Ornge now or in the future. The Ombudsman is someone who is appointed by the officers of the government—the three party officers—and the Ombudsman is someone who is respected throughout the House. When he did an investigation, the House would accept that as being a good investigation and one based on fact. So if that were put in as an amendment, it would make this a better piece of legislation.

If this bill also included some authority for the Minister of Health to restructure Ornge to ensure that direct accountability to the Minister of Health—this organization does not have any responsibility to anyone in government, other than to operate an air ambulance service. When they were operating, they were operating five or six different private companies along with one public company, the air ambulance service. They were transferring money between those two companies being investigated by the OPP right now. The person in the Italian company they bought the helicopters from has been arrested for fraud in Italy. There are huge questions around that kind of deal. There was a \$6-million kickback. There's a question as to where that kickback went, as to whether it went to the public company or whether it went to a private company. If it went to a private company, it would be a prima facie case of fraud.

All of those things could still happen if we passed this bill. They couldn't happen, or it would be very much more difficult for them to happen, if this bill contained some authority that there was oversight of the Ornge organization by the Ministry of Health.

Another amendment might be the incorporation of specific accountability and performance measurements into the performance agreement. Again, there are some generalities. There's nothing specific. It's the same thing as happened under the old plan. There was a clause that said that we will protect whistle-blowers, but there were no consequences. If there was a reaction taken by the company to a whistle-blower, if the whistle-blower didn't get the proper hours in a week, if his or her working conditions were changed, there were no consequences to the company for any of those actions. A whistle-blower should be treated fairly, and if he or she is not treated fairly, there are no consequences to the company or the

officers of that company and the Minister of Health now or under this bill, if it were to be passed. It has no change. There's no difference. There are no teeth to the bill, and that's a shame.

We have an opportunity to do something to make this air ambulance service better for the people who work at Ornge, better for the people of Ontario who need this service desperately. We're letting that opportunity slip through our fingers because the government is failing to listen to people in the opposition. I have no great knowledge of the air ambulance business, but there are people in my community who have talked to me about it who do have knowledge of it, and they have passed this on to other members of our caucus: This is knowledge coming to the government, and you shouldn't be ignoring this. You have an opportunity to make this a better piece of legislation, and you shouldn't allow that opportunity to pass by.

The most important thing is requiring the direct oversight of Ornge air ambulance. All agencies, boards and commissions that operate in Ontario require direct oversight by this House. If you ignore that direct oversight, you do so at your peril.

Hazel McCallion was at a committee the other day in this House—two weeks ago next Thursday—and she said to keep an eye on the agencies, because if you don't keep an eye on the agencies, they'll bring down a government every time. She was absolutely right.

Ornge is a huge problem for this government, and it's because you didn't have any direct oversight over it—

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to stand in this House and not so much an honour to talk about Ornge.

I'd like to comment on some of the member from Halton's remarks. I agree with a lot of his remarks. A lot of his remarks were very well thought out.

The one thing that he brought forward was, despite this being the second coming of this bill—

Interjection: It's a rerun.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's a rerun. It hasn't changed, even though there was lots of time in between for the government to make some reflections and say, "How can we ensure that this bill will actually go more speedily through the House—because when we debated last time, some good things were brought up." They didn't take that opportunity, Madam Speaker, and you kind of wonder why. It would have made sense.

Proroguing the House didn't do any Ontarians—oh, no, it did. It did the Liberal Party some good, but it didn't do any other Ontarians any real benefit.

They could have taken that opportunity to say, "Let's make this bill a bit more substantive," and then maybe this debate would have been done already. But they didn't take that opportunity, and the member from Halton pointed that out.

Another issue that he pointed out—and in this corner we really do agree, and we don't often agree with the

Conservative Party—on this one, there should be whistleblower protection through the Ombudsman. The Attorney General, a while ago, brought up, “Well, there are special investigators.” How do you find them at an Ornge base somewhere up north? How do you find the special investigator? You can find the Ombudsman a lot quicker because you can find him in the phone book.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I think there’s agreement that has been stated on all sides of the House that what happened at Ornge was something that shouldn’t have happened.

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I think when you’re approaching the provision of any government service at any level, you decide on the way that’s going to be provided. You can provide it yourself—you can provide direct provision from the province in this—or you can send it out to any agency. In this case, Ornge was set up in a way—and I think anybody that said that what happened at Ornge was acceptable, I would not share that opinion with them.

What happened at Ornge is that someone betrayed a trust that the government had placed with them. I think it’s correct that the level of oversight was not what it should have been, and it should be improved.

I think what the speaker said is that some changes need to be made. I think the Minister of Health has laid the groundwork for those changes and has asked that the House debate this bill, and obviously has asked that the House, after debating the bill, move this bill on to committee so that any amendments, any positive changes, that could be made to the bill can be debated at committee, and the bill can be enhanced.

I think this bill represents one of the final changes that are needed at Ornge. I think some of the changes that have been put in place, including things like whistleblower protection, including things like a patient advocate—they’ve changed the interiors on the helicopters; they’ve expanded service in Thunder Bay; dedicated patient flight service in northern Ontario; and finally, they have a quality improvement plan.

It sounds like the sorts of things that would be done in any organization that had gone through what Ornge has gone through have been done. I believe the organization is well into a new chapter. It’s on the right path forward.

We’ve debated this bill for going on 16 hours. If it needs more, it’s going to get more, but I look forward to the time when it’s sent off to committee and all parties can bring their amendments.

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

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Wow, I’m just astounded here. First, we have the member from Sarnia–Lambton with his great oral skills. Now we have the member from Halton, and how he actually points out some very important facts about what is wrong with Bill 11. We almost had the member from Oakville make a formal apology there. We’ll have to check Hansard.

But if we would actually just have the Liberal Party make a formal apology, particularly from the Minister of Health—and letting Ornge get out of hand as it has, such that we’re here debating Bill 11 and some of the toothless legislation that has been brought forward to us again.

The member from Halton makes a very good point in the fact that this is an ongoing situation. The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane made a very good point as well. We don’t always necessarily agree with each other, but we all can agree when something has gone wrong. The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane pointed out nicely that what we’re doing here is to try and ensure that Ontarians receive the best health care possible. The member from Halton, I think, deserves a lot of credit in standing up and serving his riding fantastically, to make sure that the people from Halton are going to get the health care that they need, should they ever happen to use Ornge.

The people from Halton can rest assured that Mr. Chudleigh here is doing a fantastic job at Queen’s Park, bringing forth issues that are going to make a big difference in their lives.

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

M. Jagmeet Singh: Je suis d’accord avec le député. Il a dit que le gouvernement n’a rien changé dans ce projet de loi. Nous avons demandé quelque chose; nous avons demandé quelque chose comme la surveillance de l’ombudsman. Nous avons demandé quelque chose, mais je demande pourquoi le gouvernement n’a rien fait. Ils n’ont pas ajouté des idées ou nos suggestions.

I ask this government why they haven’t acted on the ideas that we’ve presented. The member made a great point that there were a number of ideas that we’ve suggested, a number of ideas that we’ve raised. There has been a big gap between the initial iteration of this bill and the reiteration of this bill, yet none of these suggestions that we’ve made, like Ombudsman oversight, like stronger whistleblower protection, like bringing this Ornge agency before Government Agencies—these suggestions haven’t been implemented and haven’t been taken into consideration. Why not? There is no reason, given the time between the first bill and the second bill, that some of these great suggestions haven’t been implemented.

I have to give credit. I strongly respect and give a lot of credit to my colleague from—where is he from?

