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Thursday 20 September 2012

Jeudi 20 septembre 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Thursday 20 September 2012

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Jeudi 20 septembre 2012

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

**WIRELESS SERVICES
AGREEMENTS ACT, 2012**

**LOI DE 2012 SUR LES CONVENTIONS
DE SERVICES SANS FIL**

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 13, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 82, An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile device / *Projet de loi 82, Loi visant à mieux protéger les consommateurs en ce qui concerne les conventions de consommation portant sur les services sans fil accessibles au moyen d'un téléphone cellulaire, d'un téléphone intelligent ou de tout autre appareil mobile semblable.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate? The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity and recognizing me to speak on Bill 82, a bill which is, I think, extremely important and has created quite a buzz out there in the broader community. I'll speak to it in a moment.

But let me start by congratulating the member from Scarborough–Guildwood, the Minister of Consumer Services, for her leadership on this particular bill, for bringing such a comprehensive piece of legislation forward in the Ontario Legislature; and also the member from Sault Ste. Marie, who brought forward a private member's bill initially in this regard and obviously worked very hard in terms of the research he did in putting together a private member's bill and then, of course, working with the government and working with the Minister of Consumer Services and convincing her that this is the right thing to do. So a big hats off to the member from Sault Ste. Marie, as well, for his leadership on this issue.

This is something that I've been quite interested in for some time. In fact, strangely enough, I was doing a fair bit of research on this particular issue as well and was starting the process of drafting it before the member from

Sault Ste. Marie's bill came forward, which I was very happy to see. Therefore, needless to say, I 100% agree and support this bill. This is a very important step in the right direction to protect consumers who use wireless technologies. Now I say wireless technologies because we're not just talking about cellphones anymore. We've got all kinds of smart products that we use, from BlackBerrys to iPhones, but iPads now and other kinds of tablets which have become so commonplace, of such common usage in our daily lives.

I remember very distinctly when I got my first cellphone. The first cellphone I got was in 2000. I went all through university without owning a cellphone, because there was no need for it—no need whatsoever. It was back in 2000, and I was in the process of becoming a young lawyer and I felt that for my professional purposes I would need a cellphone. I still remember that particular device: very limited in functionality from today's standards and a little bulkier than what we are used to today, but obviously it did the job of making phone calls. I'm sure if I look in my basement, I'll still find that phone somewhere, sitting in the bottom of a box, just for nostalgic purposes.

But after that, I have entered in many, many cellphone contracts. I have had my share of stories and will talk a little bit about them. I'm sure we can all share stories when it comes to contracts relating to cellphones or wireless technology, when it comes to the so-called cell shock we get when we see the bill and see charges that we don't understand and don't know what they mean. You call the various telecommunication companies, and you get different answers in that regard.

You know, one of the stories I remember—an issue that is squarely dealt with in Bill 82—was dealing with cancellation charges. I got a BlackBerry for myself, one of those old, bulkier types. I signed on. I was asked to sign on for a four-year contract; I'm sure we're all used to that. I figured this was appropriate. The contract, I recall, was extremely convoluted—and the nature of those contracts has not changed, by the way. I'm a lawyer by profession. I like to read these contracts; I like to read the fine points. But when you're standing in a store in a mall, be it owned by a large telecommunications company or one of those affiliates or subsidiary retail stores, you really don't have time to read through the multiple pages of a contract. In fact, the deal is apparently so good that you've got to sign on today to get it. What happens is that people do sign on.

The nature of consumers, when it comes to use of cellphones, has changed. I was talking about getting one

myself in 2000; I was almost 30 years old at that time. Now, young children have cellphones—not only cellphones; they have smart-phone devices. A lot of times, parents are the ones getting it for them. Teenagers are procuring these by themselves. I'm sure that if we did a quick survey right now, most of our pages in the Legislature have cellphones. They really don't have the knowledge, the know-how or perhaps the capacity to understand these very lengthy contracts, and I was a victim of the same thing.

I signed this contract; it seemed pretty simple to me at the time. But through circumstances beyond my control, when two years later I needed to get out of that contract, well, guess what? Now, two years in the cellphone world, you will recall, are leap years, because the technology is changing so fast, and the product you've got in hand is of no value whatsoever. So two years later, when I was trying to get out of the cellphone—because of an employment situation I was getting a phone etc.—well, you can, yes, but the cost was over \$400 in penalty costs, over \$400 for me to get out of that contract with a phone that was really of no use. It was old technology.

My story, I'm sure, is not unique to what others out in the community have experienced. This particular bill really deals with that issue and puts limits on cellphone carrier companies as to how much they can charge in terms of cancellation or termination charges—a very important step.

0910

It also requires that cellphone agreements be written in plain language so everyone can understand what they are agreeing to. That's absolutely essential when it comes to transparency, when it comes to protecting consumers—no doubt about it. I do not understand why cellphone contracts have to be more complicated and written in such a small, fine font size than when purchasing a car. It seems like purchasing a car is a far more straightforward process, which is a far more expensive purchase one will make in their lifetime than a cellphone, which has more now become a necessity of life, a regular thing that we all have on a daily basis.

These two pieces alone, which are outlined in this legislation, are extremely important. First, that contracts be written in plain language, that they really clearly outline in plain English—or French, I'm assuming—the terms and conditions in a contract so that the consumer, when he or she is purchasing or renting this product, is clear as to the conditions they're agreeing to. Second, I think it is imperative, which is very much part of this legislation, that there be caps on the termination or cancellation fees, that there be a fair mechanism, a fair method, to calculate these termination fees so you're not running into the kind of situation that I ran into, of paying in excess of \$400 in termination fees—which, by the way, I did pay. Was I happy or pleased about it? Absolutely not. But there was no way out of the agreement unless I wanted to keep that phone for another two years and not use it but still pay certain basic fees attached to it, which are fairly hefty as well.

Two of the pieces that I'll speak of which are important in this agreement—one is the need for express consent. If you are going to purchase a new device and going to sign for it, there needs to be express consent; you shall know all the terms and conditions. Or, if your contract is being extended, it should not happen without your express consent. It should not be one of those negative billing options. Remember those, Speaker, which were introduced some time ago: "If we don't hear from you, you'll get this whole package and you'll get a bill for it"? No, no, no. I think we live in a world, we live in a time and place where people are mindful, people know what they want, and laws and rules should require that there be express consent relating to that—and of course, again, related in plain language so that they can understand what they're consenting to. To me, that's just good business practice.

Deceiving people—any company engaging in that type of practice—is alienating consumers. There are enough choices now. There are enough options out there for you to shop around. So from a business point of view, if I was one of these companies, I would embrace these changes wholeheartedly, because it's only going to make you that much more attractive to consumers out there, who are looking for hassle-free services in their lives. So I really hope and I really think that businesses, the telecommunication companies, are receptive to these changes and are welcoming of these changes. In fact, I hope they adopt these things even before it becomes law, because it just makes sense. Express consent before renewing, extending or amending a fixed-term contract is a step in the right direction. It's something which is extremely important, and I very much support that it is part of this bill.

The other piece I really like, which I think is a source of large confusion, is all-inclusive pricing. Again, we see these ads—if you look at today's newspaper, they're probably half a page or a full page—from various telecommunications companies offering their products. Like I said, I think it is my legal training, or maybe I have just too much time on my hands—

Interjection.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: —it's the latter, I guess—but I like to read the fine print. I like to see what those asterisks or those little crosses or those little squares mean. That's a lawyer thing, I guess. If you notice, at the bottom of those advertisements there is this minute, minute writing.

Mr. Rob Leone: Two-point font.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Maybe less than two-point font. The member from Cambridge is saying "two-point font"—I think it's sometimes less—which outlines all the real stuff. Even somebody with good vision cannot read this unless they have a magnifying glass. What are you trying to hide? There's no need to hide anything. Let's get that out in public; it's just good business practice.

Having a provision that requires all-inclusive pricing, where you know exactly what you're purchasing, what the cost is, with all the bells and whistles you may want, is a good thing. It will make for better decision-making by consumers, and I think it's extremely important that

we require that, as opposed to getting that surprise or so-called cell shock when you get the bill. “Oh, you didn’t realize there’s a price for X, there’s a price for Y and there’s a cost for Z.” It just does not make sense; it is bad business practice. I think it’s deceiving to consumers. Requiring in law, as in this legislation, Bill 82, that there be all-inclusive pricing is very much a step in the right direction.

For all those reasons, I think this is a good bill. I’m really hopeful that all the members in this Legislature will support this bill, because I think these are the kinds of things that we, as a Legislature, need to do to protect our consumers on a daily basis.

I have to say that since this bill was tabled—in fact, the private member’s bill and then the government bill—I’ve been hearing a lot of support in this regard in my riding of Ottawa Centre. In fact, I started a petition in support, and I have received hundreds, if not thousands, of signatures from folks in my community of Ottawa Centre saying, “Yes, we need more consumer protection. Yes, we need more transparency in this regard.”

Just this past Saturday, I was in the Wellington West village part of my riding. There’s a great event called Taste of Wellington West that takes place in the riding every fall, where all the businesses come out and sell their goods and have little treats and whatnot. It’s a great family-friendly event—it was a beautiful sunny day. I always have a community tent set up during that event, an opportunity for me to speak with constituents and give them information about consumer protection and other things their government is doing on their behalf, so that they know.

So this issue came up. I had the petition, and a lot of people signed on to that petition. But what I wanted to tell you is that somebody called me from the street. It was a gentleman on a bicycle; I can’t remember his name right now. He stopped me and said, “Where’s that bill on cellphones?”

I said, “Actually, it’s going through second reading debate. In fact, I’ll be speaking to it on Thursday morning.”

He said, “You know, I’m very supportive of this. Let me know if I can help in any way, because this is something that we need.”

You know, you rarely get that kind of endorsement on a particular bill. People really don’t pay attention to these types of things. But for somebody to stop me on the street and say, “I support it. Tell me what I can do. I have a blog. I have a website. I would like to write about this”—I’m hoping that he and I will be able to connect, to speak on how can we ensure that people are making smart decisions, and how we can make sure that people do have information at their disposal so they can make decisions, especially on things like acquisition of cell-phone services.

Like I said, these are nothing unique anymore in our lives; this is not really a luxury anymore in our lives. This is almost a necessity. People use them. People of all ages have some sort of device. I’m sure you’ve recently

noticed that one of the telecommunications companies even has a special plan for seniors. They’re really sort of promoting a simpler cellphone with fewer bells and whistles and bigger buttons and whatnot, because they realize there’s a market out there where seniors may not want something complicated like a BlackBerry or an iPhone or an Android device. They want something simple so they can connect with their loved ones or have emergency services at their disposal.

0920

I think having a mechanism in place, as outlined in Bill 82, that requires that contracts be written in plain language; that requires that there be all-inclusive pricing; that requires that there be caps on termination, just in case you’ve changed your mind or circumstances change in your life—that happens—by which you need to get out of the contract; and the requirement that there be express consent needed in order to amend or extend or renew a contract, is extremely important. These are grievances people face in life which are not necessary. We just need to make sure that rules are in place, that these are the least of the headaches people should worry about. Life is complicated as it is, for whatever circumstances, and people have to worry about a lot of things. The last thing they need to worry about is their cellphone contract or the wireless contract they have for their iPad or other mobile devices that we use all the time.

Speaker, my time is coming to an end, but I just wanted to restate my 100% support for Bill 82. I’m really hopeful that the debate will conclude soon in the Legislature, once the time is up, so we can take it to committee, so we can hear from various stakeholders, because I am sure there will be different views from the industry, from consumer groups, from other broader community members; we can take them into account and make the necessary changes. I’m sure there will be some suggestions into amendments as to how we can make the language clearer in this bill, which is always welcome, which is part of the democratic process. Then, bring it back for third reading in the Legislature and pass it.

I really hope we can pass this before Christmas, and I say this intentionally, because Christmas is a time when you start making these purchases a lot, because these are times where—you know, I’m already hearing from my wife, “Oh, there’s a new iPad coming out.” Right? So those requests are coming in.

Interjection.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Yes, and our young baby too, who I’m sure will be using a phone sooner than later.

Those requests are already coming in. We need to make sure this bill is in place at the right time, so when people are making those big purchases, when they are engaging in that activity, they are fully protected, and we as a Legislature are doing our jobs to ensure that Ontarians are able to continue to live a hassle-free life.

Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the time.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I want to make some comments about the speech from the member from Ottawa Centre. First of all, Speaker, our party, while believing in this bill as well, also wants to see a long series of amendments and proper consultation. I think that's going to be important.

The member from Ottawa Centre said he hopes this is done by Christmas. You're going to need to form committees in order to get that done. I know the Liberal Party took six months to form the committees when we were first elected, which resulted in us only getting four bills passed in our first 11 months, which I'm embarrassed to say are the facts. But I do agree; it would be nice. If we got the committees formed early, Speaker, we may actually be able to look at talking about our amendments and having plenty of consultation on this bill.

The member also said there's broad choice out there, and I want to take a couple of seconds to talk about northern Ontario, because there isn't quite the broad choice in northern Ontario. In fact, most of us here from the north chuckled when we saw the cuts being made in the tourism sector in the northwestern part of the province, when they said, "Oh, if you're looking for tourist information, all you have to do is fire up the app on your mobile phone and look at the app, and you'll get all the tourist information that you want on northwestern Ontario." But I have to tell you, Speaker, there's not that kind of coverage in northwestern Ontario. So while we appreciate that, here in the centre of the world, in Toronto, there really is a broad choice, there really is a much more limited choice in the north, which means more reason for us to actually support this bill.

My final point is: You talked about the two-point type and you're wondering, "What are they trying to hide?" I've got to throw that back at the member and say, what are you trying to hide, as well? We're trying to get the documents on Oakville and Mississauga. I ask you the same question you asked: What are you trying to hide?

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join today's debate. I want to thank the member for Ottawa Centre. He truly has the gift of gab. We all know that in this House. He's eloquent. I can only imagine what his cellphone bills are, and I certainly wouldn't want to see the minutes used.

I do appreciate the intent of this bill. I understand it is a measure to bring about some clarity and transparency when it comes to cellphone contracts. In our country, we are large users of cellphones and the Internet. We're becoming a lot more technologically savvy. I think it's about time that we shine some light on what is essentially a Wild West scenario in the cellphone industry when it comes to contracts. It's a measure of accountability and transparency.

I would point to a measure we brought about as New Democrats, where we proposed to cap gas prices at the pump on Monday mornings. This House voted against that measure of transparency and accountability. I think

the intent is the same: to bring some transparency to the cellphone industry. Why not to another important measure of our economy, gas prices?

We are anxious to see this go to committee, to hear submissions from consumers and consumer groups, because we know that these are the folks who actually have some great ideas as to how we can make this industry a lot more user-friendly.

New Democrats are prepared to propose some ideas. Certainly, one of them would be to make sure that people who are currently in contracts are afforded the transparency that this bill may provide, something that I think is being asked for out there as we canvass and talk to residents in our ridings who currently have exorbitant cellphone bills and are struggling to try to find some rationale within those costs.

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

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise today to speak on Bill 82, the proposed Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2012. Four other provinces—Quebec, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia—have introduced similar provisions. David Oraziotti's private member's bill was a precursor to this proposed legislation, and as a result of that, we did some consultation previously in this regard, with respect to this proposed legislation.

This proposed legislation, if passed, will provide greater transparency and stronger protections for Ontario consumers and their families when they sign contracts for cellphones and wireless services. It will help us to ensure that Ontario consumers are better protected when it comes to wireless services agreements—protected in terms of their rights, the contract they enter into, the way in which services are provided, knowing how much they will have to pay, and their ability to take advantage of choices in the marketplace.

As these wireless plans are mostly postpaid, meaning consumers enter into agreements before using the services, and they get their monthly bills after they have used the services, it is important for us to have the kind of protection that is needed to protect our consumers.

It is our growing reliance on these devices, with so many people using them and finding they do not understand the services and plans they contracted for, the changes in the contract terms—this is what has given rise to what we have termed "cell shock." Cell shock is what happens when consumers open their wireless services bill and receive exorbitant charges they were not expecting. Cell shock is what happens when consumers are not aware that they're using services that will add additional charges to their bill.

Mr. Speaker, we have a responsibility to Ontario consumers and to their families to ensure that when they, like millions of cellphone customers, sign agreements each year, they are clear, comprehensive, easy to understand.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Before I refer to the next member, I'll remind all members of the

House that we don't refer to people by their name but by their riding.

Questions and comments. The member for Burlington.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to lend my voice to the ongoing debate around Bill 82, the Wireless Services Agreements Act.

0930

We here in the House all want consumers to be able to make informed decisions. We all want to protect Ontario consumers and to have them be able to go about their lives with eyes open but free from costly and unexpected fine-print complications. Bill 82 seems to line up with those goals. I think there's a consensus that Bill 82 is a decent bill and that government attention to this issue is perhaps overdue. I also think that there's widespread agreement that this legislation could be improved greatly at committee through hearing the voices and perspectives of various stakeholders in the public and private spheres. When we get down to clause-by-clause consideration, we will hopefully be able to make the kind of level-headed amendments that will protect consumers without creating unnecessary overlap with other jurisdictions or a ream of red tape for the telecommunications industry, because if Bill 82 adds endless regulation and red tape, it could also end up costing consumers in the end, which is obviously not the intent.

Bill 82 has some sensible measures to help cap cancellation fees, prevent automatic renewals and make mobile contracts simpler, written in easy-to-understand language that's as clear as ice water. But at the moment, some members on this side of the House have identified the potential for an unwanted downside to this legislation, specifically with regard to the overlap with similar regulations in other jurisdictions. We should be able to agree on the benefits of a healthy, vibrant and innovative telecommunications sector. We should want to reduce the red tape and regulatory burden, because it affects consumers as well as businesses. In working together, I think we can all contribute to strengthening the legislation so that it is beneficial to all of us.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Ottawa Centre, you have two minutes.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. We were having such a good, non-partisan morning—but debate is the essence of this Legislature.

I do want to thank the members for Nipissing and Essex, the Minister of Consumer Services and the member from Burlington for bringing in their perspectives on this, because I truly believe, and I think the members will also agree with me, that this is not a partisan issue; this is an issue that impacts all Ontarians equally, no matter which part of the province they come from.

Yes, there are some unique challenges, and I appreciate the member from Nipissing raising the unique challenge around Nipissing. I think he highlighted in his own comments that this legislation is even more important for communities like the northwest, where the choices in terms of providers may be limited, because this will

create better circumstances for northwestern Ontarians to get services at an affordable price in their communities.

Keeping that in mind, I think it's important that we do all work together. It sends a very strong message out in the community—because one thing we know about politics is that people get turned off because of partisan bickering. That's not what people want. That's not what people engage in. They would like to see their legislators, no matter what label, no matter what colour they don, come together and make their lives better. I think if there is a bill out there right now in front of this Legislature that really does that, it's Bill 82, because it speaks to a real issue which is not ideological in nature—unless you just don't agree with consumer protection, but I don't think anybody in this House has those types of views. I think it brings us together and it really can bring the best of all of us out in ensuring that we put Ontarians first, and that we make sure we have a process in place that results in better consumer choices. Therefore, I support this and I ask the members to support it as well.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a real pleasure to have the opportunity this morning to talk about Bill 82. Just a quick summary of the bill: It's 25 different sections and it's 15 pages in total. That means there are seven pages in English. Actually, it's what we would call, I suppose, a sort of "Me, too" act, the "Me, too" bill. The reason I say that, with all due respect—Minister, it's a pleasure to see you here this morning—is, as you said in your remarks—and I think it's important to put in context that the CRTC is looking at this and started their hearings in May. You would know that as well.

There's been a lot of input from across the country. Not only that; as you mentioned, Quebec has it in place already—Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador and Ontario. Any decisions made by the CRTC will supersede this bill. I believe it's true, and I think it's important—Ontario is such a large province—to contribute to a successful consumer protection bill. I commend that provision. I wonder, sometimes, if the member from Sault Ste. Marie wouldn't be somewhat surprised. I hope you give him—we should call it the David Oraziotti bill, using it in the context that that would be the name of the legislation.

It's important that the minister or the ministry staff are listening, because some time ago I initiated a bill on driver distraction. It was a result of an inquest in my riding where a father and his young daughter were killed crossing a railway crossing. There was an inquest that was able to conclude, I suppose, that the cause was that the father was passing his cellphone to the young daughter to say goodbye to the mother. It was a tragic event. I realized how ubiquitous the whole wireless world is. I mean, it's everywhere. It's taking over on cars now; you have HUD, heads-up display, where it displays it on the windshield. It's really, quite frankly, now integrated, with OnStar, a General Motors product. They have a similar Microsoft product for Chrysler and Ford, where

it's totally integrated into the intelligence of the vehicle itself. In fact, it can tell you if you're going to back into something or even assist in steering in.

The whole issue here of the world of business is important—voice, text and data and the charges that we're charged for. It's clear that most people understand that Canada has some of the highest rates in the world. In the previous remarks made in this House, we were told that in India it's about \$13, and in Canada it's \$70. That would be for a monthly charge. In most countries like Denmark, where Nokia was first developed, they don't have any—it's all wireless; it's all cellphones. There's no more of this running cables from here to there and all that kind of stuff; that's just completely prehistoric. We can talk to the moon, now, from earth, so I think we can manage.

What we need is clear consumer protection. This is where we agree, and our position from our critic was that we would have hearings. Now, the hearings should call on the stakeholders within the industry as well as consumer protection groups. The consumer protection groups that I've looked up myself in preparation—just a little departure here. I just hired a new staff person this week, Michael Pew. Michael, the new staff person, already has three cellphones. He has one for me, one for Jane McKenna and one for his own use. It's quite frankly an example of what I said earlier: they have different functions. He wants the calls to deal with me telling him to do something to be on my phone, and the ones from Ms. McKenna—from Burlington, I should say—on that phone, and his own personal calls, I want them kept off my line. Do you understand? I don't want to be paying for any of his roaming charges or whatever else he might be doing, downloading music or uploading an app. That's exactly how it is.

Even our children today—I have nine grandchildren, and these children have iPads. These iPads teach them things just by point, touch, sounds and developing visual images of the world around them. I would suspect that, in reading this release here—competition in the Canadian wireless sector. This is saying that the hearings about the CRTC—in 1994, they decided that they really weren't that interested in tightly regulating the industry; they wanted more competition. So more providers came in. Then you started to get these complex contracts; thicker than the instruction book was the contract itself, of all the options. Very few people read the fine print, as the previous member from Ottawa, Mr. Naqvi—he was clear on that: These contracts are themselves a challenge for consumers. I would say the CRTC hearings should be paid attention to. The Consumers Council of Canada, it said here, and their president, Don Mercer, recognized Mr. Oraziotti and “is encouraged that the Ontario government has decided to make this initiative part of its agenda” as a government bill. “The private member's bill enjoyed all-party support”—we support it—“so the council is optimistic the government's bill will receive broad support.” It gives all MPPs an opportunity, whether in northern Ontario, urban Ontario or rural Ontario, to comment with

respect to the lack of service in some areas, blackout cells within my area. I'm driving along in my riding of Durham and bang, you're gone. The person listening to you may consider that you may have gone off the road or something.

I think what's important in any consumer protection bill is clarity, plain language and disclosure. Really, what it is is there are two parties to the agreement: One is the consumer and one is the provider, and the disclosure is the first part of the provider.

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Now, the responsibility on the consumer is to read the contract or have it explained to them in plain language. If we can achieve that, there still is a responsibility for the consumer. People who are walking around talking on cellphones all the time—I can't believe it. In fact, it's a pedestrian hazard now if you walk down the street. But they have a responsibility. These gadgets that they're all attached to are not for free. Somebody has to put the software in place and the cell towers and sort out all the communication gadgetry and digitalization, but I think that's important to keep in mind: that the consumer has to be responsible at the end of the day. One of the people said that we should—the consumer's report said that we should not mollycoddle the consumer. This is a case where you can only do so much, Minister, in all fairness, to legislate against—should I be so coarse as to say?—stupidity.

I think we need to change the channel, as I said before. I know for myself, the biggest surprise I've had in the 17 or 18 years that I've been here—and Mr. Arnott's been here over 20. It's surprising; he's only about 30 years old. But I would say this: The biggest surprise for me was the roaming charges. When I was out of the province, I was mistaken—this was some years ago—that I was only receiving calls from my office and/or reading press releases and stuff like that, so I was getting voice communication as well as data communication. I came home only to find that I'd had a humongous roaming charge bill on top of my normal cell charges. That's another thing that people need to be aware of: the use of it, and downloading.

Maybe some of the people who are more technically literate in this stuff—they're always talking about bandwidth, too. If you're downloading movies and all this kind of stuff—and that's the future. If you've got an iPad—which is a phone, it's a camera, it's a GPS device; it's a multi-functional gadget—you could be watching movies. You could be watching live-streaming hockey. I've watched, on mine, live-streaming broadcasts, news-casts. It's incredible. If you leap ahead five years, these young pages who are here—there will be, really, virtually no reason to write. You'll be able to speak and it will record it. It will record it in digital format, and so you'll be able to send it to somebody as an email. You won't have to type it. That's months away. This is becoming a rather important tool in life, and in that respect, we need to have clear, simple rules on the bill.

Now, there are a couple of sections in the bill which I had the chance to look at. I think section 17 is “Cancel-

lation by consumer at any time.” This is important, so I took a look at this section. Let me have a look here. I underlined it because there are so many good sections here. I don’t know if this is actually as clear as the bill could be, so I’d ask the minister to look at that section. I’m going to jump right in.

The first section says, “A consumer may, at any time, and without any reason, cancel a wireless agreement by giving notice to the supplier.” It goes on to say that it “takes effect on the later of the date the consumer gives notice of cancellation to the supplier or the date that the consumer specifies in the notice, which date cannot be later than the expiry date....” It’s pretty straightforward. I haven’t got a clue what they’re talking about technically. I know that there’s a requirement to inform the supplier, and then the supplier would inform you. So it’s two-way knowledge that they’ve received it, and you should keep that record, somehow, on the cellphone itself or in some data file somewhere.

“Subject to this section, the cancellation terminates the rights and obligation of the parties under the wireless agreement on a go-forward basis from the date on which the cancellation takes effect....”

“If the consumer cancels a wireless agreement with no fixed term”—this is important—“and in respect of which the supplier provided no goods to the consumer free of charge or at a discount, the supplier shall not charge the consumer a cancellation fee”—and it goes on to say—“and shall not demand, request or accept payment for the cancellation.”

But it goes on further. There can be charges for cancellation. It would be part of the original agreement and in the disclosure.

There’s another part here, the calculated formula; it’s very complicated, how they calculate this cancellation fee. That’s on page 11, if people want to look it up.

There’s another section here on the fines. I found that fairly onerous too, I would say. Why do they have these big numbers in here? People don’t pay them, I think. They go to court instead of paying.

Here’s what it says. This is under “General,” and these are on the “Offences.” “An individual who is convicted of an offence under this act is liable to a fine of not more than \$50,000”—holy smokes; I hope some of these young people walking around with a cellphone are aware the fine could be \$50,000—that’s for an individual—or imprisonment for up to two years less a day. A corporation, if convicted—it’s \$250,000 for a violation.

So there’s some pretty, pretty onerous material in this particular bill. I think it’s well intended. Our position is clear: We would be asking for an extensive consultation with the shareholders.

I would only say here that in the preamble, which explains, “The act contains other measures for protecting consumers under a wireless agreement. For example, a supplier must have a system”—the supplier—“in place for providing advance notice to the consumer when the consumer accesses a service under the agreement that will result in a cost in addition to the minimum periodic

cost.” In other words, if you haven’t got it in your contract to just download data or movies, they’re supposed to develop a system to notify you. You can’t just go ahead and do it under a contract that didn’t include that advantage. If you have a contract that’s on a month-to-month basis, which many of them are today—I think it’s five out of every 10 people have a cellphone. Now, the vast majority of them are on a month-to-month—casual. But if somebody takes the phone and starts playing around with it, downloading stuff and stuff like that, they could end up with real charges.

“A consumer is allowed to cancel a wireless agreement” and to amend the agreement, and do all this without reason. So there’s quite a bit of improvement there for the consumers themselves and some additional responsibilities for the provider. I could say that, in my own case, I have looked into this, and I’m considering a couple of other points that I’m looking for.

One of the things, without criticizing any of the suppliers—we, probably all in the Legislature here, are with one supplier, and that supplier’s bills, I would like them to be a little more straightforward. We get a monthly bill. You can hardly untangle whether they’ve taken your last payment off the bill. I think that billing itself is a problem for me. I don’t know, Mr. Speaker, you might have been shaking your head there too. But I have completely great staff in my office in Bowmanville who kindly look after that, but I sign everything because, ultimately, we’re responsible.

These are the actions taken, I would say. A submission by Rogers to Leonard Katz, who was the acting chair of the CRTC—and this is in March; it’s part 1 of the application by Rogers partnership to implement a national wireless services consumer protection code. So, the industry themselves is taking heed to this, and they’ve made this delegation or presentation to the CRTC, and I commend them for that. It talks about section 24 of the Telecommunications Act, the federal bill. “Rogers Communications Partnership ... hereby request that the commission establish a CRTC interconnection steering committee to develop and implement a national wireless services consumer code....” That’s the goal that we should all be aiming at. I put that to the minister because that’s the industry’s—probably the one that we’re most familiar with—position on it for sure.

If you look at it, as I said, there are five wireless users out of every 10 people—there are a lot of people there—and we must avoid overlap in jurisdictions. The minister would know this as well, that “legal proceedings are before the Ontario Superior Court of Justice under the misleading advertising provisions of the Competition Act. The bureau is seeking:

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“—full refunds for customers”—and this is before the courts already, and I think that these things are good signals that the minister is on the right track and, I believe, the member from Sault Ste. Marie and other provinces;

“—administrative monetary penalties—\$10 million each from Bell, Rogers and Telus, and \$1 million from

the” Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association, “CWTA;

“—a stop to any representations that do not clearly disclose the price and other terms and conditions applicable to premium-rate digital content; and

“—a corrective notice from each of Bell, Rogers, Telus, and the CWTA, to inform the general public about the terms and conditions of any order issued against them.”

So it’s before the courts. Other jurisdictions have done it. They say that Quebec is watching very closely what Ontario is doing, and I think the contribution that members here make about having clear transparency will help all Canadians, and that’s the end goal.

Our critic on this file, Mr. McDonnell, said a few things that I want to put on the record, because he has done considerable work on this. The bill is “jumping the gun,” and it’s a “me, too” bill, meaning everybody else is doing it. But Ontario is a large province and needs to be playing at the table here.

The CRTC is preparing to create a national regulation. The major providers are on board with the CRTC. The bill was announced eight days after the CRTC announced consultation was tabled, the same day as the consultations closed. We must avoid a patchwork of regulations across the country. The bill tries to outdo Quebec by forcing an early warning system that users, when they are about to hit their limit with their operator—it will be at a greater cost, and they have to be notified. They’re estimating \$100 million per operator—\$100 million, holy smokes.

There are free and cheap apps that are already on the market. Consumers deserve protection as high cancellation fees are not reasonable, and we all agree with that. Bill 5, as I said, has been sort of eclipsed, I guess. The government doesn’t share the whole truth regarding complaints. They cite the telecommunications complaints commissioner, who logged 8,000 complaints against cellphone providers. The Ministry of Consumer Services itself received some complaints about cellphone providers, and it goes on to say that gyms receive many more complaints.

So there’s no catastrophic failure in the marketplace; in fact, we should make the marketplace more consumer-friendly. On our side, I’m sure many members will wish to speak about this bill here. I only wish I had more time. I don’t know what I would say actually, but there is much more to be said, and even listening to other members I think could be a contribution as well. Even the complaints commissioner sides with the supplier often, saying that we shouldn’t mollycoddle the consumers too much. So there you are.

Again, the CRTC is the ultimate boss at the end of the day, and I suppose they’re listening, hopefully, to this speech this morning, because it was so informative. But 25% of cellphone users are on a month-to-month agreement, and these are the ones who don’t realize that some of the stuff that they’re applying to or applications they’re using could in fact be a super-charge on their bill,

which may cause them to issue a complaint, which means they should have read the contract in the first place.

Thank you for the time this morning, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, this bill will be of consequence to a lot of people in Ontario, because I think a lot of people in Ontario are quite shocked by their wireless charges. I think my colleague from Algoma–Manitoulin will be talking about the kinds of problems that people face when they call in to see if they can get reductions in their charges, and in the end find that they’ve been sold a whole bunch of new services.

Increasingly, there’s no doubt that people come to rely on their wireless services, on their cellphones, and the member from Durham was quite correct: Increasingly people move away from land lines to become wireless operators in all aspects of their lives.

I look forward to hearing Mr. Mantha talk about this bill, because—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Once again, I’ll remind all my colleagues that we should refer to members by their riding.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The member for Algoma–Manitoulin—and quite proud he is to be that representative. Thank you for the reminder, Mr. Speaker. I’m very appreciative.

The bill, however, is very limited in the matters that it addresses. I’m sure that there will be opportunities, as we go further down this road, to look at improvements.

There’s no question this bill wouldn’t be here today if there wasn’t a lot of upset and anger amongst cellphone wireless customers who find that they get bills that letter carriers roll into their homes on wheels. They’re big. They’re expensive. We pay some of the highest wireless and cellphone charges in the world here in Ontario. That matter of people paying a fortune for service which is much cheaper in many other jurisdictions is going to become increasingly pressing.

I appreciate the opportunity today to address the matter.

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

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Mr. Speaker, first of all let me thank the member from Ottawa Centre, who spoke earlier. I also want to thank all the members who are speaking positively, and I look forward to all members of the Legislature supporting this bill.

I would like to respond to the member from Durham regarding the CRTC. I am well aware that the CRTC is holding hearings to determine whether they should take action in the future. Basically, having hearings to possibly hold future hearings is the action that’s been taken so far by the CRTC. I am encouraged to hear that they are taking action with respect to this and am looking forward to it. But in the interim, life goes on here in the province of Ontario. We have a responsibility to Ontario consumers, and that is why we want to act with respect to this bill, because I don’t know how long these hearings are going to go on.

The member from Durham also spoke about an incident in Durham that I'm quite familiar with: a father and daughter who were killed near the railway tracks. That was a very tragic incident of someone talking on the phone, with a young child in the car, and both died. I think this is a great opportunity for us to remind Ontarians not to text while driving and not to use hand-held mobile devices while driving, as well.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to the member from Toronto–Danforth, who spoke about people being upset and angry relating to the shock that they get—the cell shock we refer to—when they get the bills, where they are not expecting the kind of monies that are on the bill. The response is that this proposed legislation is here to provide some security for the members of the public when they get their cellphone bills, to know that they're not going to be surprised when they get their bills. They want to be able to have some assurance that they are—

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: I was very pleased to have the opportunity to listen to the member for Durham this morning as he talked about Bill 82. As he always does, he brought forward the views of his constituents very effectively, and also his own wisdom and experience in terms of his service as a member of the Legislature for many years. He offered some very interesting comments. In terms of this bill and in terms of regulation respecting the use of cellphones and the billing procedures, he mentioned that there needs to be clarity, there needs to be plain language and there needs to be full disclosure in terms of the agreements that people are signing. He mentioned there needs to be clearer consumer protection. I would certainly agree with all of those statements.

As he said, cellphones and other hand-held devices are ubiquitous in our society today. I think back to when I was first elected to the Legislature, Mr. Speaker—and you'll recall this, too, 20, 25 years ago—cellphones were almost the size of bricks. Very few people actually had them. But I remember through the years, more and more—in fact, now most high school students have them in their knapsacks, including my own two sons.

The fact is, we have to ensure that consumer protection legislation is in place and that it's fair for both the providers as well as the consumers.

The member for Durham is too modest. He talked about his role in terms of the highway safety legislation which banned the use of cellphones or other hand-held devices while people are operating a motor vehicle. In fact, he pushed for that for many years and, in the finest traditions of this Legislature, brought forward private members' bills which in fact led, ultimately, to a government bill that has improved highway safety dramatically.

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I would take this opportunity to remind people, as I remind my own son who's 17 and just got his G2 licence, that we have to be very careful on the highway. Obviously, studies have shown that the use of cellphones or other hand-held devices, if you're using them when you're

driving, in fact, is more dangerous perhaps than even driving while impaired.

Again, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much, and I look forward to the continued debate on Bill 82.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait plaisir de rajouter quelques détails au sujet du discours qui a été porté par le député de Durham au niveau du projet de loi 82. Le projet de loi s'appelle la Loi visant à mieux protéger les consommateurs en ce qui concerne les conventions de consommation portant sur les services sans fil accessibles au moyen d'un téléphone cellulaire, d'un téléphone intelligent ou de tout autre appareil mobile semblable.

Les commentaires qui ont été faits sont des commentaires avec lesquels je suis en accord. Je dirais que tout le monde ici, tous les députés à l'Assemblée, ont un téléphone cellulaire. L'Assemblée nous permet d'en avoir un, mais je dirais que dans notre vie personnelle, ainsi que dans celle des membres de notre famille, nos voisins, etc., maintenant quasiment tout le monde a un cellulaire.