Interjection: Halton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Halton?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Oakville.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My apologies. The member from Oakville stood up and took some responsibility. He said there could have been better oversight. I commend the member for saying that. I think it takes a lot of courage to get up and say the right thing, that the government could have done more work. I think there’s nothing wrong with doing that. If I am ever in the position of the government and I make a mistake, I think it’s the right thing to do to get up and say, “Listen, we made a mistake. We could do

better.” There’s actually nothing wrong with that. I think that would work towards creating a better sense of collegiality in this room, when we could all admit our mistakes and work towards making them better and improving them. I salute the member for saying that and I agree with his suggestion that there are some things that should have been added in this bill that haven’t been added.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Halton has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I appreciate the comments made by the members. It’s interesting that the members who made comments picked out the same essential points and emphasis that I made in my brief comments.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane talked about how there were no amendments made to the bill, which I find—if you’re going to reintroduce something after three or four months, why wouldn’t you take the time to redraft the bill and incorporate some of the things that would ensure its passage through this House? It just makes common sense. If the bill is truly important to the government, these amendments to the bill would make the bill stronger. It would make the bill better. It would not dilute the bill one iota. Why wouldn’t the government take that advice and do it?

The member for Oakville talked about the oversight and the breaking of the trust that the government gave to this organization. It wasn’t what I’d refer to as a mea culpa, but it did approach the fact that, yes, there were some problems. When you have some problems, it’s up to this House, the entire Legislature, to fix it. The government has brought back a bill, again, without any substantive amendments from the original version. It had the opportunity and it didn’t take that opportunity. It was an opportunity lost. That’s too bad.

The member for Northumberland–Quinte West also talked about the lack of trust.

There’s the old story from the 1950s when they were building the New York thruway. There’s a rumour that the New York thruway was built 12 inches too narrow, so the contractor got to save 12 inches of cement for the concrete for the entire length of the New York thruway, and that amounted to a lot of money. That was a lack of trust. That was a lack of oversight by the New York government.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I’m pleased to rise again to speak to Bill 11, the Ambulance Amendment Act. Normally you can’t speak twice, but obviously last year I rose in the Legislature to speak to this same legislation, which at that time was called Bill 50. I raised a number of concerns with the legislation, as did my colleagues. I think it’s important that we remember why the people of Ontario sent us here and why we spend hours in this Legislature debating legislation. It’s our job as members of Parliament to point out weaknesses in the bills that are brought forward and to point out where the legislation doesn’t reach its intended goals. But it’s also our job as

members of Parliament to listen to that debate. It’s the job of government members in particular to act on the concerns raised in the Legislature by making the legislation better and to ensure it works for the people of Ontario.

The government talks about consulting and working together, but the proof is in their actions. In October, when the Premier prorogued this Legislature, all the legislation, including Bill 50, died on the order paper. As you know, Madam Speaker, we were disappointed that the government chose to delay all the work of the province while they held a leadership race. We are disappointed that they chose not to debate bills like this one and they chose to shut down the committees that were investigating Ornge, leaving five committee requests for information outstanding and the evidence by a number of key witnesses yet to be heard.

But I’m even more disappointed that when they reintroduced the legislation like this act, they ignored all the concerns that had been raised by the opposition parties.

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This morning, as we began debate on the Local Food Act, we were facing the same situation: After four months of the Legislature being prorogued, after all the comments from agriculture organizations and local food groups, that act missed many essential issues. After a commitment by the now-Premier and Minister of Agriculture and Food to introduce a “strengthened food act,” the government introduced the same weak food act as last fall. Then they introduced the same weak ambulance act, which will still fail to address the challenges at Ornge air ambulance. This is not a real attempt to fix the problems with Ontario’s air ambulance organization or to add better oversight; it is an attempt to divert attention away from the fact that the minister has had the power to hold Ornge and its board accountable from the very beginning.

There were many signs that something was wrong at Ornge. The ministry was informed about the many corporations that were being created. The ministry should have realized that something wasn’t right when Dr. Mazza disappeared off the sunshine list—and we later discovered his excessive salary. The ministry should have realized that something wasn’t right at an organization where they were paying for designer motorcycles to sit in the front lobby and paying expenses for glamorous trips to Florida, South America and Europe.

Through the work of the public accounts committee, it has come out that there were communications with the government and there were warning signs, but they were ignored. No one took responsibility; no one bothered to look up at the many signs that something was going wrong. The people of Ontario need to know that they have an air ambulance service that they can count on. We all hope that our loved ones never need to use one, but if they need it, it must be there.

I heard from constituents in my riding whose granddaughter, Jamie Lynn, was one of the unfortunate ones that needed the air ambulance. She was six years old.

Jamie Lynn collapsed at home on June 30, 2011, and was rushed to Windsor Regional Hospital by ambulance. There, the family was told that she needed to be transferred to London or Toronto, but they waited for hours for the air ambulance that didn't come, and she was eventually transferred by car to Detroit. There, she was diagnosed with meningitis, but it was too late.

Jamie's grandparents want to ensure that no family goes through what they went through. They want to ensure that Ontario has an air ambulance system that works. For that to happen, we need to ensure that if there is a problem, employees at Ornge can alert us to those issues. Without whistle-blowers, we might never have discovered that Ornge had purchased helicopters which didn't have enough room for paramedics to perform their jobs properly.

This legislation addresses whistle-blowers, but it fails to provide across-the-board protection for them. In fact, it limits which individuals are protected and who can approach them with information. Without whistle-blowers, we might never have learned about the money that went to expenses and excessive salaries instead of health care. Without them, we might not have discovered that Ornge purchased 12 helicopters and 10 airplanes even though their own analysis said that three helicopters and four airplanes were all they needed at the time. Without whistle-blowers, we might not have learned about the mystery payments of millions of dollars that the manufacturer paid to companies related to Ornge.

I want to commend those people who were brave enough to come forward to raise their concerns; those who were brave enough to risk their jobs to say that things weren't right. If there are problems in the future, whether the issues are related to money mismanagement or operational issues that put lives at risk, we need those whistle-blowers to come forward, but this bill fails to provide the protection to ensure that they will feel safe in doing so.

But solving the problems at Ornge takes more than whistle-blowers. It takes proper oversight, like a minister, a Minister of Health and a government who are accountable and responsible. The many problems at Ornge have demonstrated that we don't currently have that. When my colleague the member from Newmarket–Aurora raised questions in the Legislature, the Minister of Health defended Ornge. When it became clear that there were significant problems at Ornge—from finances to aircraft to operations—the Minister of Health failed to take any responsibility. The government failed to take responsibility or hold the minister accountable. In fact, after everything had happened at Ornge, the new Premier chose to promote the Minister of Health to Deputy Premier. What message does that send?

The actions that were taken at Ornge are the subject of an OPP investigation. The coroner launched an inquest to look into a number of deaths related to Ornge. These are serious problems with serious consequences, and yet, when employees raised the concerns and a member of the Legislature questioned the Minister of Health, concerns

were simply ignored. There was a fundamental problem with the government's oversight of Ornge, but it's not one that this bill will address. For instance, in this bill, the government could have, and should have, given the Ombudsman oversight of Ornge to ensure that the minister was doing her job, that limited health care dollars were not wasted and that Ontarians had an air ambulance system they could depend on.

It's not just the opposition parties that were asking for this oversight. In a letter to the Minister of Health, the Ombudsman said: "While moving in the right direction, measures such as the establishment of an Ornge patient advocate and Bill 11's creation of a new bureaucracy of 'special investigators' are insufficient to provide much-needed scrutiny, and continue to shield Ornge from Ombudsman oversight. My office remains unable to address any individual or systemic issues involving Ornge."

"The Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario is a unique resource to support the Legislative Assembly in holding government accountable. It is there to allow the provincial Parliament to scrutinize government bodies. I cannot think of a more persuasive case for this than Ornge."

That's from the Ombudsman.

Over the last four months, why did no one in government take the time to amend the legislation to add this oversight? Why did they not take the time to strengthen the legislation to make it more effective?

The role that Ornge plays is essential. The service they provide is often literally life or death. The people of Ontario can't afford for the government to play games or put public relations first. I hope that this time the government is listening to the concerns the opposition is raising and will be taking steps to address them, to ensure we have legislation that provides proper accountability and oversight, legislation that ensures our limited health dollars are protected and that this essential life-saving service is available when it's needed.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for allowing me a few moments to put those words on the record.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour today to comment on the comments of the member for Oxford. Although he is my uncle, I hope no one holds it against me.

But he did bring up some very good points, and he showed how close he is to his constituents. He brought up a case in his constituency of a family that was deeply impacted by a problem at Ornge. He focused a lot on whistle-blowers, and that's also a subject we focus on a lot—a subject I focus on a lot, about a case that's happening in my constituency. Maybe I learned from my uncle to be close to my constituents, because those are the people you're really working for.

One thing I think we also echo each other on is Ombudsman protection, because that's the one universal. I talk to my constituents, and who do you turn to when you have a problem, when you want something impartial? You look to the Ombudsman. He did a good job of bringing that forward. Once again, I fail to understand,

and I would like someone on the government side to say why they don't want Ombudsman oversight. What do you have against an impartial office looking over this issue? And not only this issue, the Ornge issue; what we're missing here is that there could be other Ornges—there will be—and we have to look at how we can fix it. Why don't we have Ombudsman oversight?

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: I think there's agreement on all sides of the House that what happened at Ornge was unacceptable and better oversight is needed, and the OPP is in there doing their investigation now.

But since that happened, there have been a lot of good things happening at Ornge. The minister has done very important work and made positive changes. There's a new performance agreement, new procedures and policies, a quality improvement plan, and a new board and CEO. We're going out to the head office tomorrow as part of the public accounts committee, but reports we've had over the last six months say that things are really improving. The front-line staff are doing a great job, and so is the administration.

1650

This bill represents the final stages needed to get Ornge properly set up. We've used almost 17 hours of debate for a bill that is very similar to one that was already seen by this Legislature last fall. We need to move forward with our work on this bill. It's time to send it to committee. Members of the opposition have said they see room for improvements in this bill, and that work needs to be done at committee. I'm calling on the opposition to allow this bill to proceed to committee so that we can have debate and discussion that will allow us to come forward with a piece of legislation that is strong and provides protection for the people of Ontario.

One of the things that was discussed, because this has been sort of an issue of—the right agreement is the right agreement. We had in front of us twice, and under oath, Carole McKeogh. She's the senior legal person for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. She wasn't involved in the original Ornge agreement. She was brought in as the person that advised us. At committee, twice, under oath, Carole McKeogh said this is what is required. It's like the Excellent Care for All Act. It's like the hospital agreement. So this agreement is the right agreement. Let's get it to committee, and let's do the work on it to get it passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Simcoe—Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to commend the member for Oxford for, once again, an excellent speech. It's the second time he has had to speak on this legislation because, of course, the government keeps telling us how important this legislation is, yet the rascals took off for four months, closed this place down, wouldn't let us—

Interjections.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I guess it's unparliamentary if it upsets them, so I do apologize. You son of a guns, first

you buy an election, right? And then, for your own selfish reasons, because things are getting a little heated around here, you shut the place down. Now you expect us to reward bad behaviour by speeding up your bill. Well, frankly, folks, if this was so important—I think what it shows is that you brought back the same weak legislation you had before you prorogued last October 15.

The fact of the matter is, I'm a former Minister of Health. I know darn well that the existing law allowed Ms. Matthews, the Minister of Health, to do her job. She failed miserably in doing her job. She should have at least stepped down and gone to the penalty box to show that there was some remorse over there for wasting the taxpayers' money at eHealth, for the boondoggle you made of Ornge.

You know the one thing they've never explained, Madam Speaker? Why did you get rid of the ambulance service we had, which was run by the private sector? What deal did George Smitherman make now that he's in consulting? Is he actually working for some of these companies that benefitted? The fact of the matter is, you put thousands of pilots and people out of work and you've never explained it to the people of Ontario.

I can remember celebrating, as Minister of Health many, many years ago, the 15th anniversary of the helicopter service we had. Remember, we had Bandage 1 and Bandage 2, and the complaints in those days were far less. Those ambulances could actually land on the grass. They could land on gravel roads. Now we have to drive people to fancy airports in order to get them air-ambulance lifted. That's ridiculous. You've never explained to the people of Ontario why you screwed the system up in the first place.

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: Here's the voice of reason.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the Attorney General. I pretty much 100% disagree respectfully with my colleagues in the PC Party in general, in general. However, I absolutely respect their ability to participate in debate in this assembly. That's why we—

Interjection.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm happy that they have their right to debate and continue to debate. What I object to is a government that is going to scold us about our objectives here and about the pace at which things move here, because we know that we have a government that is dragging their feet, that shut down the Legislature. It's a broken record. We all know this. For months and months and months, this place was not open and the people's business could not be done. But it seems like a government in which, depending on the issue, things go at different paces. In my community in Toronto, people are feeling like a casino is being forced down their throats. A casino will be forced down the throats of people in this city because this government is pushing this issue. They know that there's a captive market in Toronto. They can create people with gambling addictions in our city.

There's a big market here, so they're pushing that. We've asked for a referendum on this issue, and the government—Kathleen Wynne as the new Premier has refused to give our city a referendum to make this decision.

But when it comes to this issue, the Premier in fact bragged that she was going to bring the Legislature back early. She brought it back, and then there's nothing to talk about. They've got this same tired bill that's not going to do anything. This is the government that's setting the agenda, and now they want to stand up and complain about the PC Party holding up the agenda. It's whatever works for this government.

At the same time, we're missing huge opportunities to actually take action. This government owes it to the people of Ontario to take action on the key things that matter. Unfortunately, we haven't heard very many of those in a very long time.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the members from Timiskaming–Cochrane, Ottawa–Orléans, Simcoe–Grey and Davenport for their comments.

One of the things I keep hearing from the government side is that we've had considerable debate, and now this is going to go to committee and this is where you make changes. Madam Speaker, in the normal course of events that's what happened, but as I mentioned in my remarks, this is the second time we've been through this. We had all the debate. All the issues with this bill were put to the government, and we said, "This isn't going to work the way you're doing it. What you need to do is improve the bill." Now they're saying, "We're willing to improve it. Just send it to committee."

What did they do all the time they were unemployed and let go by the Premier while they were looking for—oh, they were looking for a leader; that's what they were doing. But they were not amending the bill to what they heard in the discussion. They then brought it back exactly the same. From that, I have to make the assumption that they wanted the bill to pass exactly the way it was there, that it's all window dressing. They're not about to change the bill when it goes to committee this time.

I just want to encourage them to make sure that with what everyone has been telling us, this bill does not do what they say they want done, which is that they want to have an accountable air ambulance service with accountable oversight. That will not be done unless they look a little further, do what the Ombudsman asks for and give the Ombudsman the power to have oversight of the air ambulance, so that when people do not get the service they want, they don't have to go directly to the minister. They can call the Ombudsman and say, "I think you should investigate. It's a government service, and we're not getting what the government says they're providing us."

I think that's what they need to do. So, from all this debate, the very least we can hope for is that they put in that the Ombudsman will have oversight to make sure the people of Ontario are protected with their ambulance service.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): 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 Ms. Armstrong assumes ballot item number 20 and Mr. Singh assumes ballot item number 25.

Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I was just wondering if any of the other parties want to join the debate, but I'm pleased to stand up here and join the debate of Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services.

For over a year—mostly the public out there that happens to be watching—we've seen on the news that Ontario's air ambulance service, or Ornge, has symbolized everything that's wrong with this McGuinty-Wynne government. It represents out-of-control spending, lack of safeguards to ensure that taxpayers' dollars are being spent wisely and what has turned out to be a virtual abdication of government oversight.