Et les surprises continuent, bien que les consommateurs soient souvent à leur deuxième ou troisième appareil cellulaire. Ils ont eu des contrats avant. Ils sont à l'affût des possibilités que les compagnies leur chargent trop. Ils négocient leur contrat, ils surveillent les ventes, etc., et lorsque la première facture arrive, c'est toujours la même chose : des surprises, des frais cachés, des frais excédentaires. On pensait qu'on les avait discutés, on pensait qu'on les avait réglés, et : « Non, ah non, c'est parce que vous avez uploadé un tel service » ou « Vous êtes allé sur un site Internet quelconque. Ça fait qu'on vient de rajouter un autre 3,50 \$ sur votre facture. » Le mois suivant, c'est un autre six dollars sur votre facture, puis à la fin de l'année c'est des centaines de dollars excédentaires qui ont été ajoutés aux factures des consommateurs.

Je suis en accord avec les points que le député de Durham a soulevés.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Durham, you have two minutes.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, a pleasure. I thank the member from Toronto–Danforth, and of course, it's a pleasure that the Minister of Consumer Services was here. The member from Wellington–Halton Hills, I thank you for your complimentary remarks. Merci, Madame Gélinas, for your comments en français. I had to listen to the translation, but I believe we all talked about the same thing, about cell shock, which is the bill that you get, whether it's a new contract or a contract after you may have been out of the country.

I do appreciate that the growth in our own office budgets in this one issue is the technology piece. Everybody has one or two cellphones. You have three or four staff. It's probably \$300 or \$400 a month. It's quite unusual. I remember when I worked for a large company that we used to have a pager, and I think it was \$50 a month or something so they could always get in touch with you. The cellphone and the wireless stuff that our young people will have is the office of the future. You can find

out anything, you can talk anywhere, you can get anywhere from anywhere, so we need to have clear rules—and privacy issues as well—with respect to voice, text and data and how we're going to receive and transmit this information and the service provider's responsibility in all of that.

I look forward to broader consultations on this. I'm sure it will be interesting and informative and will therefore protect consumers by the very discussion we're having. Thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I look forward to the day where, in Algoma-Manitoulin, we won't have to rely on dial-up, where we'll actually have cell service. That would be a big step forward.

It's a privilege to get up, Mr. Speaker, and again, I like to give kudos where kudos are deserved: the Minister of Consumer Services and the member for his private member's bill—good show. This is a long time coming. We should be moving it forward, and of course we're going to be looking forward to having this bill at committee, to getting all the stakeholders and the individuals who will have their say on actually making this bill that much better.

Now, besides being the MPP for Algoma-Manitoulin, with constituents who still rely on dial-up, I have another part-time job, just so you know: I'm a troubleshooter for cell service. With me, I have a team of four individuals—one of them here in Queen's Park and three in my constituency office—who consistently deal with troubles with cell service: billing, penalties, cancellation fees. The list goes on and on.

This is something that we consistently do. I did it, as a matter of fact, in a supporting role in my previous job, and I have to say that I was fortunate in getting remedies for some people. However, with others who didn't come in or walk through the doors of our office, we never were able to fix them. So a lot of these measures may help that.

Every time I call my service provider, I am usually on hold for great lengths, trying to get an explanation for what I'm actually being charged for. Oftentimes, I'm convinced the hidden fees and services are unknown to their representatives. They really just don't know what I'm talking about. So we understand this bill enacts a new act to govern these wireless agreements; therefore, an agreement between a supplier and a consumer in which the supplier agrees to provide wireless services, whether or not the supplier agrees to provide goods to the consumer under the agreement. What I like is that under this bill the supplier must provide information on the cost to a consumer, which must be included in any price advertising. This is a fantastic idea.

Now, through our discussions that we'll be having at the committee, can we look at applying it through the sales/marketing department of these companies? I'll tell you about a little bit of an issue that I've had experience with. Individuals are receiving these wonderful adver-

tisements: "If you call in, we have these great packages for you, and it will reduce the actual cost of your phone bill." We'll refer to that as the bait, all right? So the bait is set. You receive in your mail a nice announcement that says, "This is your package that you're paying for now, but if you call, we're going to offer you this"—a different package.

So the bait is set. A lot of individuals call in. And then, all of a sudden, as you're calling in, that's where the switch happens. If nobody's familiar with the term "bait and switch," you should be, because this happens often. Now, they switch this announcement on you, or this publication or this advertisement, and all of a sudden, by the end of the call, you have more charges on your phone, you have a new phone and you have a bigger bill than you started with. This is a bait and switch.

As I said, in my previous employment I was successful in getting individuals who would come into the office out of that contract. However, a lot of seniors are targeted through this bait and switch. Particular areas, particular communities are targeted with this type of a service, and there are a lot of people still out there that are too embarrassed that they've been caught in this little bit of a scam, a little bit of a catch. Those individuals are still out there paying those high prices for their cellphone service and other services, because this bait and switch is not only with cell service. It's also with satellite. It's also with TV. It's all over the place. So it's about time that we start recognizing this particular problem.

If a wireless agreement does not meet the disclosure requirements or if a supplier does not disclose a copy of the agreement, the consumer can cancel the contract without penalties. The act includes authority to make regulations on matters such as specifying additional rights and obligations of consumers and suppliers.

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What is most important for us is the need for greater protection for the consumer of wireless phones, smart phones and mobile data services, and we support this initiative.

Now seriously, I want to talk to you about an issue in my riding. I just got a message on my "WhiteBerry" here, this wonderful piece of technology that we all use. I apologize for using a prop, Mr. Speaker. My staff said it would be nice to have a service range that matches the bill; then it might not hurt so much to pay the darn bill. It would be nice to have that. Thank you to my constituency assistant Cindy.

Seriously, I wanted to tell you a little bit of a story from back home. When I first got set up here, my staff and I were a team of five, and we were trying to set up our phone service. We were arguing with the provider. I knew what I needed. He wanted to sell me his wonderful technology, this 3G, 4G. It doesn't work in my riding; there is no support for that type of service. I needed the old CDMA. So it took four of us from my office to deal with this. It took at least three individuals from LIS to convince the provider to do it. Plus, I think it was about a three-week period when we finally got the phones. I finally got frustrated and said, "Listen. I'll go out and

find the phones. You just put the service into it.” We were successful in doing that, but it took an army just to set us up with cellphone services and the proper cellphone service which I will be able to serve my constituents with.

So that is just in my area. Again, some of my constituents are still stuck with dial-up.

I'm all for putting an end to unfair practices. These wireless companies have become so accustomed to concealing their real costs, and every month you get a reminder in the mail. Oh, yes, that reminder which comes in the format of a bill, which every single one of us here is so happy to see, that wonderful bill—well, it costs somebody to draft that bill, and that's an additional cost that we're all getting as well. As I was saying, unfortunately, each month, you get that reminder that you are paying far more than what you had thought you had agreed to. We would agree that ending this culture of secrecy that results in unknown hidden fees and charges is a good thing for consumers.

New Democrats would also support another provision in the legislation which would limit contract termination penalties. Perhaps once wireless service providers start offering fair and transparent plans, once they start providing the services they claim to provide, the consumers will not be dissatisfied and will have fewer reasons for cancelling their plans in the first place.

Holding these large wireless service companies to account, especially in their advertisements, is a must. It is imperative that suppliers advertise the all-inclusive price for their service before the HST is put on to their bills. Moreover, this all-inclusive price has to be the most prominent cost information in the advertising.

The supplier has to ensure that the agreement is in writing and that it discloses the name of the consumer, the name and contact info of the supplier, the date of the agreement, the term of the agreement, the expiry date of the agreement, a description that itemizes each service, a statement indicating whether any of the goods provided with the agreement are subject to any technological or physical features that restrict their functioning, the terms and method of payment, the total amount paid by the consumer before entering into the agreement, the minimum amount payable by the consumer for each billing period, the manner of calculating the amount that the consumer is required to pay to the supplier if the consumer cancels the agreement and the total cost of the contract for the billing cycle, which is really what many people have issues with.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Prue: I'm delighted today to introduce the parents and brother of page Caelius, who, today, is

one of the page captains. I'd like to introduce Sam Musharbash, the father; the mother, Franca Tarentino; and the brother, Phoenix, all of whom are here in the audience.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, and welcome.

The member from Whitby—Oshawa.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning. I have several introductions to make this morning, so I ask for your indulgence.

First, I'd like to welcome members of the Canadian Sikh Association to Queen's Park: Jagtar Singh, Deepinder Singh Loomba and Avtar Singh Dhillon. They will be hosting a reception from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. in committee room 2. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Secondly, I'd like to welcome some guests from my riding of Whitby—Oshawa. We have Mr. Tyson Harrison, Ms. Christina Zevenhoven, Ms. Amber Harrison, Ms. Matthea Liston, and Ms. Michelle Marshall, who is the executive director of the Participation House Project of Durham region. They're all here to listen to the private members' business that's happening this afternoon. And also Ms. Vanessa Foran, a co-op student who's currently working in my office. Welcome to all of you.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I ask the entire Legislative Assembly to join me in welcoming a number of guests in the members' lounge. I have Jagtar Singh, who was one of the first residents to take up the issue of wearing a dastar, wearing a turban in the bus system in Hamilton; Deepinder Singh Loomba, who was the first to fight for the right to wear a turban in Home Depot; and Avtar Singh Dhillon, who was the individual responsible for fighting for the right to wear a dastar in BC.

I also have Baljit Singh Ghuman, president of the Canadian Sikh Association, as well as Balkaranjeet Singh Gill, president of the Guru Nanak Mission in Brampton.

I ask everyone to welcome them today.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I would like to welcome the entire Canadian Sikh Association to the Legislature today, and I encourage all of my colleagues to join us as they will host an open house in committee room 2 at noon today. I encourage everyone to attend. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Energy, and it concerns the power plant documents.

Speaker, the minister has been hung out to dry by the Premier and his cabinet. He's been abandoned by his caucus, forced to sit in this House every day and watch his fellow leadership competitors smirk as he pays the price for their sins. The minister wants to be leader of the Liberal Party, but surely he knows that that's all over if this House finds him in contempt.

So I ask the minister, given that the Premier has turned his back on him, will he finally do what's right and table the documents immediately?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the question. We listened to the communities in both Mississauga and Oakville. We cancelled the plants. We're not proceeding with those.

There has been a lot of discussion about the documents, and I recall a couple of weeks ago there were submissions before you with respect to those documents. You gave a ruling. I indicated, as soon as you gave the ruling, that I would be complying with the ruling, and I have repeated that since then. I know there have been some discussions with the House leaders, but I was very clear on that. I thank the Speaker for the ruling and I thank my colleague opposite for the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: To the minister once again: Speaker, the minister was once the Attorney General of this province. He's a lawyer by profession. He knows full well what the ramifications of being held in contempt are. He knows that he could lose his licence to practise law. He knows that he could be expelled from the Law Society of Upper Canada. He knows that he may be called before this House to deliver a humiliating apology—and for what, to protect the Liberal Party of Ontario, to take a bullet for Premier McGuinty?

I ask the minister, what is it going to take for him to release the documents? A raid by the OPP, a public shaming, being disbarred? Do it now, Minister: Release the documents and save yourself.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm enormously respectful of the Speaker and his authority in this place. You made a ruling in this place. I was here when you made the ruling. I indicated, in answer to questions in question period just after that, that I would be complying with the ruling, and that's exactly what I'll be doing. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the minister: Clearly, the minister has little understanding of the humiliating precedent he's about to set. In case he's unaware, I'd like to inform the minister that the Legislative Assembly Act empowers this House with many of the same powers of punishment as a court of law. I can assure the minister, as the opposition House leader, that we will be pursuing each and every one of those powers.

My question for the minister is this: Why? Why are you risking it all—your political career, your legal career, your integrity—for a party and a government that don't even care about you?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Well, again, I thank the member for the question. As I recall the ruling, it had a number of terms in it and it had a date. The date was clear to all, and we're not at the date. I quite understand

and understood the terms of the ruling. I understand that there were discussions among the House leaders, as was suggested and encouraged in the ruling, and I also understand that there's a date. I'll be complying with the ruling.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the energy minister. Mr. Speaker, we know this is a difficult time for this minister. He's been deserted in the trenches, left fighting the Premier's battles all by himself. The Liberal Party has cut him loose. They know a fall guy when they see one. The minister's entire professional career is on the line. For the sake of protecting the Premier and the Minister of Economic Development, he's risking it all: his legal career, his leadership bid and his credibility.

Throughout this process, the Premier and the Liberal Party have repeatedly put themselves ahead of Ontario. They've been concerned with nothing but their own selfish political fortunes.

I ask the minister, will you end this charade? Will you stand up for yourself? Will you stand up for Ontario and table those documents immediately today?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Speaker, as I indicated in my previous answers, I was here when you made the ruling, and you heard lots of submissions and all the different issues and interests. They were presented to you and so I won't go back into those. You made a ruling at the end of that, and in answer to questions which followed, I indicated that I was respectful of the ruling, thanked you for the ruling and that I would be complying with the ruling.

Part of that was—these are not your words; I'm paraphrasing—an encouragement to the House leaders to see if they could get together and have some discussions. I understand that they have had and are having some discussions. I'll turn the supplementaries over to my colleague to deal with, but I simply indicate as I indicated before: I'll be complying with the ruling.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Again to the minister: Minister, it's painful watching you struggle to defend that which you know is simply indefensible. I actually feel sorry for you.

Speaker, it's unbecoming of a minister of the crown to rise in this House and defend the inexcusable actions of the Premier and the Liberal Party. Instead of focusing on his own leadership bid, the minister is busy defending the leadership of a Premier who has failed this province enormously. The minister surely feels he can do a better job. Why, then, is the minister sacrificing himself to protect a legacy of scandal, of waste and of self-opportunism?

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Hon. Christopher Bentley: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, what's painful is watching the opposition ignore your ruling. Let me quote, Mr. Speaker, from your ruling of that day. What

you did was you cited a passage from Speaker Milliken which you believed applied in this situation. I'd like to quote it for members: "It seems to me, that the issue before us is this: Is it possible to put into place a mechanism by which these documents could be made available to the House without compromising the security and confidentiality of the information they contain? In other words, is it possible for the two sides, working together in the best interest of the Canadians they serve, to devise a means where both their concerns are met?"

That is exactly what's happening, Mr. Speaker. The House leaders met last week for close to two hours. We will be meeting again today, and I have faith that the three of us, coming together, can find that spirit of co-operation that you called for in your ruling of 10 days ago.

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

Mr. Rob Leone: Right back to the Minister of Energy, Mr. Speaker. None of us on this side of the House blame the minister for being disappointed or angry. We understand how hurt he must be by the betrayal of his closest colleagues. It must be difficult to watch your entire political career unravel before your eyes. While the minister is here falling on the sword of the Premier and the Minister of Economic Development, his cabinet colleagues, like the Minister of Municipal Affairs, are busy assembling their leadership campaigns. We watch as the energy minister stands there struggling with the weight of two cancelled power plants on his shoulders. I ask him, why won't you shrug? Why won't you stop being complicit in the destruction of your own integrity?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, we have respect for your ruling on this side of the House, and I'd remind the honourable member—let me quote again from your ruling, Mr. Speaker. This is you speaking directly. "I, too, have immense faith in the abilities of the honourable members of this House. I know that a solution can be found to this impasse. All sides need to exercise sobriety in this. Political fortunes should not be the motive for eroding the supremacy of Parliament or ignoring the best interests of citizens in this province. Assiduous attention should be paid to dealing with matters such as this responsibly."

Mr. Speaker, that is the approach that this side of the House is taking. I'm quite frankly disappointed that members of the opposition are not gathering behind their House leader to look for a responsible and co-operative way to balance the interests that are at play in the release of these documents.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Does the Premier believe that public disclosure is a threat to effective government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: No, Speaker, we do not. It may come as a surprise, but on this particular issue we in government and the opposition are in violent agreement.

Speaker, we all stand four-square against the development of that particular gas plant in that community. It was a difficult decision to make, but I was heartened by the fact that we had the strong support of both opposition parties in this regard, and we both believed that, at the appropriate time, and certainly in keeping with your ruling, we should make all these documents public, Speaker. I think on this, as I say, we are in violent agreement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, nearly a decade ago the Premier said, "The Conservative government has treated public disclosure as a threat to effective government. We see it as exactly the opposite: a basic right and an essential means of ensuring that decisions are made in the public interest." He then promised, "We will require that all future contracts signed by the government be subject to public scrutiny." After nearly 10 years in office, does the Premier still believe that?

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

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, as I say, we respect the ruling that you've put forward. The question at hand is not about the release of the documents. All sides agree that the documents need to be released. But what we are pointing out, Mr. Speaker, is that on the advice of the Auditor General, based on the situation—the negotiations that are going on right now—we need to find a way to release those documents that does not jeopardize the position of the taxpayers of Ontario.

You have asked the House leaders to come together and find a reasonable way to balance these interests and achieve this goal. That is what's happening. As I said, Mr. Speaker, we met for close to two hours last night, and I look forward to further discussion this afternoon, in keeping with the ruling that you put forward about a week ago.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, that government was elected on a promise of ending self-serving politics and opening government to the people. That's what they were elected on. Now after almost a decade in office, we see a government that's more interested in their own political survival than the public good and that's scrambling to hide public information from the people who pay the bills.

When did the Premier stop believing that public disclosure was essential to making sure that decisions are made in the public interest?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again I remind the honourable member of what Jim McCarter, the Auditor General of Ontario and an officer of this Legislature, said on September 5 in public accounts: "My sense on the Oakville one"—that is the Oakville gas plant—"is that it could very well be that some of this information could be subject to client-solicitor privilege, or even if we were to get it, in my opinion, it could be damaging to the province's negotiating position." Mr. Speaker, I have a

tremendous amount of respect for Ontario's Auditor General, Mr. McCarter. He is an officer of this Legislature.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, the question is not whether we will release these documents, but can we find a fashion to release them which protects the interests of the taxpayers of Ontario? We are standing up for those interests on this side of the House, and I think it's time that the opposition stood up for them as well.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. This government has a problem, Speaker. It's that the people who sent us here, the people who make this province work every day, see growing evidence that this government will say and do anything to hold on to power. They see little or nothing being done to take on the challenges that they are facing.

Will the Premier get his priorities right finally and stop focusing on the challenges that are facing the Liberal Party and start focusing on the challenges that are facing the people of this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, that's exactly what we're doing. The fact of the matter is, I'm a little bit bewildered, frankly, while my honourable colleague is raising an issue which is the subject of a very important and productive discussion among House leaders. Either she has confidence in her House leader to pursue those discussions, or she does not.