We have seen a supposed arm's-length agency of the government running amok, virtually unchecked by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. My colleague the member for Newmarket–Aurora has done an excellent job trying to get to the bottom of Ornge and making public the scandal that has existed. I quote his remarks on March 5: "The Ornge air ambulance scandal is a textbook example of why people are cynical about politics, about politicians, about bureaucrats and the role of the private sector in delivering public services."

Since the McGuinty government created Ornge, we've witnessed a consistent record of mismanagement and scandal. A lot has been said about the Auditor General here this afternoon—it goes as far back as 2005. The Auditor General was already documenting many of the problems which in the last year have dominated the newspapers and newscasts.

What started out as a reasonable plan to divest the delivery of an essential health care service—we don't know why the other service wasn't performing that well, but anyway they planned to divest it to an external, non-profit corporation, and it has turned out to be this government's worst nightmare.

1700

With the financial crisis which is facing Ontario, it's criminal, absolutely criminal, to see millions and millions of scarce health care dollars wasted, frittered, misappropriated, due in no small part to the fact that the minister was not providing proper oversight to Ornge. We all have cases in our ridings where we'd like to see our health care dollars spent better, but when we see the scandalous waste of millions of dollars from Ornge under the Ministry of Health, we all cringe and say, "How could this be?" when patient care has been compromised and the courageous efforts of the front-line health care professionals have been undermined by a flagrant lack of oversight and misuse of delegated authority. And it's those workers who were tipping us off about what was going on at Ornge. They were disgusted. They were there to provide quality care and save patients' lives. They

took it on as their responsibility, and they were the ones who kept pushing and pushing the ministry, and nobody was listening. The red flags were up.

What do we have? We have patients who have died as a result of this incompetence and lack of oversight. One of the most important issues that the Legislature can address is certainly the safety of all Ontarians and the ability of a government to deliver high-quality and safe air ambulance services.

In the Auditor General's report in 2005 on land ambulances, he recommended that the ministry conduct unannounced reviews to ensure consistent quality of service. However, the ministry's policy, then and now, is to provide advance notice of at least 90 days. So, despite the advance notice of 90 days, about one third of the services, including Ornge, did not pass their scheduled review the first time. Again, the Auditor General gave you tons of red flags. We have asked and asked to get to the bottom of Ornge, because there's a huge responsibility. We have, in this Legislature, to be responsible to the people of Ontario.

The Auditor General said, in the issues that were cited—we've heard about it in the news and during committee hearings—such things as aircraft being improperly stocked with medical supplies and equipment; medical oxygen equipment that was improperly maintained as well. We've heard tons about the inability in the space to perform CPR, which is a basic life-saving measure. How could you buy a helicopter in which you couldn't perform CPR? Again, who was watching the shop?

It has been brought up, and I'll bring it up again. Chris Mazza: How did they let a salary go of \$1.4 million per year, outrageous perks and expenses, money channelled into other companies in order to get around reporting requirements, the sunshine list?

We asked some pretty hard-hitting questions in question period last year before we prorogued and they tried to shut all the questioning and everything down so that we in opposition or the public couldn't ask any more questions and put pressure on the government. They kept saying, "We had no prior knowledge of this." Well, we have all spoken, pretty much. We are going to continue on this side until we have all spoken on this bill. We haven't heard the right answers back; that's why we keep speaking.

Anyway, there should have been consequences for the Minister of Health; instead, we see that she has been promoted to Deputy Premier. There were no consequences at all. She got a promotion—

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Ridiculous.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes—for covering up what clearly has been proven: that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care knew about Ornge.

After all the days of committee hearings, dozens of witnesses, thousands of pages of documentary evidence proving for all to see that the fundamental structure of Ornge is flawed, it's dysfunctional, we're still seeing a serious flaw on the part of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to exercise oversight responsibilities.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's a little loud in here. I really can't hear the member. We've got people in her own caucus talking loud. For the amount of people in here, it certainly is loud; I can't believe it. So if we could cut it back a bit, I'd like to hear what the member has to say. Thank you.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for wanting to hear what I had to say. I appreciate that.

Bill 11, which we're debating here today, has been much touted by the minister as a panacea for all of the ills at Ornge; it's going to solve it all. But we can see that it's just a further attempt by this government to divert attention away from the failure of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for years. It's a lack of oversight for the bureaucrats who failed to clearly define their oversight responsibilities. As we've seen so many times before, it's another example of too little, too late. So, lots of bravado over there on the government side, but short on substance. It truly is, Bill 11. If shallow, high-sounding rhetoric were the key to successful government, Ontario would have a huge surplus, zero unemployment, brand new infrastructure and the best highway and health care systems in the world. We could probably throw in a cure for cancer over there, but unfortunately, that is no reflection on the reality of what goes on in this province.

The gross mismanagement of the Ornge file is merely symptomatic of so many other areas that this government has tainted with its misguided policies, and if there was any oversight at all—what we have in this bill is an attempt by the government to cobble together a piece of legislation. They had a long time between the first time they brought it in—then we prorogued, then they brought it back in again, but really, they have made it no better. The public accounts committee still hasn't completed all its work, so we haven't even gotten to the bottom of Ornge. We haven't heard from all the witnesses, but yet they're bringing in a piece of legislation—again, for the second time—that says it fixes all the problems at Ornge. There are still too, too many questions to be answered. We need to fully understand what happened at Ornge and the magnitude of how this scandal actually evolved so it's not repeated again.

If you could hopefully table responsible legislation—and I know that the ministers have been shouting that we can make amendments; well, we'll see if amendments actually get made, because really, why didn't you change the bill to make it stronger while you had kind of the time off to do that? You could have done it during prorogation and brought back a stronger bill.

The Auditor General, in 2012—I mentioned him in 2005, that this started—noted that Ornge wouldn't willingly provide his investigation with documents. Why couldn't the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care say, "Provide the documents"? They had to be accountable. Could you not have seen that, with all the complaints and the Auditor General's report starting, there was something wrong? People's lives were at risk, and this incompetence and scandal shouldn't go on.

When this bill would amend the Ambulance Act to allow providers of air ambulance services to be

“designated air ambulance service providers,” the cabinet would give the power to appoint provincial representatives to sit on boards of designated air ambulance providers, of which Ornge is one, and the bill would actually empower the minister to issue directives to designated air ambulance services—really, a lot of excitement in that bill.

The bill—I have just a short time left—would also permit cabinet to appoint special investigators to investigate a designated air ambulance service in various areas. I know my colleague on the NDP has mentioned that it's pretty hard to get special investigators up in northern Ontario when they need to investigate; that's why we've been calling for the Auditor General to have more oversight in this.

Finally, this bill would provide limited protection for whistle-blowers. It's been brought up: It may be better than it was, but it's still not what we need to protect the whistle-blowers. As I say, the staff that brought forward those documents certainly put their jobs on the line, and we didn't offer them enough protection.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: There was a comment made that, if anybody's listening outside TV land—is anybody listening? I know for a fact that in London—Fanshawe, Wayne and Netty are listening. They tune in every day to watch the Legislature, and I know that they're going to find that we're talking about Ornge and the scandal that happened at Ornge; they're going to be following it, and they're going to be listening very intently to what the Liberal bill is proposing and what the opposition is saying.

One of the things that we have found that there's a provision in this bill for is, it allows for the amendment of the accountability agreement, at any point, through regulation and without consultation. This is the first time that this has been done. When we have this particular concern, where an amendment can be made to the accountability agreement without it coming back to the House so that it can be discussed, to me that's another red flag, because this government failed in the first accountability agreement to properly enforce the tools that they had on the Ornge organization. Now, if we have this type of provision in here, where the government can just amend the accountability agreement without it coming back to the House, through regulation and without consultation, that's another recipe for unaccountability and a situation where a minister may not—well, you know what? They need to have the opposition's perspective. We give them a different perspective. It's not all sunshine and roses when we make a bill. We have criticisms of that bill. We have suggestions for that bill in order to make it better. Same thing when you're looking at an accountability agreement, where you're going to make an amendment to that; you may want to hear the opposition's feedback in order to make that a stronger amendment and an amendment that's accountable in that agreement. That way, you don't get the situation we

heard about Mr. Smitherman: “It was his original agreement and now we're going to make it better.” That agreement should have been ironclad from the beginning when you're talking about the public purse.

1710

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

Hon. Mario Sergio: Just a few comments on the remarks made by the member from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock. It's a beautiful part of this country of ours.

As I was listening to the previous speakers, especially the member from Oxford, I didn't know about the relationship between the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane and the member from Oxford. I think it's wonderful that we have a relationship on both sides of the opposition there. I look forward to some more intermingling as we move along.

But just a brief remark on the comments by the member: Nobody is questioning that there was not enough supervision or whatever you want to call it, but we're at the stage now where we've had 17 hours. I won't even dare say that you folks have had enough, that I think we should send the bill to committee. They can have all the time in the world, but the longer we debate the same thing over and over again, the longer we delay the bill from going to committee and bringing it back.

I would suggest to the members of the opposition to prepare themselves a good number of amendments that would indeed make the bill much better when it comes back. We have already incorporated in the bill some good recommendations which, I have to say, the opposition tends to agree is an improvement. Well, if we want to see it better, then prepare some amendments, come along to the committee, let them be heard and then bring it back. This is all we want, and I hope that today we can accomplish this.

Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the member for her comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments. The member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. It's wonderful to see such a steely man in the chair this afternoon here in the House.

It's a pleasure to have some comments on this, and I think it's important to start off first by saying the public interest is safeguarded through debate. That is the fundamental purpose and objective of this assembly and every assembly. The only way that we have, the only tool that we have, to safeguard the public interest is through debate. These comments from the government side that we should do away with debate—what they're in reality saying is, “Let's do away with the safeguards to the public interest.”

I think it's also important for everybody to recognize—I think Ornge demonstrates beyond any reasonable doubt that there are some things that governments are just not capable or well suited to do. Ornge air ambulance is that. As the member from Simcoe already mentioned, up

until 2005 we had an air ambulance system that worked fine and worked efficiently. It was run by the private sector; government was not involved. We had no scandals. We had no misfortunes or terrible situations of people not being able to get to the hospital because of crews not being lined up or improper helicopters being purchased.

I think that is really what this government ought to recognize. In my view, this government should pull this bill off the table, recognize their total, complete and utter failure with Ornge, and say, "This is something beyond our abilities. Let's go back and put it the way it was before George Smitherman tinkered with it."

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: I know there has been an awful lot said about Ornge. I want to put a very positive spin on this, and that is, I want to say something very positive about all the hard-working people that work at Ornge on a day-to-day basis.

I'll talk from personal experiences. I live within about one block of Kingston General Hospital. They have a helicopter pad just outside of Kingston General Hospital. On a daily basis, at least two Ornge helicopters come in that take people from wherever they are hurt in the province of Ontario, or from wherever they need to be transported from, right next to Kingston General Hospital. Many of these helicopters, either directly or indirectly, come from Moose Factory. You see, there has been this relationship developed over the last 300 years between Moose Factory and Kingston General Hospital whereby many patients that need the extra care that a tertiary care hospital can give them and that are in Moose Factory are helped at Kingston General Hospital. I have seen these helicopters land on a day-to-day basis at least two or three times a day. I've always been very pleasantly—not surprised, but I found that the care that these individuals that fly these helicopters, that look after these sometimes severely ill individuals in the helicopter and transfer them from the helicopter into the hospital—that that is done in a very professional fashion, and I think we should applaud those individuals.

That's really what this service is all about. It's all about the safety of the individuals that need to be transported to hospitals as quickly as possible. And that's why I say to the opposition: We've had enough debate. Let's get this bill to committee so that you can make your necessary amendments. It's a minority Parliament. You control the day. Let's get this on the road and get going.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock has two minutes.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are having a debate because we do care about the safety of the citizens of Ontario and we do care that the government is spending their money correctly and not having scandals like we've seen at Ornge, where actually people died from the mismanagement of the file.

Why do we have Ornge? That is the question. Was the government not able to provide adequate services before

for air ambulance? Did Ornge really have to be created, and did all those millions of dollars have to be wasted? No. And this bill does nothing substantive to change that. It's just a cover-up for the ministry's failure of leadership. It perpetuates the existing structure of air ambulance, and those great front-line workers that we all praise and that we are happy are there serving us are the ones that helped uncover all the scandals that were going on at Ornge. They did not want this system to occur. They saw that patients were compromised, that the whole air ambulance was being mishandled.

Does it talk about enough whistle-blower protection? This bill actually limits the scope of the whistle-blower protection to protect those front-line staff so they can tell the government, the ministry, when there are problems, when patients are compromised, when they are compromised. It does not provide across-the-board protection for whistle-blowers.

The legislation, we feel, needs to provide for a formal process through the Ombudsman that will ensure proper protection and follow-up. This bill is, as I said before, an attempt to divert attention away from the fact that the minister had the power to hold Ornge and its board accountable from day one. She had the power to intervene at Ornge under the original Ornge performance agreement, as well as the Independent Health Facilities Act. But Bill 11, which we're debating here today, does not provide the oversight that's needed for the air ambulance, nor does it get to the bottom line of what that scandal is all involving.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you so very much, Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 11. I'll just start off by once again by reminding people that Ornge demonstrates beyond any reasonable doubt that the government is incompetent and incapable of providing some services. Before Ornge became structured in this province, we had private contractors providing air ambulance services to the people of Ontario, and they did it efficiently. They did it effectively. They did it without scandal. They did it without buying motorboats for Chris Mazza, or motorcycles. They did it without providing MBAs and executive MBAs at taxpayer expense. They did it efficiently, effectively and without tragic circumstances for the people of Ontario.

1720

This government ought to recognize the failings of Ornge and not window-dress it with Bill 11.

Speaker, two weeks ago I spoke in this House about the need for strengthening the Taxpayer Protection Act as well. When I raised the concerns that I've heard from citizens around the province about how they were being put out of business by the various Liberal and NDP coalition taxes—that mimosa coalition—it was laughed off by the government.

When I spoke about how a resident from the Attorney General's own riding called me because he couldn't work

in the winter because, with all the new taxes, he couldn't afford to heat his workshop, the Attorney General and the government just didn't seem to care about our constituents. It seems to me that's the Liberal government's approach when it comes to Ornge as well: a disregard for the people who are affected by their failed administration. If you're a patient of Ornge who requires CPR, you might just as well be disregarded or forgotten.

I'd like to quote from a Toronto Star story from last January regarding the safety issues with Ornge's new helicopters at the time. Dr. Bruce Sawadsky found that the helicopters' "cramped medical interiors are a 'high-risk environment.' [It is t]ough to do CPR. [It is h]ard to prop up a patient with difficulty breathing."

This wasn't the first time that this happened under the leadership of the Minister of Health and the member for London North Centre. This actually came up, and someone's life was put in jeopardy, in 2011.

I'd like to again quote from Mr. Donovan's story in the Star. There was an "incident in which pilots and paramedics on the new helicopter had to struggle to save a patient's life.

"A patient went into cardiac arrest mid-flight and the paramedics attempted cardiopulmonary resuscitation. However, they discovered they could not carry it out because the patient was pushed toward the chopper ceiling in mid-flight.

"Under tremendous pressure to save the patient's life' the crew figured out a way to provide the life-saving treatment."