But I have confidence in her House leader. I have tremendous confidence in her House leader. He's a good man from northern Ontario. He represents my mother's old hometown, and he's always welcome both in the north and over here, I must say, as well.

I do say, Speaker, I have confidence in the ability of the three House leaders to come together, work through this issue and do so in a way that is in full compliance with your ruling.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, only this Premier will be bewildered by why New Democrats work hard to get public disclosure for the people. The people who make this province work every day are very happy to do their part and to pay their fair share. But here's what they're seeing: They're seeing a government that promised transparency being called out for secrecy and contempt by the Environmental Commissioner; a government that promised to make life affordable signing secret deals that add millions and millions of dollars to their electricity bills; a government that warned that reckless Conservative legislation would cost millions when challenged in the courts now proposing the exact same kind of plan.

Why would the people believe what this government has to say when they themselves don't believe it, Speaker?

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

Hon. John Milloy: Just to paraphrase what the Premier said, the honourable member can't seem to take yes for an answer.

When it came to the Oakville power plant, let me share some quotes with her. The member for Toronto–Danforth told InsideHalton, “I don't agree with the Oakville power plant, I don't think it's necessary.” The member from Beaches–East York on December 2 in this very Legislature said, “I'm glad that the people of Oakville came to their senses. I'm glad the people of Oakville hired Erin Brockovich and did all the things that they did in order to have this killed.”

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

Mr. Speaker, the plant has been cancelled. The documents will be released. All we are trying to figure out is a responsible way to do that to protect the best interests of the taxpayers of Ontario.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, I'm glad they understand over there the wrong-headedness of their move on that plant from day one. We knew it all along. We've said it all along.

After promising change a decade ago, Speaker, it's clear that this government will say or do anything to hold on to power. The party that promised transparency is scrambling to hide public contracts. The party that warned against simplistic and unconstitutional Conservative plans is now adopting the very same kind of plans. The party that promised to protect the public interest is ignoring the challenges that face everyday people in this province. Why should anyone believe anything that this government has to say?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the member stands in her place and talks about the public interest. That is exactly what we are trying to defend on this side of the House. The simple fact is that there are sensitive negotiations that are going on concerning the Oakville plant. We have said that we will release the documents. We are trying to find a way to move forward which respects these sensitive negotiations and, through them, respects the rights of the taxpayers of Ontario.

This is about finding a solution to a complex problem. We respect the ruling that you put forward, and I call on the honourable members opposite to respect your ruling as well as we work towards a negotiated solution.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, the clock is ticking, ticking down on your credibility and your bid to become Liberal leader. Come Tuesday, you'll officially become the victim of the Liberal team's seat-saver decision to cancel the Oakville and the Mississauga gas plants. Without even thinking

twice, the Premier threw you under the bus in an effort to buy an election that cost Ontarians hundreds of millions of dollars.

Minister, given that the Premier and all his advisers have turned against you, will you finally denounce the Liberal campaign team's seat-saver program and release the power plant documents requested by this House today?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Just a couple of things are clear with respect to the gas plants, and that is that all three parties have supported not proceeding with the plants—all three. Secondly, all three parties have advanced the public interest.

Third, I've been very clear with respect to the Speaker's ruling. We'll comply with the Speaker's ruling, and part of the Speaker's ruling was that there were discussions among House leaders, which I understand are still under way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Harris: Again to the Minister: Minister, the Liberal government record is one of mismanagement, incompetence and cover-up, whether it's refusing to testify—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): While I will not ask to withdraw, I ask the member to be cautious of that. It was a generalization, but it does start to move down the ladder I don't like. Carry on, please.

Mr. Michael Harris: Whether it's refusing to testify on Ornge or withholding critical documents on eHealth and the Mississauga and Oakville power plants, the Liberal government has shown over and over again that it will stop at nothing to keep Ontarians in the dark. In the most stunning display of Liberal arrogance, the energy minister has made it very clear that he's even willing to risk being found in contempt of this House to stop the release of documents relating to the Liberals' seat-saver program.

Minister, enough is enough. It's time to stop hiding. So I ask you: Will you release the power plant documents today and admit Ontarians should no longer have confidence in your scandal-plagued Liberal government?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: There are many, many quotes for both sides of the opposition. Here is what the member from Halton had to say in Hansard: "The people of Oakville have told you they don't want the proposed gas-fired power plant ... and I agree with them."

The member from Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant, in a letter to Minister Duguid: "The potential for future alternate generation in Nanticoke to replace that slated for the proposed and disputed Clarkson plant should receive ample consideration."

The Leader of the Opposition told the Globe and Mail on September 25, 2011: "We've opposed these projects in Oakville and Mississauga."

MPP Ted Chudleigh, the member from Halton, on October 19: "I was pleased when it was cancelled."

Mr. Speaker, the simple fact of the matter is that all sides of the House have rejected this plant. All sides of the House are looking for a way to make the relevant documents available based on your ruling and based on the request from the estimates committee.

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Mr. Speaker, a year after we learned the LCBO was overcharging consumers, we learned that not much has happened through this minister or his ministry. According to Global News, the LCBO asked a French brandy supplier to raise the price quote by \$1.79 a bottle. They asked to pay more than what was asked, despite the fact that the LCBO was ordering 180 cases of Calvados.

You'd think that a monopoly buyer the size of the LCBO would use its size to lower the price, not to raise it. When will this government tell the LCBO to use its leverage to get a better deal for Ontarians and not for foreign liquor suppliers?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we welcome the Auditor General's review. That was one among a number of recommendations, many of which we have acted on.

The member opposite will know that groups like MADD and others support a minimum pricing rule for very valid reasons, which is at the essence of how we establish liquor prices in this province. It's complicated in that sense because those prices don't get passed on to consumers. In fact, the way it is designed to work is to ensure that those who feel strongly in this province that there ought to be minimum pricing in order to prevent abuse of alcohol and so on—that's been the model of pricing throughout the history of the LCBO.

We concur with the auditor's advice to look at this carefully, because frankly, the additional revenue that could accrue to the province—

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

Mr. Michael Prue: We're not talking here about minimum price for very cheap alcohol; this was \$50.75 a bottle.

The Auditor General found that the LCBO does not negotiate discounts for high-volume purchases to reduce its costs. He found that the LCBO has no incentive to negotiate lower supplier costs. He found that it was often more interested in raising wholesale prices than in lowering them.

When will this government finally start taking the side of Ontario consumers instead of lining the pockets of foreign suppliers?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I've never heard of Calvados. It's interesting the NDP have. I'd recommend you try Pelee Island wines.

After question period, I'll explain to him how minimum prices don't affect the high end; they affect the low end. I understand. But I would urge all Ontarians: Buy Niagara, buy Essex county, buy Prince Edward county—

it's a growing and booming industry that's employing more Ontarians. I look forward to your supporting the initiatives we're doing to build a better wine industry for all Ontarians with greater export potential.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am standing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —and members continue to ignore the fact that I'm standing. Thank you.

New question.

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MUNICIPALITIES

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question this morning is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. As this House is quite aware, there has been some discussion recently around the issue of interest arbitration. We've heard a variety of concerns expressed with respect to the proposed reforms to the arbitration system, and I understand that some of these concerns were originally raised by the province's municipalities. In fact, I know it has been a long-standing issue. I can remember years ago being at a meeting with LUMCO, the large urban municipalities, and I remember Mayor McCallion's passionate advocacy of reform of the arbitration system.

Municipalities have difficult decisions to make in their communities and are dependent on the government's support on issues such as this. The back-and-forth on this issue must be both confusing and unsettling for them.

Speaker, can the minister please tell us what steps our government is taking to reassure Ontario's municipalities that we hear their concerns and are committed to working with them in reforming the system?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would just say, we certainly value the relationships that we have with our municipal partners and would never ignore the advice of mayors, including and especially the mayor of Mississauga. We would certainly not.

Municipalities have specifically asked us to make changes to the arbitration system to help them control costs. In fact, the former president of AMO, Gary McNamara, said in August that he wanted to see all of us in this chamber work together on arbitration reform so that municipalities wouldn't have to do it on their own.

The budget bill that we put forward, Mr. Speaker, included those reform provisions that would have reformed the arbitration system. Unfortunately, those provisions were taken out of the budget bill. We were aghast to see the Conservatives at the head of that parade. Now I understand there's a private member's bill that wants to reintroduce some of those provisions. We needed the support of the opposition in the first place to support those provisions.

The Premier has said that we will reintroduce those provisions, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to work with our municipalities to reform the system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you, Minister. It's good to hear that our government will continue to work with municipalities to help ease the burden caused by interest arbitration costs. I know many municipalities have expressed how much they value the supports our government has already provided and will be reassured to hear that we will continue to work with them on this matter.

However, we all know that the Ontario government is facing its own fiscal pressures, and we need the support of all our partners, including our municipal partners, to help balance the budget. Municipalities have suffered under previous governments that downloaded costs to municipalities. I know that my own municipality of Guelph certainly appreciates the fact that we are unloading court security costs.

Speaker, through you to the minister, how is our government providing support to Ontario municipalities so that they can navigate these challenging economic times?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: This is a really important question because it's one that speaks to that very important relationship between the province and municipalities, the balance of costs that are shared and who takes responsibility for which pieces.

As recently as the AMO conference this summer, we recommitted to continuing the uploading process on schedule, Mr. Speaker, which will, by 2018, have a net benefit for our municipality of \$1.5 billion a year. That means that municipalities have more room on their property tax income to deliver the services they need.

We would expect the support of the official opposition on that uploading, on the investments in roads and bridges, on the gas tax for transit, on the investments in affordable housing—that whole range of issues. We have not had that support, Mr. Speaker. We need that support. We'll continue to work with municipalities, but it would be great if the members opposite, in both parties, would work with us on that as well.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Minister of Energy. It must feel like the vultures are circling you, just waiting to dive in and have at you. You can avoid all this, Minister. Just honour the committee's request, honour the Speaker's ruling, and quit hiding the documents.

You're a lawyer. You know what's coming next. Is your career really worth being the fall guy for the former energy minister's deals, the fall guy for the Premier? It seems he has left you out of the succession plans anyway. He has left you out in the cold. You're in this alone. They've abandoned you. End the pain today and turn over the documents.

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I've thought of my colleagues as many things, but never as a vulture.

I appreciate the ruling that the Speaker made on this very important issue, and the ruling contained a number of terms. It contained terms with respect to documents relating to two gas plants, two gas plants that no party in this House believes should have gone ahead. So we're all on the same page. We're all on the same page with respect to the ruling, I believe, and part of the ruling was that there be meetings among the House leaders, and so I'll be referring the second question to the government House leader to give us an update on the progress of those discussions. Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, the minister has been cleaning up for his colleagues' mistakes ever since becoming the Minister of Energy. Minister, your predecessor has left you on the hook for the failed Green Energy Act and the failed FIT programs. Just this morning, we learned that FIT is now costing the province \$4 billion a year, and now your gang has left you on the hook for the billion-dollar, politically motivated seat-saver program.

Ask yourself, is your career worth being the fall guy for the Premier? The longer you wait, the worse it gets. You know what to do here, Minister. Turn the documents over today.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, I remind the member of your words to this Legislature: "I, too, have immense faith in the abilities of the honourable members of this House. I know that a solution can be found to this impasse. All sides need to exercise sobriety in this. Political fortunes should not be the motive for eroding the supremacy of Parliament or ignoring the best interests of citizens in this province." I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that the honourable member heed your words as he goes forward.

The fact of the matter is that all sides of the House believe that neither of these plants should have gone forward, and the Minister of Energy has done an outstanding job in moving forward with this file. All that we are asking is that we find a way to balance the interests of taxpayers with the rights of the committees that have come forward and that we respect the ruling you put forward about a week ago. Again, Mr. Speaker, I call on members of the opposition to respect what you've said and to allow the process to continue.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Jonah Schein: My question is for the Premier. The government has taken another U-turn when it comes to the much-delayed Eglinton LRT. Today we learned that the LRT will not be operated by the TTC. They'll be operated by a separate private company. Transit users fear that this will mean higher fares, poorer service and more difficulty in transferring between lines. Why is the government once again switching tracks on Toronto's long-delayed transit plan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Far from switching tracks, Mr. Speaker, our goal has always been to have a seamless system along the Eglinton line, seamless from the transit rider's perspective. So same fare, same transfer, seamless for commuters—that has always been our objective, Mr. Speaker, in building the Eglinton LRT. We're focused on delivering that service to the people along that line and for the commuters who come into the city.

Toronto residents, I think, Mr. Speaker, are less concerned about whether it's a Metrolinx employee or a TTC employee. They just want to make sure that the line is going to run. They want to make sure it's delivered on time. They want to make sure that the service is reliable. So that's what we're going to deliver, Mr. Speaker. We've been working with the city of Toronto from the beginning of this project, and we will continue to work with the city of Toronto on this project.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jonah Schein: Back to the minister: The people of Toronto do not believe this government. The last thing that Toronto needs is a 407 of transit, with transit commuters joining drivers and paying more and more every day. City councillors, transit experts and the chair of the TTC all fear that this new plan will mean increased fares. It will mean reduced service levels and poorer conditions on transit lines, poorer coordination of transit lines. Why is the Premier supporting Metrolinx in a scheme that seems to put the needs and the interests of public-transit users last?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I think one of the most surprising things about this debate, this transit debate in this Legislature over the last three years, has been that the NDP has consistently stood up and argued against public transit, consistently, starting with the previous leader, Howard Hampton, not supporting new subway cars; the air-rail link—consistently fighting against that investment in transit. I would have thought that the NDP would have been an advocate, would have been a champion for public transit. Instead, they pick away at the projects; they create indecision. They create doubt in the public's mind instead of saying, "This is a very good project. How can we work with you to make it better?"

Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to work with the city of Toronto. This is a critical, critical line for the city of Toronto. The members from Toronto should know that, and they should be supporting us on this.

1110

FIRE SAFETY

Mr. Joe Dickson: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Over the summer, one of my constituents visited my office demanding to know more about what the government is doing to install sprinklers in retirement homes

and long-term-care homes. Her mother is in an older retirement home that is not equipped with sprinklers.

This individual is actually an avid fan of question period and remembers watching a particular session in May when the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek stood in the House and said that the technical consultations now being conducted by the Office of the Fire Marshal are a waste of time.

Minister, can you please answer this question for me?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member from Ajax–Pickering for this important question. I have been waiting for an opportunity to clear the record on this issue. First, I appreciate the passion that the member of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek brings to this issue, as I believe everyone does in this Legislature. Unfortunately, the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is misrepresenting the legislative process, and has been—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I withdraw. “Inaccurately”—is that the best word? Okay. Inaccurately—the legislative process, and had he done his homework he would know that before you make a change to the fire code, a technical consultation must be conducted. Experts such as the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association and the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs support our technical consultations.

This government takes seniors’ safety very seriously. That’s why we are taking the necessary steps to ensure that, when we implement sprinklers in our older retirement homes and long-term-care homes, we do it right.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is again for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, it’s nice to know that this government is taking a responsible yet decisive approach to this very important issue. Clearly, much can be learned from this exercise to ensure that we implement the right policy. I think we all understand that a one-size-fits-all solution won’t work, as Ontario’s retirement and long-term-care homes can be found in urban and rural settings and are connected to different water services. All of these factors need to be considered, I’m sure.

But with that said, Minister, how long will the technical consultation take?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, we’ve expedited the technical consultation process by four months. The technical committee will deliver its initial recommendations this fall and has committed to making sure more retirement and long-term-care homes across the province are equipped with sprinklers. But we realize sprinklers are not the only solution. That’s why we’ve developed a multi-pronged approach to fire safety in homes for vulnerable Ontarians, by also focusing on training, inspection and automatic door closures. Kevin Foster, president of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, recently told my office he is pleased this issue is

a priority and his organization is committed to expediting the work to provide workable recommendations.

We’ve taken strong actions to improve the safety of Ontario’s most vulnerable citizens, and I look forward to the recommendations that will be brought forward by the technical committee.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question today is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, it’s no secret that when Liberal Party campaign advisers like Greg Sorbara stressed the necessity of implementing the seat-saver program as a last-ditch effort for the Premier to hold on to power, they knew they needed a fall guy.

Everyone knows that the Premier will do anything and say anything to hold on to power. But what is most shocking is how the Premier was actually bold enough to choose you, Minister, as his fall guy—a fellow lawyer, and most of all, the single Liberal cabinet minister outside the inner circle who poses the biggest threat to assume the Premier’s role as leader of the Liberal Party.

Minister, why are you protecting the same Premier who defends an incompetent health minister to the bitter end but tries to tarnish your brand and leadership credibility?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: You’d think by the tone of all the questions that they were actually insistent that the power plants remain in Oakville, but that would not be the case. And since that isn’t the case, then all parties would have been in exactly the same position, which is determining what happens next. The issue that we have been working on is how not only to reach a resolution but to find the right time to speak to the resolution. I spoke to the Mississauga resolution when it had been reached. The Oakville matter is still the subject of discussions. We have the Speaker’s ruling. We’ll be complying with the ruling and respect the terms of the ruling. Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: The only ministers who look happy over there today are Minister Wynne, Minister Duncan and Minister Murray. They’re the only ones smiling today.

Back to the Minister of Energy: Minister, either you just don’t comprehend the gravity of the situation you’re in, or maybe you simply don’t care about transparency and accountability. Or perhaps you have simply taken the bait and the Premier’s office has actually convinced you that withholding documents is a smart decision.

Minister, don’t be fooled. Don’t think that the media training that you’ve received will protect you from being held in contempt. Being held in contempt is unfortunate for you, your career and your leadership ambitions. But you can change course if you just stop protecting Dalton McGuinty’s Liberal campaign team when you really want to be building yours. Minister, will you do the right thing? Will you release the documents today?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Respect for the rulings made by the Speaker is paramount. That ruling had a number of terms, one of which was a date and another of which was a suggestion or encouragement that the House leaders get together. The government House leader has updated this House on those discussions. I understand they're still ongoing, and I suspect and I hope that my friend opposite would want all members of the House to fully and completely respect the order made by the Speaker in all of its terms, not just in some of its terms—and that's exactly what we're doing.

OBSTETRICAL CARE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Health. Windsor Regional Hospital's neonatal intensive care unit is one of the best in the province and it's operating at almost full capacity, but the CEO of the hospital is warning that the NICU might be downgraded from a level 3 to a level 2, losing the ability to treat babies born before 32 weeks. This would force up to 60 babies and 300 pregnant women to London, Toronto or even Detroit for this kind of care.