Documents describing these problems were sent to Ornge head office and to the provincial Ministry of Health, but no action was taken.

Can you imagine being the crew of the helicopter, fulfilling your dream as a paramedic, saving people's lives, and having to deal with that from our province? Can you imagine having a loved one die due to incompetence like that?

Unfortunately, there are people who are victims of Ornge's mismanagement and the Liberal government's incompetence. Take, for example, Clyde Dearman. Last May, Clyde was supposed to celebrate his 50th wedding anniversary with his wife, Judy. Unfortunately, Judy had to wait eight hours for Ornge to send a helicopter from Barry's Bay to Ottawa. She was not shown the compassion or the care that she deserved and that ought to be expected.

Just a week prior to that, there was a horrific crash in Stouffville. Ornge didn't have enough crews to respond and there was another victim of their mismanagement: Richard Ribeiro, a married father of a young child, died of his injuries in hospital because he wasn't treated timely or professionally by Ornge.

When Richard and Judy fell victim to this mismanagement, the person at the helm wasn't Chris Mazza anymore. It was the Ministry of Health, the minister—the same minister today—who had oversight the entire and complete time.

What has been the minister's response to the mismanagement at Ornge? Well, at best, you might call it a shrug of the shoulders.

Speaker, there are lots of models the minister could have chosen to look at to reform Ontario's air ambulance service. She could have used the example found most often throughout the world, where air ambulances are provided privately, either through charity or at a profit. That is the norm in the world.

In Australia and New Zealand, for example, the second-largest bank there, Westpac Bank, provides air ambulance services while also bolstering its image as a charitable company. Can you imagine the scandal that Westpac would have endured if they didn't buy helicopters large enough for their patients, or how angry the people would be if there was an Australian Judy or a Kiwi Richard who perished due to Westpac's incompetence?

There is another model that the minister could have looked at: Scotland's model. Scotland is one of the few places that has a government-run air ambulance service. I went on the Scottish ambulance services website yesterday and saw a page called "Making a Complaint," which detailed the numerous ways and people to whom you could complain. You could complain to the ambulance service itself; you could complain to the National Health Service or to the Scottish Ombudsman. There was even a detailed way to go to mediation if you were not happy with the way your complaint was dealt with by the air ambulance service. Does Ornge have any of that? Does Bill 11 have any of that? The answer, Speaker, is no; none. That's what accountability and oversight is. That's a far cry from what we had or will have with Ornge under Bill 11 or without Bill 11.

I don't believe the minister looked at either of those models. Personally, I don't believe she looked at any model ever about air ambulance services. Instead, the government is telling the victims of Ornge, from all the taxpayers who have funded this fraud to the actual people who have lost their lives due to Ornge's mismanagement, that their concerns do not matter. Instead of fixing the problem, instead of fundamentally reforming the culture of fraud and the pathological bureaucracy that created this baneful entity, the Liberals have said that the status quo is the only way to go.

Bill 11 is giving ever more power to the Liberal government, but ever more power, also, to hide from accountability and scrutiny behind their unelected, unaccountable third party agencies. It's no way to fix the problem, Speaker.

We know how these agencies have turned out before. Chris Mazza was appointed. Considering how well that appointment did, I'm sure that it's a wonderful conciliation to those harmed by Ornge that the Liberal government will make even more appointments in the future.

I know that Bill 11 promises to address this lack of oversight, but we've heard those promises before, and it doesn't seem to me that the people who have contacted

me believe it either. After signing a petition to appoint an all-party select committee to investigate Ornge, Al from Brockville wrote me to say, “Fraud must be addressed, and those involved must be treated as the criminals they are.” Or Rick from Toronto, who wrote me to say, “Think of all the work we could have accomplished building roads and bridges if the Liberal government did not waste billions on eHealth ... millions on gas plant cancellations” and millions more on Ornge, just to name a few. Dell from Merrickville wrote me that his concern isn’t that Ornge is going to be fraudulent again, but instead that, “These suits and skirts at the new College of Trades will be just another Ornge boondoggle” in the making.

A common theme and thread has appeared constantly through this Liberal agenda, the McGuinty-Wynne agenda, and it’s this: The minister will sit back and relax, fall asleep at the switch, create an agency to hide behind and enjoy sipping a mimosa and the parliamentary support from the NDP coalition partners who keep them there.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: I’m happy to respond, except I’m awaiting this bill proceeding to committee. I notice that the government has engaged in a debate. I notice that the third party has engaged in a debate from time to time on this bill and has brought forward some interesting suggestions, as have members of the government.

1730

What is clear here is that the speeches that are taking place amount to a filibuster in the House now. This bill should proceed to committee. At committee, people will have a chance to advance their thoughts there, and perhaps some amendments that they can put forward at that particular point in time. I think there will be probably an opportunity to hear people who would make presentations to the committee. This is appropriate. But it’s clear what their strategy is. The government is proposing this bill. We did not expect that there was going to be a unanimous endorsement of it, by any means. But the Conservative Party is only interested in tying up the House, not proceeding with the bill, not proceeding with any legislation, because they have no interest in making the House work, unfortunately.

Now, that’s different from what I saw from 1977 to 1981. There was a minority Parliament at that particular time. Mr. Davis happened to be the Premier of the province, and, yes, there were ideas that were advanced by the government of the day, Mr. Davis’s government. There were two opposition parties that outnumbered the government party, but I think there was a chance then and a desire then for the parties to work together to bring legislation forward to make any appropriate changes.

That’s what should be happening with this piece of legislation, in my view, as opposed to simply having one party that is going to exhaust all of its time regardless of whether there’s anything new to add to the debate. That’s unfortunate, because I think a lot of good work could be

done at the committee, and I think they have some good members who could ask some appropriate questions at that point in time.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I just want to say to my colleague the Conservative MPP from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington that I think he summed it up really well, and summed it up on behalf of the people of Ontario who are clearly frustrated with the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals, with their mishandling of Ornge, after they saw years of misspending and scandal at eHealth and now, of course, the gas plant scandal that is soaking taxpayers for billions of dollars.

Just to add to what the Minister of the Environment said, the MPP from St. Catharines, I think debating this bill is what democracy is all about. There are processes in place to allow this debate to continue, and I’m proud that the PC caucus is engaging in this debate. For 10 years, we’ve seen this government put politics over the people of Ontario. It’s always been politics first, and I think, quite frankly, that’s why we’re in this fiscal crisis and jobs crisis that we’re into now. The debt in the province of Ontario is heading towards \$300 billion. Recently, we saw a report from another economist saying that by fiscal year 2019-20, the debt in the province of Ontario is going to be \$550 billion. Clearly, this government continues to put politics over the people and over families and small businesses in this province.

Ornge is one of the biggest scandals to ever hit the province. It started under the McGuinty Liberals and is continuing under Ontario’s Premier currently. They’re not getting to the bottom of this. They continue to delay and not face the facts that this is a rogue organization, and we have a Minister of Health who clearly is ignoring the problem, sadly to the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I wasn’t going to rise and continue this debate, but the Minister of the Environment made a few comments that caused me to.

I found it quite rich for a minister of the governing side to accuse the official opposition—and we don’t agree with the official opposition, maybe—of holding up debate on this important legislation when the government prorogued the House and killed the original legislation. He accuses the Conservatives of filibustering. We may or may not agree with that, but it was that side who prorogued the House, killing not just this legislation but all the other pieces of legislation that they claimed were so, so important.

And why, Mr. Speaker, did they prorogue the House? Why? Why did they prorogue the House? They prorogued the House to avoid some of the gas plant issues they’re facing now and to change the channel by picking a new leader, so they could stand on that side of the House and talk about their new government. It’s the same players.

We have held our fire, but for the government to accuse people on this side of the House of delaying

legislation when they prorogued Parliament for the sole purposes of their party, I find it—in the words I've often heard from the government House leader, I find it passing strange.

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

Hon. Mario Sergio: It's hard to follow some of the comments, Speaker, but I wanted to make a couple of remarks to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

I will not dwell in the past or make excuses for the lack of oversight in the past at Ornge, but let me say that there are more than 600 front-line workers there who, day in and day out, do a heck of a good job—very dedicated work on behalf of the people of Ontario.

Let me say, for the information of the members of the public, that yesterday, April 8 of this particular year, 38 patients were transported, 58 hours were flown, nine babies were transported, 13,211 miles were flown, yesterday alone. This is only part of what they do on a daily basis on behalf of the people of Ontario.

If we want to keep on dwelling on the lack of oversight in the past, we can do that, but after a while, it becomes repetitious. We don't want to cut the members' right to speak, because it's their right to speak. But after a while, not only does it get repetitious for the members—but I think we want to send it over to the committee so we can get some of those ideas and see how we can make it better. With all due respect, this is where we debate it, but that's where the actions are going to be taken that are going to make the difference.

I'm looking forward to seeing a number of positive changes, amendments that they will bring forward to the committee, where they're going to be discussing them, reincorporating them and bringing back the bill better and stronger. I hope they will do that, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington has two minutes.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, the Minister of Innovation and of course the Minister of the Environment, who has cause for some special attention from my comments, as he was being dismissive of this debate and as he was putting false motives on this, calling this a filibuster. This is a debate.

I'd like to call the Minister of the Environment—I find it absolutely disturbing and horrifying that a minister of the crown would have such contempt for democracy and the public debate that safeguards the public interest. I'll remind the minister—he was probably in this Legislature back in the days when we had a Royal Commission Inquiry into Civil Rights back in the 1970s, by James McRuer, who clearly spelled out in that royal commission that the courts safeguard the public through the wisdom of the judges. The assembly safeguards the interest of the public through debate, but there is no safeguard to the public interest with subordinate bodies of the Legislature. The impetus of that commission into

civil rights was to provide some protection for the public from these subordinate bodies.

Here we see this government making the same mistakes over and over again, stumbling, fumbling and bumbling along, and the public has to pay and pay, with the hurt of incompetence, with those examples that I gave, with the fraud and the over-expense of Chris Mazza in Ornge, and they're just going to do it again. They cannot learn, and they cannot see what history has there to provide for them.

1740

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to add to the debate for Bill 11, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services, also known as the Ambulance Amendment Act. This particular piece of legislation is the current government's attempt at fixing the colossal failures of Ontario's scandal-plagued air ambulance service, Ornge, and covering up the mistakes from a failed health minister and a failed organization.

When I talk about a failed health minister, it brings back memories of the eHealth scandal which I mentioned a few moments ago; of course, the Ornge scandal; and most recently, the issue with chemotherapy drugs here in the province of Ontario that clearly put patients' lives at risk. If this minister was an employee in any small business or any business across this province or this country, they would be fired. This clearly reflects the leadership of the government under the former Premier, under Dalton McGuinty, and of course under Premier Wynne. Anyone who acts this irresponsibly and who doesn't have oversight and control of their own ministry should be gone.

If passed, this bill would give new powers to the ministry that would supposedly better equip the ministry to deal with the long list of scandals that occurred at Ornge and attempt to prevent them from happening in the future. I'm sad to say that scandals are something that we are all too familiar with when it comes to this Liberal government. Some of the changes in Bill 11 would allow providers of air ambulance services to be designated as "designated air ambulance service providers." Cabinet would be given the power to appoint provincial representatives to sit on the boards of these newly designated air ambulance service providers, of which Ornge is one.

Bill 11 also empowers the minister to issue directives to designated air ambulance services. Under this legislation, cabinet may appoint special investigators to investigate a designated air ambulance service in the following areas: the quality of the administration and management; the quality of the care and treatment provided; the services provided; and any other matter relating to an air ambulance service provider, and the minister may appoint a supervisor to oversee a designated service provider. The single biggest weakness is that this bill perpetuates the existing structure of the air ambulance service rather than recognizing that the structure of this

organization is flawed and requires direct oversight by the Minister of Health.

Bill 11 maintains that the organization should be held accountable through internal mechanisms. This bill fails to address the fact that the Minister of Health had the power to hold Ornge and its board accountable from the very beginning of the Ornge saga. The minister had the power to intervene at Ornge under the original Ornge structure, and if she had done so, she would have saved this province millions in taxpayer dollars and indeed, more importantly, the lives lost due to the failures at Ornge. Instead, the minister tried to claim that she was not responsible for what was happening at Ornge and passed the responsibility off to anyone she could.

This legislation will continue to allow the Minister of Health to pass off her responsibility to whomever he or she chooses to blame, depending on who that health minister is. This type of structure is not acceptable. It is essential that the minister take ownership for her portfolio and intervene when necessary. Instead of this legislation, we should give the Minister of Health the authority to restructure Ornge so that they are directly accountable to the Minister of Health.

I am also concerned that the Ombudsman is not given the authority to investigate Ornge under this legislation. The Ombudsman is an independent officer of the Legislature, and as such, reports only to this legislative chamber and the people's representatives who serve within it, not the Minister of Health, not the Premier.

The minister, however, thinks oversight duties are better handled by employees of Ornge itself and would report to Ornge management. This seems to be a conflict of interest. Oversight issues should be handled by external parties, not by internal management. I'm really uncertain why this is so complex here with Ornge. Basically, Ornge should report to the minister, who should provide direct oversight and supervision for this important organization. The Ombudsman should be allowed an additional level of oversight and should have purview over the minister's actions or, in this case, lack of actions at Ornge.

Was it not the total lack of government oversight that allowed for all the corruption to take place at Ornge in the first place? This is a totally failed model that is being put forth and supported in this legislation. It is just more of the same old that we have seen from this government in the past. There is no real change here, no difference and nothing new. If this government truly wanted to prevent scandals from happening, I would expect that this legislation would not only allow but would require Ombudsman oversight, and as I said, it does not.

This is not just about scandal and government waste. It is about the lives of the people of Ontario. If Ontario's air ambulance service is plagued with scandal and mismanagement, how can we trust the same organization with the lives of our loved ones in their time of need? In the past, this organization has put people's lives at risk, and this has to come to an end. It is essential that organizations that are entrusted with responding to health crises are transparent and held to account.

Another concern that I have with this particular piece of legislation is that there is limited protection for whistle-blowers. This is almost laying the groundwork for a repeat of Ornge scandals. We have seen historically at Ornge terrible injustices committed against people who have spoken out against the wrongdoings there. Failure to protect whistle-blowers will only lead to people not being willing to speak out if there is scandal taking place within the organization down the road. Bill 11 references whistle-blower protection but limits the scope of that protection. The bill does not provide across-the-board protection for these individuals. It imposes limits on which individuals are protected and who they can approach with information. Dozens of brave whistle-blowers have come forward with the shocking and devastating details of the abuse that took place at Ornge, and they often did it in secret, for fear of retaliation against them, yet the minister's idea of protecting whistle-blowers is to make them take their concerns to an individual who reports to Ornge management.

With reforms like this, it's no wonder Ornge went completely out of control. Clearly, the minister has absolutely no understanding of proper oversight mechanisms. Why else would the ministry expect people who have issues with the way an agency is being run to report their concerns to the very people who run the agency? This legislation should, rather, provide for a formal process through the Ombudsman that will ensure proper protection for whistle-blowers, and follow-up.