My question is simple: Does the minister think that it's right for new parents with fragile babies to be forced far away when they could be treated in their home hospitals?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I think the parents in this province want when they have a baby that needs intensive care is that that child receive the finest care possible. I think that commitment to quality is something that we agree on.

1120

We also agree that care closest to home as possible is vitally important, and whenever possible, that care should be provided as close to home as possible. Sometimes babies are born who are so sick they need an intensity of care that cannot be provided at every hospital in this province. I can tell you that that is an issue I know is under discussion now. We will always make the decision based on what's best for those little children.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: In 2009, the Minister of Finance said the following at a funding announcement at the Windsor NICU: "Windsor Regional will probably be the premier centre for this type of care in the province."

That was a short four years ago. Why, only four years later, is this government cutting health care services for Windsor families and their vulnerable infants by downgrading the NICU to a level 2?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I actually have personal experience in a NICU. When my twin grandchildren were born, they spent some time there, as did I and as did their parents. I saw first-hand the quality of care that is provided in NICUs.

I can tell you that parents want their child to get the care they need when they are very, very vulnerable. We will always make decisions based on what's best for those babies.

INVASIVE SPECIES

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. I know our government is committed to fighting all invasive wildlife species across Ontario. We've made big strides over the past decade. Invasive species pose a huge threat to our lakes, ecosystems and industries, and I know that your ministry has recently implemented Ontario's invasive species strategic plan that's going to create some formal mechanism to collaborate with all levels of government and stakeholders, including First Nations.

Minister, what is the strategic plan to prevent and limit the impact of invasive species here in Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks to the member for Willowdale for asking this very important question. Our government is very concerned about the threat of invasive species and remains committed to limiting their impacts on Ontario's ecosystems.

Recently, we held a grand opening for the Invasive Species Centre in Sault Ste. Marie. Our colleague David Oraziotti from Sault Ste. Marie attended on behalf of the province. This centre will be serving as a forum for the governments of Ontario and Canada to work collaboratively on management and research of invasive plants and aquatic species. Frankly, this is a historic moment for Ontario. This innovative facility is the first of its kind in Canada.

We're also, of course, thrilled with the introduction of Ontario's invasive species strategic plan. Our plan will build strong networks with conservation groups, including the federal government, our First Nation partners and neighbouring US states as well. Certainly, this is a comprehensive strategy. We'll improve our ability to prevent, to detect and to respond to the threat of invasive species like the emerald ash borer and the Asian carp.

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

Mr. David Zimmer: Minister, in particular I want to raise the issue of Asian carp. They are posing a real threat to our lakes, ecosystems and industry. They haven't yet made their way into Ontario, but I can tell you, Minister, in Chicago and in the state of Michigan, they are having a real problem with Asian carp, and Asian carp are just nipping at the edges of our own Ontario Great Lakes here. Keeping that in mind, I'm starting to get questions from constituents, even in Willowdale, asking about this.

Minister, specifically, what are you doing to defend against the Asian carp threat in Ontario? Because I want to take the message back to my Willowdale constituents.

Interjections.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: This is no laughing matter, Mr. Speaker. It's important to everybody in the province of Ontario. Asian carp pose a significant threat to our province and to the many industries that depend on our Great Lakes, including the \$230-million commercial fishing industry. That's why we've recently joined the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee, a collab-

orative effort, again, between our government, the federal government and US federal and state governments. Joining this committee will enable us to formally share information and employ new and innovative techniques aimed at preventing Asian carp from entering the Great Lakes system.

Also, in 2005, our government took action back then. We took a defensive stance on this issue by banning the possession of live Asian carp in Ontario. Since 2010, we have seized over 39,000 pounds of Asian carp that were destined for Ontario markets. So I can promise everyone in the Legislature and all Ontarians that we will continue to take strong action like this—

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

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question is to the Minister of Energy this morning as well. I'm not exactly sure what the minister is doing. He was given a clear order a week ago by you, Mr. Speaker. He knows what he's doing is wrong. He knows he's been told to turn over the documents on the power plants. He knows that he's doing the Premier's dirty work right now. I don't know why he isn't turning the documents over now. It just doesn't make any sense.

He knows that the cost is being borne by families in Ontario on cancelling those two power plants. We want to get to the bottom of this. The people of Ontario want to get to the bottom of this. Sadly for the minister, he's become the sacrificial lamb for that floundering government over there. He's turning on a spit, and not doing what needs to be done.

Speaker, can the minister tell the House when he's going to stand up to the Premier, when he's going to do the honourable thing and when he's going to turn those documents over? He should do it today.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the premise of the member's question is quite simply wrong. You made a ruling a week ago. In that ruling you quoted Speaker Milliken, and I think it sums up your ruling in an excellent way. It says: "It seems to me, that the issue before us is this: Is it possible to put into place a mechanism by which these documents could be made available to the House without compromising the security and confidentiality of the information they contain? In other words, is it possible for the two sides, working together in the best interests of the Canadians they serve, to devise a means where both their concerns are met?"

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I'm disgusted with this line of questioning. You have asked for co-operation between the three House leaders, and I would hope that the Progressive Conservative Party would come to those discussions with the spirit of co-operation and openness that you have asked for.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Speaker, it's quite clear from where I sit that the people of Ontario are disgusted with this government—their arrogance when it comes to this issue.

You made a clear ruling that they should turn over the documents. Why are they stalling? Why are they waiting? What's in those documents that they don't want the people of Ontario to see?

This member over here, Rob Leone—his privilege was breached by the Minister of Energy; that was quite clear in your ruling last week. Why is the Minister of Energy not complying with this? Why is he falling on the sword for the Premier? Why is he carrying the load for the economic development minister who made all these mistakes two, three years ago? Why is Minister of Energy Bentley having to fall for this?

It doesn't make any sense to me, Minister. You're above this. Why don't you turn over those documents today and do what's right for yourself and for the people of Ontario?

Interjections.

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

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The member's theatrics don't make what he's saying any more accurate. The simple fact of the matter is that the documents will be released. We have made that clear.

At the same time, the Auditor General of Ontario, an officer of this Legislature; you, Mr. Speaker, in your ruling; and opposition members in their discussions have certainly identified the fact that this is a complex situation and there are a number of competing interests. The question that we have right now is: How can we balance those interests to protect the interests of taxpayers, at the same time balancing them with the interests of the committee?

They are the discussions that we're undergoing right now, Mr. Speaker. We had about a two-hour meeting last night between House leaders. I look forward to further discussions this afternoon, and I would hope that all opposition members will stand behind their House leaders as we find a co-operative way to address this situation.

FAMILY HEALTH TEAMS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question? The member from—Algoma—Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and since you had problems identifying me, I had problems identifying you this morning.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's about time we smile in here a bit.

My question is to the Minister of Health. In my riding of Algoma—Manitoulin, the Manitoulin Central Family Health Team in the town of Mindemoya—does anybody know where that is?—is working out of trailers and cramped spaces in the basement of their local hospital.

After two years working on the capital expansion plan, and despite the best efforts of local stakeholders, the family health team has no response to their plan. So the hardship continues—working out of those trailers and cramped spaces.

1130

Can the minister let my constituents know when this important project will finally be approved?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Algoma–Manitoulin for raising this issue. We know how important family health teams are, Speaker; that's why we've created 200 of them.

The people of Mindemoya deserve access to the best possible care. The staff at the family health team—the doctors and the other professionals there—also deserve to work in a building that reflects the importance of what they do.

I will undertake to take a look at this application and see where we are with it. Thanks again to the member for raising the issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Minister, for that response. The constituents from Manitoulin will look forward to getting that response going forward.

However, the patients of this family health team include some of the sickest and most vulnerable in Ontario, including many from First Nations, and there are many on Manitoulin Island. The minister can talk a good game about the importance of family health teams and health equity, but she needs to follow up this talk with action to help those that are most in need.

Will the minister do the right thing and accept the capital expansion plan or at least explain what barriers are preventing her from supporting it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as I said in the answer, I am more than happy to undertake to find out what's happening in Mindemoya to the family health team there.

Family health teams are a very important innovation in primary care in this province. I'm very happy to see the members opposite—in fact, I would say that members from all sides of this House have approached me at various times looking for the creation of family health teams or expansion of family health teams because we know that they provide excellent care. They're interdisciplinary teams, Speaker. They include nurses and nurse practitioners, social workers, dietitians and a range of health care professionals who provide holistic care for people in a way that I can say both patients and providers celebrate.

Thank you to the member, and I will undertake to look into this question.

YOUTH SERVICES

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. There are many issues facing this House and certainly Ontario.

One of the most significant ones in my riding, and I suspect in all ridings, is the issue of youth unemployment, youth violence and what it is we're going to be able to do to expand some of the programs we've put in place. It's interesting: One of the barriers, believe it or not, in my riding is a postal code. Because of a postal code, which averages out the income base in my riding, youth cannot access particular programs.

But I know the minister has put in place some really good programs. I know he's looking at how he can expand those programs, and I think it's something that all of us will be able to benefit from, in terms of what's accessible next year for our communities.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I thank the member for Etobicoke Centre for this very important question.

I'd like to take the opportunity to talk about a fantastic program that my ministry supports, which is the youth in policing initiative. It was referenced and in fact expanded in the recently announced government youth action plan responding to the unfortunate violence we saw in this city this past summer. This program creates employment opportunities for youth in priority neighbourhoods, while also importantly strengthening relationships between youth and police.

It's not only the YIPI program, the youth in policing program, we've expanded. The summer jobs program for our young people is also part of the foundation of our youth action plan. We're expanding 270 new after-school jobs each year throughout the school year in communities across Ontario, and also 440 new jobs through our summer jobs for youth program, which is very successful. I know a lot of the members throughout this House, including the opposition, appreciate the work of the government that's providing support for students through summer jobs. That's 710 new jobs right there.

There's much more to be done, of course, but this is important work for the young people in our province.

VISITOR

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I was remiss in not introducing one more guest I have. He is the co-owner of Khao San Road, ranked one of the best Thai restaurants here in Toronto. I'd like to welcome Montgomery Wan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not a point of order, but we always welcome our guests.

The member from Simcoe–Grey on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. My point of order isn't as tasty, but it's very important. I seek unanimous consent to move a motion to have the Legislature restrike its standing committees.

Interjections.

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

Unanimous consent has been asked. Do I hear unanimous consent for the striking? I heard a no.

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

The House recessed from 1136 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees: It gives me great pleasure to welcome members of the Armenian community who are here today to celebrate Armenian Independence Day. Specifically in the west members' gallery, I want to welcome Father Gomidas Pandssian, Lorig Barboushian, Vartan Kargotsian, Hratch Melconian, Sam Manougian, Sevan Manougian—my constituents—Michael Boghosian and Greg Chitilian.

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

Mr. Michael Coteau: It gives me great pleasure today to introduce Harout Manougian, who is the trustee from my beautiful riding of Don Valley East. Welcome to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

Ms. Soo Wong: I, too, want to welcome special guests to the Legislature today, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce Raffi Sarkissian, Daron Keskinian, Razmig Tchakmakian, Vahan Ajamian, Varant Marsim, Krikor Shahinian, Hratch Aynedjian, Levon Poladian, Mark Atikian and Vartan Kargotsian. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Michael Harris: It's my pleasure as well to introduce the folks from the Armenian National Committee of Toronto. Welcome to Queen's Park, and congratulations again on the 21st anniversary of Armenian Independence Day.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ARMENIAN COMMUNITY

Mr. Michael Harris: Twenty-one years ago, Armenians went to the ballot box to decide whether to establish their own republic. They voted overwhelmingly in favour of independence and freedom, giving their families and future generations the hope and possibility of a better life.

With its ancient history and culture—the first country in the world to adopt Christianity as its religion—Armenia today is proudly free of the remnants of the former Soviet empire.

Now, from the crossroads of Eastern Europe and western Asia, Armenia is pursuing its destiny among a community of nations as a multi-party democratic country. Over the last two decades, the international community has seen Armenia make huge strides toward prosperity, thanks to the efforts of its citizens.

Here in Ontario, we have a strong and growing community of Armenian Canadians, and I know your hearts swell with pride when you look at the achievements of your families, friends and loved ones back home.

But there are still real challenges that the Armenian community is facing at home. In fact, just on August 31, Azerbaijani military officer Ramil Safarov was transferred from Hungary to Azerbaijan to serve what was supposed to be a life prison sentence for a brutal murder of an Armenian military officer in 2004. Instead, upon

his return home, he was pardoned and released. These developments are a real concern to Armenian Canadians, who want peace to be maintained back home. This murder should be condemned, not rewarded.

I stand here today to support Armenian Canadians as they continue their fight for peace in their homeland.

ARMENIAN COMMUNITY

Mr. Michael Prue: I, too, rise to salute the Armenian community as they come here today to celebrate the 21st anniversary of independence from the Soviet Union.

Armenia, as has been said, has a very long and ancient history going back, and you can find references throughout the New Testament in the Bible.

Armenians also suffered genocide during 1915 and the following years, and a diaspora occurred around the world. To Ontario's everlasting credit, people like Sir Henry Pellatt and Archbishop McNeil helped to bring orphaned Armenian youth from Armenia to Ontario. They became known as the Georgetown Boys, and they prospered very hugely in this country. But in prospering, they never forgot their Armenian roots, they never forgot the people who helped them to come here and they never forgot the atrocities that had happened to them and to their families.

Every year, it has been my honour to attend the remembrance, and I must say that it is a very dignified remembrance of those years. We, as the Ontario government and the people in Canada, must never forget that as well.

But today, we are here to celebrate the accomplishments of the Armenian community in Ontario and the accomplishments of the Armenian diaspora around the world and of those people still in Armenia. I wish them all the best, both in their ancestral home and here, because this is a truly unique and powerful culture of which they ought to be very proud.

ARMENIAN COMMUNITY

Ms. Soo Wong: Today I stand in this House to extend greetings to all Armenians in Ontario celebrating Armenian Independence Day. After over 70 years of Soviet rule, Armenia became an independent state on September 21, 1991.

While Armenians may be a young nation, they have much to be proud about. In its brief existence, the country has experienced economic growth. New sectors, such as precious stone processing, jewellery making, information and communications technology, and tourism have begun to supplement more traditional sectors such as agriculture in the economy. In addition, the monasteries of Haghpat and Sanahin and the water resorts of Lake Sevan continue to be a beautiful attraction for tourists.

The first wave of Armenian migration to Canada arrived in the late 1980s and helped with the vital role in building our great country. Today, Armenian Canadians

contribute to the cultural diversity of Canada and to this great province of Ontario.

Ontario is a proud collection of different histories, traditions, languages and beliefs. As a province, we draw strength from our diversity.

Armenian Independence Day allows us to celebrate the invaluable contributions that the Armenian-Canadian community has made to our province and to this country. On behalf of our government and the residents of Scarborough–Agincourt, I would like to send my best wishes, as Armenians in Ontario celebrate their important occasion.

INNISFIL CELTIC FESTIVAL

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from York South.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Last weekend, I was pleased to join with friends and constituents at the Innisfil Celtic Festival, billed as “Bagpipes by the Water on Beautiful Lake Simcoe.” Residents and visitors enjoyed a fun day of music, culture and sport, including musical performances, dancing, a strong man competition and an Ireland-versus-Scotland soccer game.

It helps remind us how much Ontario owes to its settlers from Celtic countries that helped create our province out of the wilderness. Millions of people today are descended from immigrants from Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and the Celtic festival is a great way to celebrate their contributions.

We were honoured by the presence at the festival of Irish Ambassador Ray Bassett and his wife, Patricia, who came to give their greetings and who spoke about the important ties between Canada and Ireland and other Celtic countries. I know that a great time was had by all.

Thanks go out to all the organizers, volunteers, performers and sponsors providing Innisfil such an enjoyable and exciting day. I want to particularly thank festival chair Angie Chisholm for her outstanding commitment and for the dedication and hard work of her team. I look forward to next year’s festival. I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that Angie herself is of Italian descent. That shows you about multiculturalism in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I apologize. I think I said York South and not York–Simcoe, so the Speaker corrects his record and apologizes to the member.

TEACHERS

Mr. Jonah Schein: I grew up in a family of teachers, and I’ve always felt that September is like the start of new year: a time of new beginnings and possibilities.

My parents have both dedicated their lives to teaching and, like thousands of teachers across this province, they’ve worked hard to instill the value of learning, of reading, of writing, and of critical thinking to thousands of their students over many years.

1310

Like thousands of teachers in Ontario, teaching is a calling, a passion and a commitment to serve the community, and like thousands of teachers, my parents dedicated their lives to their work. In fact, they worked year-round, reading, thinking, planning in the classroom and outside their classrooms, to support the children and the parents in their schools.

And like the best teachers in Ontario, they went far beyond the three Rs. They taught their students about the world we live in and all of its challenges. They taught about fairness, about social justice, about environmental sustainability and about compassion.

Their former students are now the midwives, doctors, teachers, civil servants and community leaders who are making this a better city to live in.

I met with teachers in my riding this summer; they told me about the challenges their students face in their classrooms. They told me about the growing pressures on teachers and families and on children, and the impacts this has on our schools. They expressed their shock and concern, and their sense of betrayal too, that this government would create a new crisis in our schools and scapegoat teachers, just to serve their own political interests.

Most of all, they conveyed their love of teaching and their unwavering commitment to their students. I’d like to thank the many students and teachers in my life and in this province for the work that they do. I’d like to congratulate my mom, who started her 47th school year this year in September, continuing her passion for teaching by teaching future educators at Ryerson. And I’d like to wish the teachers, students and families of Davenport a very happy new school year.

CONDOMINIUM LEGISLATION

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I rise in the House today to talk about a wonderful event that took place in my riding yesterday. I held a town hall and information session on the review of the Condominium Act.

For me, this story began when somebody like Hanna walked into my office one day with a laundry list of issues she was having with her condo board, and as much as I tried to help, I quickly realized there wasn’t much I could do as an MPP to interfere in an individual case. Hanna was followed by Michael, Michael was followed by Stepan—and the list continues.

That’s when I quickly realized that while as an MPP I could not interfere in the details of a particular case, as a legislator perhaps I could do something to help improve the Condominium Act that governs the lives of so many condo dwellers.

That was back in the spring, when I first approached the Ministry of Consumer Services with my idea for a private member’s motion which spoke to the idea of an alternative dispute resolution system for people in the condo community.

From there to a town hall that was co-hosted by the Ministry of Consumer Services in late summer—so I first

broached it in late spring, and by late summer we were already hosting a town hall. That to me, in the world of government time, is like a New York minute. I was very, very pleased that the Minister of Consumer Services, Margaret Best, has taken on this case to go beyond what I had originally started with, which was fairly narrow in scope, speaking only to resolution of disputes, and is going to do an entire overview of the act.