Something that I have not touched upon yet is the financial implications that the Ornge scandal has had on this province and the people who call Ontario home. Just this past Friday, it was announced that Ontario's private sector lost 58,000 jobs, and March marked the 75th straight month that Ontario's unemployment rate was above the national average. This is now over six years that Ontario's unemployment rate has been above the national average. Like the past troubles at Ornge, this is something that is truly unacceptable. With half a million Ontario residents looking for work, this government has not produced a plan to create jobs. This Premier has failed to address the jobs crisis in this province. Employers want to create jobs. Unfortunately, they can't when they are weighed down by high taxes, unnecessary red tape, and government overspending, scandal and waste.

It is legislation like Bill 11 that deliberately shifts the blame from the government and fails to create a transparent environment that prolongs Ontario's jobs crisis. Let's not forget that the CEO of Windsor Regional Hospital has said, "Things have not changed at Ornge. Whatever cultural issues are going on at that organization, things have not changed." It is clear that the current structure isn't working, and that Bill 11 is not addressing the real issues at Ornge. We are simply seeing another band-aid approach from this government.

1750

The McGuinty-Wynne government should be instilling confidence in Ontario families; instead, they are con-

tinuing down the same path that they have for the last 10 years.

I'm going to be voting against this legislation due to the fact that it leaves in place a dysfunctional organizational structure. The weakness of the accountability measures in this legislation cannot be supported.

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

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It's a pleasure to be able to stand and speak in response to some of the comments that were made by the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. In his contribution to the debate, he mentioned that the Minister of Health had the power to control the structure at Ornge's inception and that the Minister of Health had the power to intervene at any point during the process.

What we've seen is that the minister had those opportunities, and the minister also had the opportunity in the last session—when, I think it was, Bill 50, which was very similar to this bill, was brought forward. Then the minister had yet another opportunity to try to make things right by reintroducing this in this session, yet still, with all of these opportunities, we see a fundamental failure to put in some provisions that will provide for the accountability and oversight that we really do need. There still isn't Ombudsman oversight, as the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex mentioned. Still, the organization cannot be called before government agencies.

The other thing that the member talked about was that it really doesn't do anything for people who are looking for work. I just wanted to spend a couple of seconds talking about what this Ornge scandal has really meant in my riding. I think we maybe need to talk about that. In addition to some of the safety issues that we've had, we've also seen the loss of jobs, because there was an air ambulance company in my riding that was put out of business. Those jobs were sent elsewhere. Those people have relocated to Manitoba, and that's not acceptable. So we need to put some provisions in place to make sure it doesn't happen again, and we need to make sure that we protect jobs and do all that we can to continue.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I think we're debating Bill 11, which is on Ornge, but it really is hard to tell. I was sort of amused by my friend from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. Here is the province that has the lowest per capita spending of any province in Canada. Our workforce is 14% less than other provinces, and on top of that, we export \$11 billion in taxes. As I've said a few times, having been mayor of the capital city of the province to our immediate west, a lot of the money that goes into that community came from here.

A jobs crisis was a global problem. We have about 130% or 135% job recovery, which is unprecedented for a manufacturing economy, and we're second only to California for direct foreign investment. And the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex somehow thinks that the tax burden is part of this debate on Bill 11. He talked about the tax burden. Our tax rates for corporations are

18% less than they were under the Conservatives—18% less. I started and owned a business here, and it was a lot lower.

If we actually want to talk about the bill for a change—since we seem to be debating jobs, and they have a terrible record on it; they owe Ontarians an apology—Minister Matthews, without this bill being passed, has cleaned up Ornge. Every day, those helicopters are flying, those ambulances are doing it, and they're getting the job done.

We came here because no government is perfect, and things happen that you wish did not happen. With solid legislation to clean it up—the opposition parties are holding it up. If you actually want to clean this up and not play politics—which the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex did say—if you're not playing politics, then pass the bill or make an amendment to make it better. But this is just ridiculous nonsense, and Ontarians see through this nonsense.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I can't understand the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. How dare anyone in the McGuinty-McWynny government chastise us after you shuttered this Legislature for four months? I happen to commend the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for putting some of those comments that he made on the record today. He talked about the failed model.

In fact, I have to applaud the member for Kenora-Rainy River, who used the words “fundamental failure,” because I think both those members who just spoke a few minutes ago have hit the nail on the head. We had this whole debate in the previous session. The government basically takes a bill, changes a number—from Bill 50 to Bill 11; basically changes a number—yet you shutter the Legislature for four months. What the heck is your problem? Can nobody multi-task? Was everybody working on the leadership campaign that no one could have amended this bill and taken into consideration what the opposition was saying?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would suggest that the member stick to the bill.

Mr. Steve Clark: Again, Speaker, thank you. All they did was change the number from 50 to 11. They didn't take into consideration any of the very constructive suggestions that were put forward. Many members today, I've heard, have put questions and comments on the record about the Ombudsman, who made some very, very valid points that the government absolutely, positively ignored. This was just window dressing by this government. They had no intention of listening, in a minority Parliament, to the suggestions that the opposition parties have put forward.

I will take my 10 minutes of debate and I will not have someone silence me. How dare you people try to silence us from putting comments on the record on this bill? We have a right to debate this piece of legislation—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.
Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. I'd like to remind the member from Leeds–Grenville that when I said thank you for the third time, he should have gotten the message. When I stand up, we stop talking. That's how it works. Thanks. The member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Throughout this debate this afternoon I've heard that the workers at Ornge have done a great job, and certainly I agree with that. They are not to blame in any of this fiasco. They worked with what was given to them and they did the best they could. When they found that there was a problem, there was someone who came out. There were several people on the front lines who came out and spoke against the problems at Ornge. We commend the workers on the work that they've done in the past and the present, and the work they'll keep doing in the future.

The real problem was that there were alarm bells given to the minister through the NDP, the Progressive Conservatives, whistle-blowers, letters that were given back in January of 2011, and there was constant denial that there was a problem until, of course, it was out in the media. Once it was out in the media, then the Liberal government, the Minister of Health—all of a sudden we got her attention. It's a sad commentary that the only time they would actually listen to a whistle-blower or listen to opposition was when the newspaper printed it.

I hope that as we're having these debates today—again, we're expressing that there's not enough oversight in this bill. We need to have strong oversight. We need to have public confidence restored in our health care system. The way of doing that is having an impartial person look into issues with the public interest at hand, and the Ombudsman serves that purpose. That's what we're saying. We hope this government will listen and we don't have to have another scandal in print before this government will listen to our suggestions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex has two minutes.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to thank the member from Kenora–Rainy River for her input into this debate; the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation; the honourable member from Leeds–Grenville; and the member, a neighbour of mine, from London–Fanshawe. Thank you very much.

First of all, I want to say there is absolutely nothing substantive in this legislation that shows that this Liberal government really cares about addressing what happened at Ornge. They're not showing Ontario families that they will do everything they can to protect their tax dollars. This bill is simply a means of providing a cover for the health minister's failings.

As I said when I kicked off this debate, Speaker, if this health minister was employed anywhere else in the province of Ontario, her boss would have fired her a long, long time ago. This has been a scandal-plagued government for 10 years. Whether it's Ornge, eHealth, the gas plant scandals, it's been politics over people. They've taken advantage of taxpayers' money, and the scandal, waste and mismanagement is running rampant throughout this government.

To address what the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation said, he ignored the fact that they have misused taxpayer money. They continue to blame the rest of the world and other provinces for Ontario's fiscal troubles and the jobs crisis here in the province. It's been their deliberate decisions that have caused Ontario to be in the mess that we're in. They inherited a province that was booming, and they're leaving it an absolute disaster: 600,000 people unemployed. The debt in the province of Ontario was \$125 billion when they took over; it's \$300 billion this year. And it's scandals like Ornge that have led to the disaster that Ontario is in.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
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	
Craitor, 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
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
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
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
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**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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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**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Dipika Damerla, Steven Del Duca
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
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day (pro tem.)

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
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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**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
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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**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
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: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
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: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
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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