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION

Ms. Laurie Scott: September 16 to 22 has been proclaimed Legion Week by the Ontario command of the Royal Canadian Legion. As my friend Al Mayo reminds me, the Royal Canadian Legion is one of the largest community service organizations in Canada.

In my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, we are fortunate to have 16 Legion branches, some going back as far as 80 years. Although best known for their annual Remembrance Day ceremonies and support for veterans and their families, Legion branches are active contributors to their community.

Last Saturday, a celebration was held to mark a special day for my youngest branch. In Minden, members of Branch 636 gathered to mark its 25th anniversary. I was pleased to sit beside Mabel Hewitt Brannigan, who was not only a founding member, but who helped the Legion secure its present location.

In a speech given in 1988, founding President Tony Samarilo said, “When you are ... starting up a Legion branch with fresh people, who have never been members before, who know very well that they will be loaded with work, at no salary, then we know that deep in the hearts of such men and women is the memory of those who gave the supreme sacrifice, and by building a new Legion, in a township that has never had one before, their sacred memory is further strengthened. Their memory gives us all the drive to do good deeds for our Minden-area community....”

He went on to say that the branch would be forever grateful for the financial and moral assistance rendered by other neighbouring Legion branches—true comradeship in action.

The branch has donated \$200,000 to local organizations, and I wish President Thelma Lee and Ladies’ Auxiliary President Debbie Fisher continued success for their ongoing activities.

ITALIAN WALK OF FAME

Mr. Mario Sergio: On Friday, September 21, 2012, the fourth annual Italian Walk of Fame will be taking place in our city of Toronto, more specifically in Little Italy, la piccola Italia.

The Italian Walk of Fame will recognize four distinguished individuals of Italian origin who through their work, each in their own particular field, have made a remarkable contribution to our community, receiving accolades and recognition worldwide.

This year’s honourees are: Carlo Baldassarra, co-founder of Greenpark Homes; Maria Grazia Cucinotta, the award-winning international actress of *Il Postino*, or *The Postman*; Joe Pantoliano, the Emmy Award-winning actor from *The Sopranos*; and Beverly D’Angelo, a Golden Globe nominee for her role in *Coal Miner’s Daughter*.

The honourees, with their talent, vision and diligent work ethic, have enriched our lives at home and abroad. These individuals have manifested deep passion and professionalism in their work, and continue to practise and carry on with pride their love for their Italian heritage.

On behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to the inductees and to the organizers of the fourth annual Italian Walk of Fame.

SAM YOUNG

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I’m pleased to rise today and highlight a Diamond Jubilee recipient from my riding of Dufferin–Caledon. It is a privilege to be asked to nominate deserving members of our community for Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medals.

Sam Young is one of those deserving Canadians. As the owner of the Shelburne Golf and Country Club, Sam is a respected community businessman. As an accomplished coach, instructor and mentor of junior golfers, Sam has won many accolades for his teaching and coaching skills from the Canadian Professional Golfers’ Association, not the least of which was being inducted to their hall of fame last year.

Moreover, Sam dedicates himself to his community by generously supporting many local organizations. He has coached minor hockey and served on a number of local community committees, including the Shelburne economic development committee, the Orangeville and district small business enterprise board and the Group of Six productions at Grace Tipling Hall.

Sam is a member of the Ontario junior golf tour championship and a retired golf pro. He’s very active on many golf association boards and committees, including serving as tournament director for the Pepsi Titleist Junior Golf Tour.

Sam supports and donates to Hospice Dufferin as well as Big Brothers Big Sisters of Dufferin, and he also joined the local White Ribbon Campaign, aimed at bringing an end to violence against women.

For more than 50 years, Sam has been a generous community supporter and an outstanding business leader. He has served as a role model for both his students as well as our community, and I am proud of his many accomplishments.

Speaker, I would ask that you join me in congratulating Sam Young on receiving a well-deserved Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medal.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order?

Ms. Soo Wong: Yes, I do, Mr. Speaker. I just want to correct my record. In my remarks about Armenian Independence Day, I stated that immigration to Canada began in 1980. It should say “in 1880.” So I want to correct the record.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. You have the right. That’s a point of order, and you did correct your record.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

JAYESH’S LAW (WORKER SAFETY
AT SERVICE STATIONS), 2012LOI JAYESH DE 2012
SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES TRAVAILLEURS
DANS LES STATIONS-SERVICE

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 124, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to worker safety at service stations / Projet de loi 124, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui a trait à la sécurité des travailleurs dans les stations-service.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I’d also like to mention that Jayesh Prajapati, whom this bill is named after—his sister, Vipa Prajapati, is here; his brother-in-law, Hemant Kumar; and Jayesh’s young 11-year-old son, Rishabh Prajapati, is here for his dad.

Welcome to Queen’s Park.

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Mr. Speaker, this bill amends various acts with respect to workers’ safety at service stations and other places that sell fuel at retail. The Employment Standards Act, 2000, is amended to prohibit employers from penalizing employees if a fuel theft occurs while the employees are working. Secondly, the Highway Traffic Act is amended to provide that a person’s driver’s licence is suspended if the person is convicted of an offence involving the theft of fuel. Thirdly, the Occupational Health and Safety Act is amended to require employers who engage in the business of selling fuel at service stations and other places that sell fuel at retail to require customers to provide payment before they are given fuel. The act is also amended to require employers to provide training to employees involved in the sale of fuel at service stations and other places that sell fuel at retail.

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND
INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT
(PERMANENT PARTIAL DISABILITY
SUPPLEMENTS), 2012LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE
ET L’ASSURANCE CONTRE
LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL
(SUPPLÉMENT POUR INVALIDITÉ
PARTIELLE À CARACTÈRE PERMANENT)

Mr. Sergio moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 125, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to permanent partial disability supplements / Projet de loi 125, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l’assurance contre les accidents du travail en ce qui concerne le supplément pour invalidité partielle à caractère permanent.

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. Mario Sergio: The bill amends section 110 of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, so that any pension a worker is eligible for under the Old Age Security Act, Canada, does not reduce the worker’s permanent partial disability benefits for pre-1985 and pre-1989 injuries under the pre-1997 act.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSESOLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC
ATHLETES

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity.

Speaker, 170 athletes and supporters from Ontario represented Canada at the 2012 Summer Olympics and Paralympics in London. Events are being held to give Ontarians an opportunity to celebrate Canadian athletes. The celebration will culminate in Toronto with an athletes’ parade this Friday, September 21. I look forward to honouring our Ontario heroes. Each of them made us proud. Canadians watched as these incredible athletes brought their best to the biggest stage in sport. Regardless of their standing or rank or whether they won a medal or achieved a personal best, or whether they absorbed a heartbreaking setback and managed it with poise, dignity and grace, each has inspired us.

Mr. Speaker, at the Summer Olympics, Ontario athletes helped bring home eight of 18 Canadian medals. At the Summer Paralympics, Ontario athletes helped to win 12 of 31 medals.

At the Summer Olympics, our successes included: gymnast Rosie MacLennan claiming an Olympic gold on the trampoline; a silver-medal performance by Adam Van Koeverden in men's kayak, his fourth Olympic medal in three consecutive Olympic games; and the first-ever medal, a bronze, won by our women's soccer team, which includes several athletes from Ontario. In my humble opinion, they delivered a golden performance.

At the Paralympics, swimmer Summer Mortimer brought home four medals: two gold, one silver and one bronze. Multisport Paralympian Robbi Weldon claimed gold in cycling, and Ontario Paralympians captured four medals, one silver and three bronze, on the track. Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate each of our talented Ontario athletes who trained so hard and proudly represented us in London.

It is an exciting time to be a part of the amateur sports scene in Canada. Our government, the McGuinty government, is committed to working with our partners to build an amateur sports system across the province. Our investment in programs like Quest for Gold helps Ontario athletes to excel, providing athletes with direct financial assistance, enhanced coaching and training, and more competition opportunities. The program has already benefited 8,000 athletes since 2006 and we are certainly seeing the results: 79% of our Olympians and 90% of our Paralympians were Quest for Gold recipients.

We've also been working with our federal partners through programs like Own the Podium, designed to help Canadian athletes reach the podium and improve our standing in events like the Olympics and Paralympics.

We are working to provide our athletes with the best possible chances of success at the 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games right here in the Toronto area. In addition to the economic benefits the games will bring, the investment in infrastructure will provide a legacy of world-class facilities, facilities where our amateur athletes can train and compete, and which will also provide Ontarians with access to improved community facilities. The 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games will also unite Canadians in our appreciation for sport and in celebrating the performances of Canadian athletes.

Mr. Speaker, supporting high-performance athletes is a priority for this government. Our athletes are amazing role models who inspire pride among us all. Through their pursuit of athletic excellence, they have demonstrated that they are all champions. I hope everyone will join me in offering congratulations to all of our Olympians and Paralympians. Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ministry statements?

It is now time for responses.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's an honour this afternoon to respond and to speak about the great accomplishments that our Olympic and Paralympic athletes have achieved in London in the 2012 Olympic Summer Games. Team Canada has an exceptionally dynamic group of athletes, with 281 Olympians and 157 Paralympians competing in 37 different sports. Our Canadian athletes showed a great

deal of courage and determination, bringing home 18 Olympic medals and 31 Paralympic medals.

It's also significant to point out the strong contingent of athletes who represented Ontario at the games. Ontario's Olympians brought home eight of our 18 medals, while Ontario's Paralympians brought home 12 of Canada's 31 total medals.

Canadian Olympic athletes do much more than just entertain us with their athletic abilities; they inspire and engage us to be the best that we can be. They instill the qualities needed to be a leader and they energize our youth to achieve their goals and dreams. You couldn't help but feel the energy from London in 2012, an energy that has stayed alive and strong since Vancouver 2010.

Every athlete goes to the Olympic Games with a drive to win. However, it is also important to remember the essence of what the Olympics are and how it contributes and enriches the society and cultural aspects of our society. I believe the best way to convey that is through the Olympic creed, which reads, "The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not about triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well." The Olympic Games give us the chance to celebrate our shared humanity, and the object of the competitors should be to express this humanity by performing fairly and honestly to the best of their natural abilities.

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The Olympic spirit can be seen in all those who compete in the games, not just in those who win the medals. This spirit can be seen in athletes from across the world, who come together to develop their skills and gain experience. These athletes go to the Olympic Games not only for the love of their sport but for the love of their country. This is what the Olympic Games are really all about, and some might say it is what life is really all about as well.

Mr. Speaker, our Olympic athletes just finished their visit to Parliament Hill yesterday, and I think Prime Minister Harper said it well: Canadians have been captivated by the exceptional performances of our athletes. I couldn't agree more. For 31 days, the world watched as Canada fought hard, played tough and showed great poise, representing Canada on the world stage with great vigour and pride. Our athletes truly showed the world what it means to be Canadian.

It gives me great pleasure, on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and our entire PC caucus, to congratulate all of our Olympic and Paralympic athletes for their tremendous accomplishments at the London 2012 games. You have truly made us all proud.

Mr. Paul Miller: It gives me great pleasure to respond to the minister's statement about Olympic and Paralympic athletes and to welcome them to the Legislature today. On behalf of Andrea Horwath and the New Democratic Party of Ontario, I want to thank and congratulate each of the participants in these games. You did us proud this summer.

Not only thanks to the athletes but to the dedication of their families, their coaches and their friends. It is truly inspiring to see these athletes who are able to be in the Legislature today, especially in an Olympic/Paralympic year. What a wonderful high for everyone involved.

The dedication and years of training for those few moments of maximum competition, maximum physical effort, cannot be fully appreciated by those who have not gone through it. But we can recognize the sacrifice, the training and the commitment to being the best possible and to putting oneself on the international stage, out there for public scrutiny and comment. When I think of how tired I am after a hard-hitting fast game of hockey, I can't imagine the utter exhaustion of international-calibre athletes, and then add to that the extra effort of the Paralympic athletes. We are truly humbled.

I know that there are many programs to support athletes in this province, but I believe we could be doing better. The Quest for Gold program has certainly supported many of our athletes, but does it garner the maximum support that each of them deserves? It has brought in about \$6 million a year since its inception in 2006, including an infusion of \$10 million in the 2009-10 budget year. The problem with the Quest for Gold program is that it is a gambling initiative, not embraced by all Ontarians. It suffers the vagaries of the economy. So when we're feeling flush, we'll buy more lottery tickets, but when the economy is in a downturn, it's likely that fewer lottery tickets will be bought, so less money for the program.

It seems to me that there should be a more long-term, sustainable program that is less dependent on immediate economic fluctuations. How are we providing for those athletes working their way up through the ranks, through various competitive levels, to compete in the Ontario Summer Games and all the events that ultimately lead them to the Pan/Parapan Am Games and the Olympics and Paralympics?

We should be working with athletic associations to find out what they recommend to sustain support for long-term training requirements and, ultimately, competitive successes. We have only three years until the Pan/Parapan Am Games in 2015, and I would like to see Ontario establish a well-funded, sustainable program to support athletic excellence.

Although many sports are dependent on only one athlete's efforts, others require the physical excellence, ability to work in unison and trust that each team member can pull their weight, something that I would find to be even more demanding than the absolute concentration of the solo athlete.

When we think about these athletes starting out when they were quite young, having to perfect their sport as well as do their school work, develop their social network and grow up, we're more in awe of their achievements. Add to this the scant financial support available at the early levels to provide for competitive level athletes, and we realize even more how dedicated they and their families are to athletic excellence.

As we move toward the next big summer competition, the Pan/Parapan Am Games here in the GTA, we must enhance the programs we currently have in place and look for more ways to encourage government and private sector support of our dedicated athletes.

I know that our athletes aren't here to listen to politicians but to be celebrated by us for their dedication, their focus and their commitment to being the best they can and to making our province and our country proud of their efforts. Again, I thank and congratulate you for achieving the level of performance that you did in the London Games this summer. I want to wish each of you the best in the future, whether it's continued athletics or another path. You deserve the best that life can offer.

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

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to read a petition from my constituents of the riding of Durham. These are signed by Frank Agueci, Rob McJannett, Robert Purdy and Peter Barber, who have worked hard to bring this issue to my attention. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

I'm pleased that the Minister of the Environment is here to hear this. I present it to Mathilde, one of the pages.

CYCLING

Mr. Jonah Schein: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 25% of Ontario adults regularly cycle and over 50% of children cycle either daily or weekly;

“Whereas a cycling fatality occurs every month in Ontario and thousands of cyclists are injured each month;

“Whereas Ontario is lagging behind provinces like British Columbia and Quebec that have invested \$31 million and \$200 million respectively in cycling infrastructure;

“Whereas investing in cycling infrastructure in Ontario will create jobs and benefit the economy, reduce traffic congestion and pollution, protect those sharing the road, and encourage active transportation;

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

“That the province of Ontario release a comprehensive cycling strategy for Ontario that includes dedicated funding to match municipal investments in cycling infrastructure, education initiatives to raise awareness about the rights and responsibilities of all road users, and a review and update of provincial legislation including the Highway Traffic Act and the Planning Act to ensure roadways are safe for all users;

“That the strategy set provincial targets and timelines for increasing the number of people who commute by bike and cycle recreationally.”

I agree with this petition and I’ll give it to page Leo to bring it forward.

RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have a petition signed by over 20 people.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are risks inherent in the use of ionizing, magnetic and other radiation in medical diagnostic and radiation therapy procedures; and

“Whereas the main piece of legislation governing these activities, the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (HARPA), dates from the 1980s; and

“Whereas neither the legislation nor the regulations established under the act have kept pace with the explosion in imaging examinations, including image-guided procedures used in cardiology, radiation therapy, ultrasound, orthopaedics etc.;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care establish, as soon as possible, a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act to bring it up to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and covers all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes.”

I fully agree with these petitions, I sign them and pass them on to Sydney.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government’s plan to cut more than \$1 billion in medical funding will impact my doctor’s ability to provide care for me and my family and is a serious risk to health care in our community and across the province,

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

“Reverse the recent unilateral cuts to medical funding and negotiate in good faith with doctors for an agreement that will protect Ontario health care.”

I agree with this, sign my name and give it to page Katherine.

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OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

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

“Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints against children’s aid societies; and

“Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate complaints against children’s aid societies; and

“Whereas people who feel they have been wronged by the actions of children’s aid societies are left feeling helpless with nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate children’s aid societies.”

I agree with this petition, I’ll be signing my name to it and sending it with page Simran.

POWER PLANT

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

“Whereas the government of Ontario halted construction and cancelled a project to build an electrical generating station in Mississauga in the autumn of 2011, during an election period, after construction was well under way; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario has paid out \$190 million in penalties and costs to those under contract for the construction of this project; and

“Whereas Minister of Energy Chris Bentley has stated publicly that the Ontario Liberal Party campaign team made the decision to halt construction and cancel the project; and

“Whereas Minister Bentley has acknowledged that this action was taken to help win the seats of five existing Liberal Party members of the Legislature, including seats in Oakville, Mississauga and Etobicoke;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as tax- and ratepayers of Ontario to insist that the government of Ontario seek reparations and demand repayment from the Ontario Liberal Party to

refund all monies into the Ontario general revenue fund for all monies paid for the cancellation of the power plant in Mississauga, for what was ostensibly a Liberal seat-saver program and thus an election expense to retain the seats in the 2011 general election.”

I agree with this petition, I'll sign it and pass it to my page, Caelius.

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 the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

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

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

“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, and neither could all of my constituents. I give it to Ethan to be delivered to the table and I'm going to sign my name. Thanks.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government's ongoing investment in the RVHS Ajax and Pickering hospital has created an outstanding community health care delivery system; and

“Whereas the Rouge Valley Health System Ajax-Pickering hospital's 10-year vision plan (as read in the Legislature by MPP Dickson) will be instrumental in ensuring the ongoing needs of the increasing population are met;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, sign this petition addressed the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and ask that the government of Ontario continue to invest in this family-friendly Ajax-Pickering hospital.”

I will attach my name to it. I thank you, and I will pass it to page Jenna.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt;

“Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the sensitive areas of the greenbelt and Oak Ridges moraine;

“Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permitting process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries;

“Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to protect our water and prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt.”

As I am in agreement, I have affixed my signature and give it to page Christina.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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

“Whereas the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission provides services which are vital to the north's economy; and

“Whereas it is a lifeline for the residents of northern communities who have no other source of public transportation; and

“Whereas the ONTC could be a vital link to the Ring of Fire;

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

“That the planned cancellation of the Northlander and the sale of the rest of the assets of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission be halted immediately.”

I fully agree, sign my signature and send it with page Jasper.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Auditor General confirmed that no comprehensive evaluation was completed by the McGuinty government on the impact of the billion-dollar commitment of renewable energy on such things as net job losses and future energy prices, which will increase over 46% over the next five years; and

“Whereas poor decisions by the McGuinty government, such as the Green Energy Act, where Ontario pays

up to 80 cents per kilowatt hour for electricity it doesn't need and then must pay our neighbours to take it for free, and the billion-dollar cost of the seat-saving cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas power plants, have contributed to making the cost of Ontario power the highest in North America; and

"Whereas there has been no third party study to look at the health, physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of wind turbines; and

"Whereas Ontario's largest farm organizations, 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

"Whereas the McGuinty government has removed all decision-making powers from the local municipal governments when it comes to the location and size of industrial wind and solar farms;

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

"That the Liberal government support the MPP from Huron-Bruce 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 will be passing it to page Leo.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

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

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

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

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

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

"Whereas the Ontario government's plan to cut more than \$1 billion in medical funding will impact my

doctor's ability to provide care for me and my family, and is a serious risk to health care in our community and across the province,

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

"Reverse the recent unilateral cuts to medical funding, and negotiate in good faith with doctors for an agreement that will protect Ontario health care."

I support this and sign my name.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

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

"Whereas the legislated cuts to the funding for ophthalmology diagnostic tests are up to 80%;

"Whereas these cuts were implemented without consulting physicians about the impact such cuts will have on the health care of patients;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to protect the ophthalmology services and consult with the physicians before making cuts to our health care."

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and send it with page Jasper.

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RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) is in serious need of modernization;

"Whereas the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) is not in harmony with all the following acts, regulations, guidelines and codes: the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario, the radiation protection regulations of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, the safety codes of Health Canada and the radiation protection guidelines of the International Commission on Radiological Protection;

"Whereas dental hygienists need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

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

"To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by Reza Moridi, the member from Richmond Hill, that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations, make recommendations on how to modernize this act, and bring it to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes."

I agree with this petition, Mr. Speaker. I sign it and pass it to page Roberto.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

**WATER TESTING
ANALYSE D'EAU**

Mr. Grant Crack: I move that, in the opinion of this House, non-profit organizations serviced by private wells or other private water services should receive potable water testing services at no charge from local public health units and public health laboratories, in the same manner as rural homeowners currently receive water testing services.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Crack has moved private member's notice of motion number 28. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to start by acknowledging the fact that my mother and father, Wayne and Sylvia Crack, are watching at home this afternoon. I'd like to thank them for the continued support that they've given me. I feel privileged to have them in my life.

Good afternoon, colleagues. I'm very pleased to be able to stand here today in this historic Legislative Assembly to introduce my private member's resolution.

I want to begin by saying that as a relatively new member of provincial Parliament, with almost one full year of experience, I'm honoured to be able to serve the people of Ontario. I take this opportunity to once again thank the good people of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for having the confidence in me to represent their interests here at Queen's Park. As I've mentioned a number of times in this House previously, I had the privilege to serve as a local mayor, first of Alexandria and then of North Glengarry, for 11 years. It's this experience in public office—I'm confident I can bring an important perspective to policy-making in government here that represents the needs of rural Ontario.

Speaker, Ontario's strong foundation is built on its people. This foundation is built on many successes of hard-working people, over centuries, who have contributed in so many different ways to give us the quality of life that we enjoy each and every day. That is why I'm introducing my following motion, and I humbly request that all my colleagues in this House support it to move it forward.

I will read it again, Speaker. I move that, in the opinion of this House, non-profit organizations serviced by private wells or other private water services should receive potable water testing services at no charge from local public health units and public health laboratories, in the same manner as rural homeowners currently receive water testing services.

In Ontario, we have many, many non-profit organizations that do great work in our communities, and this motion is one way of supporting their great work and their accomplishments. The cost associated with water testing in rural Ontario was brought to my attention by members of a number of community organizations, non-profit organizations, in my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, but more specifically in the Cumberland area east of Ottawa. I'd like to thank this opportunity to thank Ross Shorthill of St. Andrew's United Church for spearheading this campaign, and also to acknowledge Frank Shultz of St. Mark's Anglican Church; Gordon Kerluke of the Cumberland Lions Club; Ned Lathrop of St. Margaret Mary Catholic Church; Waseem Mehmoud and Imtiaz Ahmed of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Centre; Norm Girard of the Cumberland Curling Club; and Rebecca Dufton of the Cumberland Community Association. Together, they brought this issue to the forefront.

Speaker, these community leaders, these hard-working volunteers, devote their time and efforts, and whatever resources they have and generate are invested back into our communities to improve the lives of the people they touch, yet they never ask for anything in return. That's why I'm proud to support their efforts here today in the House.

As I've noted in my letter to all my colleagues in this Legislature, in Ontario we are blessed with an abundant source of fresh water. Our great province borders on four of the five Great Lakes, and we have more than a quarter-million lakes, rivers, streams and groundwater resources. This natural wealth is a blessing and is the basis of our prosperity, growth and quality of life, and it's essential to our health and to our daily lives. Ontarians rely on clean, safe drinking water whether at home, at our places of worship and throughout our communities. We use water for personal use, recreation, farming and so much more. But with this great wealth comes responsibility, and all Ontarians have a role to play in protecting our fresh water.

Speaker, since the tragedy in Walkerton, without question, Ontario's drinking water meets strict standards, and the high levels of performance of our drinking water systems are continually improving. This is the commitment of our government. Protecting water at its source is the first step in ensuring every Ontarian has safe drinking water. Our government, over the course of the past nine years, has taken this endeavour very seriously. For example, we implemented the Clean Water Act, which helps protect drinking water from the source to tap with a multi-barrier approach that stops contaminants from entering sources of drinking water: lakes, rivers and aquifers.

More specifically, as an example of how thorough our government is about clean drinking water, rural Ontarians, and specifically those residences which are serviced by private wells and other private water sources, receive drinking water sampling or testing at no charge through the provincial laboratories operated by the Ontario public

health units. This service, at this time, does not extend to non-profit organizations that use facilities such as churches, community halls and community centres. Free water testing services assist homeowners by monitoring the safety of their drinking water quality and enable residents to work closely with local health units to address any potential issues that are identified.

The frequency of sampling and testing of drinking water and the associated cost vary among small drinking water systems and depend on local assessments done by local health units and the complexity of each individual system. In many cases, non-profit organizations in rural areas are required to pay upwards of \$240 per year. That's \$60 quarterly for water testing. This is a significant financial burden for these community organizations.

I'd just like to provide members of this assembly with the technical definition of a non-profit organization or a corporation. It's as follows: "A not-for-profit corporation carries on its activities without the purpose of" pecuniary "gain for its members. It is incorporated under the Corporations Act as a corporation that doesn't issue shares. It must have not-for-profit purposes, and use any profits to promote those purposes. The most common types are: charitable (including religious organizations), social clubs, service clubs, sporting and athletic organizations, professional and trade associations, ratepayers' associations, and other community organizations."

The numbers go on and on, Speaker. Many of these non-profit organizations are located in rural areas of the province and serve the general public in a variety of ways. They include recreational service clubs like les clubs Richelieu, Lions Club, 4H clubs, Rotary Clubs and also religious groups which host events such as fundraisers, dances, breakfast, dinners and bake sales; that's just to name a few. These organizations provide much of the needed support mechanisms in rural Ontario and are critical to the health and wellness of our rural towns and villages. Of course, most non-profit organizations in small rural communities rely on donations and contributions to carry out the good work that they do.

1400

As rural residents know all too well, there is much more to clean, safe drinking water than routine and periodic laboratory testing, because we all know that water can be contaminated with biological organisms such as bacteria, parasites and viruses, with chemical agents such as nitrates and lead, and with a multitude of other toxins created by algae in surface water.

A well must be properly maintained in order to protect groundwater from contamination, and indeed, care of the entire private system, from water source to tap, must be checked and taken into account and consideration. Most certainly, preventable and routine maintenance is necessary: pumps, pipes, valves, storage tanks, reservoirs, meters and all fittings must be cared for. Sometimes chlorine must be used to disinfect water. On top of the testing fees, this also requires time and effort, and non-profit organizations must also cover the cost and maintenance of these well-water services.

Speaker, we all recognize the importance of affordable water quality testing in Ontario as safe, clean drinking water is vital. All Ontarians rely on clean drinking water. It's good for our health, our way of life and our future prosperity. Potable water testing is critical not just for private residents serviced by private wells or other private sources but is also critical to those non-profit organizations who carry out much of the crucial and necessary volunteer work in our rural Ontario communities, including some of the groups I mentioned earlier in my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Essentially, today my goal is to deliver this message to my colleagues here in the Ontario Legislature, as I'm doing today, and to assist our hard-working volunteers in our rural communities as they continue to do the great work that they do in making our rural communities vibrant and strong. As well, they improve the quality of life of all Ontarians.

As such, I'm requesting the support of this House in recognizing the intent of this resolution. Thank you for your consideration. I hope that all can support me in this endeavour.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to speak to the resolution from the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell as it gives me another opportunity to talk about an issue that's a bit of a sore spot with many churches, Legion branches and other non-profit organizations in my riding of Leeds–Grenville. I have to say, though, right off the top, that I'm very supportive of this resolution, and I'll use the word "supportive" because, while we can all agree that water testing can be a serious burden on our non-profit groups, the solution outlined in the resolution has to be approached with some bit of caution. That's why I wish it was actually a government initiative, so we could get it into committee—not that this government has any aptitude for creating committees so that we can actually get legislation in them and get it passed, but they are having difficulty managing the minority.

This does speak to the issue of cost, and I think, in the member's speech just a few moments ago and his letter to members of provincial Parliament, that question is not answered. I think it's a valid point to put on the record today because, let's face it: Given the McGuinty government record on finances, the last thing that we want to do is to add more costs to our non-profits, our churches and our Legions. In fact, it's this government's penchant for trying to solve every problem by spending money that has really put us on this course for a \$30-billion deficit.

That's really the only concern that I would have with the resolution. I'm worried that while we know public health labs have the equipment and expertise to do the testing, we just have to get that question answered about what it will cost taxpayers. But certainly, when it comes to the intention of the motion to alleviate the burden of testing from the backs of places—in my riding, like that of the Toledo Legion—I'm firmly behind it.

I've talked about Toledo Legion Branch 475 in the past in this House. The president, Greg Williams, was

probably the first person in my riding to bring this issue to my attention. I've had a number of other people. The member opposite mentioned some churches. I also want to mention Chris Morgan, who's the secretary of the Seaway Valley Presbytery. I've submitted petitions to the member's issue in the past asking that regulation 319/08 be amended to allow non-profits and churches to be exempt from water testing, so I've been on the record.

But back to Legion Branch 475, because I think it's important to put it in perspective. They're a very small branch. They were pretty upset when the local health unit came knocking at the door, probably a little over a year ago, ordering them to start monthly testing. I can understand why they were upset. The Legion and the surrounding village boasted a 10-year track record of absolutely perfect water test results, and because those previous tests don't carry enough weight in the formula used to determine how often the tests are necessary, ultimately the health unit issued the order for them to do the monthly testing. For Branch 475, those monthly tests meant an additional \$720 per year, not including the expense of delivering the test samples to the private lab. I'm sure everyone can appreciate that for a small Legion branch, \$720, in this case, in a very small village, is not insignificant and could go a long way in improving the community and supporting a number of community initiatives had they not had to do that particular test.

So I support the motion by the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. I encourage him to talk to the folks that make the decisions over there to find out some of the costs. I truly believe that in his heart—I think he knows the government must step back before coming up with more red tape, more regulations, and appreciate how new rules will impact those people in rural Ontario in ridings like his or mine. No one wins when the government's actions, no matter how well intentioned, put the things we value most in our rural communities at risk.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to the motion, Speaker.

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

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm pleased to stand up and speak to this motion that will provide free water testing for rural non-profit organizations.

It's very important to ensure that we have safe drinking water across the province and that this safe drinking water and access to these tests are accessible. No one should be exposed to unsafe drinking water in the province. We learned our lesson in Walkerton. We learned a very tragic lesson about the importance of having clean, safe drinking water, and it exposed the deficiencies of legislation and showed that the province of Ontario has a greater role to play in ensuring safe drinking water.

Ontario is, as many of us know, a very diverse and vast geographic land mass. It's no secret that I live in northwestern Ontario. My riding alone is about 350,000 square kilometres. Consequently, there are many people who live in what the ministry terms TWMOs. We are townships without municipal organization, and it's im-

possible to provide the public services that are necessary, like safe drinking water or public drinking water, to people who live in these areas. I myself am only four kilometres outside of Dryden, but I have my own well and septic field.

I also have some experience with various—it's not just non-profit organizations that run up to these problems, that experience the financial limitations and maybe the inability to pay for regular tests. It's also some of the for-profit organizations and businesses. I know my family has a tourist camp up in Lac Seul, and they said it's very expensive because they have to send the samples and they are just over 100 kilometres outside of the nearest centre, so it's expensive and it's costly all the way around. If it's costly and prohibitive for businesses, I can only imagine how expensive and how difficult it is for some of our non-profit organizations.

1410

One non-profit organization that pops to mind when I think of my riding and home in Dryden is Second Chance Pet Network. They are an animal welfare organization that has sprung up in the last couple of years. They have undergone extensive fundraising through personal appeals to people in the community. They also participated in Pepsi's Refresh Everything Challenge, where they had two or three rounds of voting. Everyone in the community was voting for them—in fact, many people in our region were constantly voting for them—and they were successful in winning \$100,000. That has enabled them to buy a shelter—to build it from scratch. It's in an area that will be benefiting from this if this motion is passed. If we were to bring this forward, enact it and make it legislation, they would definitely welcome these changes.

There are some areas where this falls short. First of all, I'm concerned that this might be a form of downloading, that we might end up downloading these costs onto municipalities and public health units, which are already strapped for cash. But the big concern for me, in my riding, is with First Nations communities. In Ontario, we have whole communities that don't have access to safe drinking water, never mind the testing. They wouldn't be included in this motion, but they actually don't have the access.

So this is really a feel-good change. It's definitely a step in the right direction; I'm not going to dispute that. I do think there are many non-profit organizations that will benefit from this if it does go forward. But there is a gap; there's a real disconnect. You know, the member on the government side is concerned with making it easier to test water for some, which again is no doubt very important. But it's troubling that we still have entire communities in Ontario that lack this infrastructure and can't even have clean drinking water. There is a host of examples in my area.

Again, this is a step in the right direction. I would really like to see it passed, and I'd like to see us step up to the plate and do something to help some of these communities have access to the infrastructure that's needed. So I thank the member opposite for bringing this motion forward.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's a pleasure for me this afternoon to have an opportunity to get a few words on the record in support of my good friend the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and his resolution.

You know, he's a new member here—he arrived last October—and is certainly following in the great tradition of his predecessor, Jean-Marc Lalonde, who served Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for so many years in such a great way. Jean-Marc, like Mr. Crack, was one of those grassroots politicians, the kind of guy who spent a lot of time in Alexandria at the local diner, taking the opportunity to listen to what the grassroots were saying, particularly on this kind of issue.

It recalls another time—I know he's talked to the Women's Institutes in his area—and reflects an earlier time in Ontario when the Women's Institutes came together in the late 1930s and promoted the pasteurization of milk in the province of Ontario as part of an approach to eradicate polio, which was a great menace to many communities, particularly rural communities, in the 1930s. As a responsible government of the day, the Liberal government of the Honourable Mitchell Hepburn, who of course came from Elgin, Ontario, brought in the pasteurization of milk.

This is the same approach that the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell is taking today. He's talking to church groups, he's talking to the Women's Institute in Alexandria, Ontario, and to many of those wonderful communities in the eastern part of the province of Ontario to get their thinking in terms of how we might be able to assist them in water testing.

You know, when you chat with these individuals who are so involved with these groups, it reminds me: On Tuesday, I had the opportunity to visit many of the exhibits at the International Plowing Match in beautiful Roseville, Ontario. Although it was a bit wet, it didn't dampen the spirit and enthusiasm that were there, when you take the opportunity to visit those tents sponsored by the local churches—the United Church, the Anglican Church and the Catholic church—and the opportunity to sample. I love apple pie. I had the opportunity to grab a couple of pieces of homemade apple pie by those church groups.

What the member is reflecting here today in his resolution is about those church groups. They've approached the member. He listens carefully and, through that process, he has brought forward this resolution here today. In fact, in rural Ontario, we all know how dependent we are on these church groups that step up to the plate.

Last Saturday, I was at the opening of the Warsaw Fall Fair in the marvellous municipality of Douro-Dummer in the county of Peterborough. Again, the church groups were there, and I said, "You know what? My colleague from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell is going to be bringing forward a resolution this Thursday that I think will help your situation in terms of water testing." They said, "Thank goodness for the hard-working member from

Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, who's listening and bringing forward such a resolution." That's the kind of member he is. He listens carefully. He addresses situations and, indeed, has brought forward this resolution.

I sense today that he will get his support on all sides of the House, from the official opposition and, indeed, the third party. He has consulted widely with recreation groups, service clubs, the Lions Clubs and 4-H. This resolution needs to be passed, and I congratulate the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I will be brief because I know I have other colleagues who'd like to speak.

I will also be supporting this motion brought forward from the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. In my community, it will primarily impact rural churches and potentially some Legion buildings as well.

The reality is, we already have an infrastructure in place through the health units where the testing could happen. I think it's a small but important acknowledgment of the value of where we hold people who volunteer and give back to the community. Ultimately, those are the agencies, the organizations, the clubs, that are most impacted by the costs associated with this testing.

I'm happy to support it. I hope, in turn, when my private member's bill comes up about volunteerism and the removal of the cost of police record checks for volunteers, I will be looking to the other side for the same amount of support. So I'm happy to support it.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is a pleasure to add a few words to this conversation.

To start out with, this is the type of bill that may not apply to every part of Ontario, but it certainly applies to my riding a whole lot. More than half of the residents of my riding are on wells, so that means that the churches, the camps, all of those non-profit agencies—the Knights of Columbus own many buildings where the community holds functions; same thing with the Lions Clubs, which own their own buildings in two communities in my riding—all of them would fall under the act. It certainly would not make for hundreds of demands, but it would help for those dozen or so not-for-profit agencies that are on well water and that presently have to pay.

In my riding, there are, as I say, tens of thousands of people who depend on well water. Where I live, I don't have city water. We bring our water to the health unit, and the health unit does whatever it has to do. It gives us back our little paper saying, "Keep on drinking," and life goes on. But for the clubs that do own their own buildings—the same thing with the churches, the same thing with the summer camps—they have the same source water as we do, which is, they pump it from a river or a lake or they have their own well, and they have to pay. So it would certainly help them.

But I also want to look at the other side of the coin, the other side being: If they don't pay, who will?

1420

We are extremely fortunate in Sudbury with the Sudbury and District Health Unit. Dr. Penny Sutcliffe, who's the chief medical officer of health at Sudbury and District Health Unit, is a phenomenal person. She is extremely progressive, she truly understands what public health stands for, and she is a huge champion for health promotion. The health unit has many, many good ideas. They have a strategic plan, actually—they're working on it, but they have released part of their strategic plan, and they tell stories. They are also the health unit that put forward a video that has been seen around the globe. You go on their website and you can see that people from all continents have come and looked at this video that was made at the Sudbury and District Health Unit. It's on how to talk about health without ever talking about health care, and it has everything to do with the social determinants of health.

I'm telling you all of the good work that my health unit has to do—I call it “my” health unit because they serve all of my riding; they also serve the riding of Sudbury, but they serve all of my riding—because their action plan is impressive, their strategic plan is even more impressive, and, you guessed it, the amount of resources they have to carry those out doesn't always meet the needs.

Here comes this tiny little issue of cost now. We all know that part of what a health unit does is not funded by the Ministry of Health. Although it has to do 100% with public health and it has to do with health care, it is funded by the municipal taxpayer. It is funded by the municipality. Here again we are talking about a level of government that's often hurting for money. In Sudbury, the CAA puts out the worst-roads awards every year. I am not pleased to tell you that Sudbury ranks right up there. We usually have the top five, and if you look at the top 10, we will be mentioned there at least six times. The infrastructure needs of the city of Greater Sudbury are such that the amount of money it has does not meet those needs—in infrastructure, in social services, in a number of other areas.

I don't think we're talking about tens of thousands of dollars a year. It would be good—I will be supporting the bill. I should have said this from the start; sorry about that. I will be supporting the bill. I'm looking forward to the bill going to committee and I'm looking forward to hearing from the people who will be picking up the tab for the not-for-profits that now won't have to pay for those water tests, to have a better understanding as to where the final tab will stand at and who will be picking it up.

The idea is great. I wouldn't say that it is something that had never been brought to me before. The social clubs in my riding certainly come to me for all sorts of projects, and I try to help out and I try to find sources of funding and everything for them. This is not a request they have never made or that I had never heard before,

but that doesn't mean it's not a good idea. It's certainly something that is worth exploring and something that is worth sending for second reading so that the people who will get affected—and I'm guessing most of the health units in the north will get affected—can come and tell us if this constitutes a bit of financial hardship. And the same thing with the municipality, which may actually end up picking up the tab for that idea.

So, good idea. You will have our support. We want to send it to committee for second reading. That will give us the opportunity to find out the dollars and cents associated with that private member's bill. So, good idea, and you have our support.

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

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to be able to stand in support of my colleague from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Unfortunately, it's a motion, not a bill, so it will be debated at this House and approved by the House, and then hopefully, someone will pick this up. In fact, I wish it were a bill.

It's interesting: It was articulated, I think, by the member from Kenora–Rainy River, who spoke to why water testing was done in the first place—good intentions, because we wanted to avert another tragedy. Then it was extended so that it would include those wells. But I think, unfortunately, the unintended consequence of that was how it was going to impact small not-for-profit organizations such as churches.

I'd like to think that here in this House, this is again an opportunity where we could really work together. In the last century, we actually put a person on the moon, and we were part of that. Remember? You would think we could find a way and a process to help local not-for-profits find a mechanism to test their water that isn't going to tap their resources to such an extent that they can't continue their good work. I would suspect there is a way that we could go about doing this. It wouldn't be extraordinarily onerous. It's not going to rip the bank and the heart out of the municipalities. In fact, it would support the good work that happens in churches.

If you think about it, just taking a church as an example, they're often the places where Meals on Wheels get their drivers from, or they're prepared in that local church, or you'll find people who take folks for end-of-life palliative care. It goes on and on: Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, Beavers. All kinds of good and wonderful things happen in our church basements. Those are the things that help keep our kids off the street and produce all sorts of wonderful opportunities for learning and engagement and team work.

That cost alone, in another forum, would be horrendous. So testing the water so they can often go there, which is at virtually no cost to those organizations because that's what churches do, makes some sense. I think what we should be able to do is find a way that we could work together to have this happen.

This motion will pass. You've got huge support. It makes an enormous amount of difference. My colleague from Dufferin–Caledon said the same thing. We know

this is something we need to be able to do, so let's find a way to do it.

As I said, unfortunately, it won't go for second reading. It won't go to committee for debate. But I'd like to think what we could do is encourage the ministry that would be involved, the Ministry of the Environment, to sit down and work with the organizations to find a way so that we—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Send them a strong message.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Absolutely. Let's send them a strong message on how we can really work together, because this is in the best interest of these local communities.

Yes, it is probably a rural issue more than it is—but you know what? It's really all of our issue because everything that happens in this province is a part of who we are, and we're here to make sure that we support one another in these types of initiatives. No matter where it comes, if it's in the best interest of the folks of Ontario, then that's what we should be doing: working in that direction. So I'm pleased to be able to stand here and support all those who are in this House working towards the same goal, which is safe drinking water. I'd like to thank my colleague for bringing it forward.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I rise today to support the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and his motion to offload these costs from the not-for-profit organizations. We do it now for the general public and the residences, and we have the capacity to extend this service to a sector that provides many benefits to our society.

I know, from my involvement in a number of organizations—especially in rural areas, where population densities make it very difficult and economically challenging to have access to the municipal water systems—that there's a huge benefit. Rural churches, fairgrounds and more are important parts of our community and provide dividends to the communities they serve. It might be the church suppers that not only go to offset costs of heating, insurance and the like, but also raise money for local hospitals, local seniors, children's services and more. We need to look at ways to encourage them and help them serve the community they reside in.

In my riding, I have the privilege of working with a few of these organizations. Saint Mary's centre in Williamstown is used for weddings and funerals; township, community and business functions; and, during the ice storm in 1998, functioned as one of the emergency community centres serving food and providing shelter for people in our area who were without power and heat in their homes for more than a month in the cold month of January. Centres like this and the ones in North Lancaster, Martintown and Green Valley also have no access to treated water, but were made available to help the community out. They're important, and they need to be kept open.

1430

I sit on the Williamstown Fair board, Canada's oldest annual fair, which just celebrated its 200th anniversary

this past August, on grounds that were donated by the famous local resident Sir John Johnson. Over 200 years, 30 directors struggled—at times with nothing more than pride and determination—to keep the major local event going, sometimes having to take out personal loans just to keep it afloat. Measures like this are appreciated by the directors and the communities that benefit as a whole from the event.

Many community groups hold successful fundraisers during the fair. Groups such as the Char-Lan minor hockey association, the Lancaster Curling Club, the Char-Lan Junior B Rebels, the Williamstown Volunteer Fire Department, the Char-Lan Figure Skating Club and more raise significant funds during this event to help keep their operating costs down and to be able to pass those savings on to the people—the children, the seniors and the residents—they support. I remember a member of the North Lancaster Volunteer Fire Department in a fundraising campaign having a very difficult time selling tickets and in danger of losing money on the event. Friends suggested he go to the fair, and he ended up selling out all the tickets in just a couple of days. These are examples of how these local rural events support the community.

Speaker, events like this and these initiatives need to be kept alive, and they need to help the communities they help keep alive. We have to look at more ways to help these not-for-profit organizations as we so dearly rely on them to make our communities strong and thriving. I don't believe that anyone in this House has not been at one of the many fundraisers for one of the local hospitals that these not-for-profits put on. They're an important part of our communities, but they are shrinking in numbers just when they're more in demand.

I have lots to say on this topic, but I want to pass it off to my colleague who wants to also talk on this. I commend the member and suggest that we need to do more to keep these very important organizations alive.

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

M. Shafiq Qadri: Merci, monsieur le Président. J'ai le plaisir maintenant de soutenir mon collègue l'honorable Grant Crack, député représentant la circonscription de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, et sa résolution que, de l'avis de la Chambre, des organismes à but non lucratif desservis par des puits privés ou d'autres services d'eau potable privés devraient recevoir des services d'analyse de l'eau sans frais de locaux de santé publique et de laboratoires de santé publique, de la même manière que les propriétaires ruraux reçoivent actuellement un service de contrôle de l'eau.

En Ontario, nous sommes bénis avec une source abondante d'eau douce. Elle est essentielle pour la vie et la santé, et de nos jours le jour des vies. Les Ontariens comptent sur l'eau propre et potable à la maison, dans nos lieux de culte et dans nos communautés. Nous utilisons l'eau pour l'agriculture, l'industrie et bien plus encore. Sans aucun doute, l'eau potable de l'Ontario répond à des normes strictes, et des niveaux élevés de

performance de nos réseaux d'eau potable sont en constante amélioration.

Speaker, as physician and as a parliamentarian, I wholeheartedly support my honourable colleague the member of provincial Parliament for the honourable riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. As colleagues of mine have already stated, he is following in the honourable tradition of the foregoing member, the honourable Jean-Marc Lalonde.

I think this is a very important resolution. Ontario is not a stranger to local and more widespread catastrophes, unfortunately, with regard to water quality, whether it's infections such as the E. coli outbreak that we had in Walkerton or with some of the other Indian reserves that we have across the province. I was pleased to hear a colleague from the third party mention Dr. Penny Sutcliffe, one of my colleagues at the Ontario Medical Association, who is ably steering her public health unit, particularly with regard to this particular issue.

I would say, simply, that this issue is important not only for Ontarians—but particularly having learned more about rural Ontario, I must say, as a city-born-and-bred individual, rural Ontario, in my mind at least, seems to start north of Steeles. So I congratulate my colleague from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for, shall I say, educating me and introducing me to some of the local concerns.

He has mentioned that a number of community organizations, be they faith-based or community-service-based, need to have this particular resource provided to them free of charge so they don't have to incur the added expense, which of course will interfere with their good community volunteer work, community development work that they're all engaged in.

I think this is a very appropriate resolution that my colleague from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell has brought forth, and I think he has himself detected, perhaps somewhat to his surprise, that there is unanimous consent of this chamber for this particular resolution, and that only speaks to the good sense, intelligence and aptitude with which he has presented this resolution. Merci, monsieur le Président.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to take one moment and recognize a good friend of mine, Chris Bovie, from the Whitby hospital area.

I would just say that I do recognize the work done by the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, and all of us here would do everything in our power to recognize the importance of clean, safe water.

My riding is basically made up of three communities: Uxbridge, Scugog and Clarington. A good number of those smaller communities within those townships are on wells. I have been raising three issues. First of all, people who have in their home one or two rooms for a bed and breakfast often, for their own use, have their well tested rigorously. What they've asked me to say is that if the well has tested with no negative results, routinely, the

history should be considered in the necessity now that they have to have their wells tested, similar to the not-for-profit. These are small-time operators in rural Ontario. I think that the minister should look at changing the regulations so that if it has never had a negative test, they should be allowed to have them tested just as they're having their home tested, because they live there. They drink the same water; they wouldn't put anyone else in danger. I would say that's what I think.

But I also think that what has been said today—churches have been devastated by this, even though their water is proven monthly or annually as safe. Legions—and I think in my riding—fairgrounds. During this time of year, there are fairs in Uxbridge, Scugog, Blackstock and all the small communities. They go to a lot of trouble—these are not-for-profit as well.

I think looking at rural Ontario and/or northern Ontario, as has been mentioned by one of the speakers—treating them fairly; not exempting them from the rigours of testing, but look at the history of the testing and continue the testing. If there has never been any negative testing—most of them have UV lighting and all of those things, in every regard, to keep themselves safe and the people who are using their water.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity, and best wishes in your report.

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

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: There are only about 45 seconds left on the clock, so I just want to—I read the resolution. As an urban member, I want to say that I support the resolution. Some of us in the city step out and visit various parts of Ontario, whether it be Algonquin park or other parks, and we try to decide whether or not to drink the water, whether it's drinkable or not. I think this resolution makes it clear that the water testing wouldn't be charged. I think it's a very good idea.

Several times I've gone out of the province—out of the city and to other parts of the province, I should say—and I want to make sure the water is safe, and so does my wife. I think it's a very good resolution, and I support it fully. I congratulate the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Grant Crack: I just wanted to thank a number of members here today who spoke to my private member's resolution: the members from Leeds–Grenville and Kenora–Rainy River; the member for Peterborough for his kind words; Dufferin–Caledon, Nickel Belt, Etobicoke Centre, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Etobicoke North, Scarborough Southwest and, of course, Durham.

The purpose of this motion—hopefully turning it into a resolution—was to bring awareness to some of the challenges that some of our local community groups are facing, the financial constraints that they're finding themselves in. I just wanted to indicate that the good words that I heard today, that we as parliamentarians, as

legislators, support our community of volunteers—and some of the words that were spoken today are very heartfelt for me, and I'm sure all the volunteers really appreciate the input that has been received.

1440

There was a comment concerning costs associated, by the member from Nickel Belt and I believe as well from Etobicoke Centre. Yes, there are costs associated with regard to this particular water testing, but we need to do what we can to ensure that our community groups, organizations and the facilities that they operate in continue to survive during these challenging times.

I wanted a special thank you to the member from Etobicoke Centre. When she talked about that we don't want to tap into the resources of these community groups, I thought that that was a sensational pun and I thank you very much for that.

Thank you for the support, and I look forward to the vote later on today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I will take the vote on this item at the end of regular business.

FIRE PROTECTION AND PREVENTION
AMENDMENT ACT (RETROFITTING
OF RETIREMENT HOMES WITH
AUTOMATIC SPRINKLERS), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA PRÉVENTION
ET LA PROTECTION CONTRE L'INCENDIE
(MODERNISATION DES MAISONS
DE RETRAITE PAR L'INSTALLATION
D'EXTINCTEURS AUTOMATIQUES)

Mr. Paul Miller moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 54, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 to require the retrofitting of retirement homes with automatic sprinklers / Projet de loi 54, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la prévention et la protection contre l'incendie pour exiger la modernisation des maisons de retraite par l'installation d'extincteurs automatiques.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: On June 2, 2010, I tabled Bill 92, Mandating Sprinklers in All Ontario Retirement Homes Act, 2010, and began my journey to right a tragic wrong in the care of our seniors.

The bill made it to committee on October 22, 2010, but then ran into the McGuinty government's hard wall of resistance. The Premier's former House leader employed every political and administrative tactic available to her to ensure that Bill 92 was not permitted to go to the standing committee for public hearings, a disgraceful move that has set back the implementation of this essential legislation by two years.

Since that happened, three more seniors have died unnecessarily, when automatic sprinkler systems may have saved their lives. This is the legacy of that House leader.

After the October 2011 election, again, I introduced automatic sprinkler legislation with the hopes inherent with our much-needed minority government. Bill 54, the Fire Protection and Prevention Amendment Act (Retrofitting of Retirement Homes with Automatic Sprinklers), 2012, is before this Legislature today, almost 24 months since the issue first saw the light of the legislative day.

For those of you who are new to this Legislature, I'll provide some statistics. Since 1980, there have been 48 deaths of seniors due to fire and smoke inhalation. This is the worst record in North America: Extendicare in 1980, 25 people; Ottawa Centre nursing home in 1989, three; Extendicare Starwood nursing home in 1989, two; Meadowcroft in 1995, eight; Sunnybrook veterans' wing in 1997, three; Muskoka Heights in 2009, four; Rainbow retirement home in Timmins in 2012, one; and the latest one, Hawkesbury in 2012, two.

Additionally, five separate coroner's inquests have called for the immediate installation of automatic sprinklers in every retirement home in Ontario. How has the McGuinty Liberal government responded to these calls for senior safety? With inaction—until the tragic deaths at the Hawkesbury retirement home in this year.

I've already mentioned how the former Liberal House leader actively worked to keep the bill from the public hearings. And what finally spurred this government into action? Yet more deaths of seniors. The action taken by this government was to implement a technical consultation which, I admit, looked like another move to keep from implementing much-needed automatic sprinkler legislation. However, I do know that there are some positive measures being studied which will likely be recommended at the end of the consultation process.

All of this seems good. But, as always with the government, there's a reason to feel a little uncertainty.

First, I was somewhat surprised to find out that those participating in the technical consultation were required to sign a confidentiality agreement and they were not allowed to attend today. I find that remarkable. The effect of that: No professionals involved in the process are allowed to be in this Legislature this afternoon to support Bill 54—highly irregular, I might add. Was this a usual process, or was this yet another move by the McGuinty government to keep a public show of support for Bill 54 out of this Legislature? It certainly worries me. What is this government's real intent around legislating safety for seniors in care facilities?

The technical consultation was implemented this year and has included a large and varied number of stakeholders. I understand that it has expanded the initial parameters of the consultation and, if adopted by the government, will enhance the safety provisions of my Bill 54. Succumbing to pressure after the loss of life in the Hawkesbury fire, the government shortened the reporting time from the technical consultation to the end of Octo-

ber. That's good, but it doesn't go far enough. The technical consultation would likely recommend amendments to Bill 54, which I would happily entertain. Currently, Bill 54 does not call for regulations; however, this can easily be amended at committee to accommodate the technical consultation report. And, as it is a technical consultation, I believe that the recommendations would form any necessary regulations to the bill, and, after such intense professional study, will be ready to implement almost immediately.

However, the normal process here, Speaker, for a bill is that it goes to a standing committee. Then a sub-committee with one MPP from each party determines when the bill gets on the agenda, if there will be public hearings, how many days, when and where and how long for each presenter, and how presenters will be decided upon. Should the technical consultation issue its report at the end of October, Bill 54 could move to the standing committee agenda immediately after that. Considering that the majority of the information normally garnered through the public hearings has already been presented, studied and carefully reported through the technical consultation process, I will recommend that the public hearings and regulations process be streamlined.

Normally, public hearings are held to hear from those who have an interest in the bill. Often, these are the technical and professional experts whose advice is instrumental to ensuring that the bill is as inclusive or exclusive as appropriate and that the regulations which follow will ensure proper implementation and administration of the intent of the bill. Because all of the professional and technical experts have already provided their advice and had it enshrined in the technical consultation report, I suggest that the public hearings could require a lot less time. And because the technical consultation will effectively provide any regulations to the bill, that portion of the process can be truncated.

My goal in suggesting this expedited process is to have royal assent before the Christmas recess. Once we have royal assent, then any regulations that are deemed necessary can be drafted and in place for the effective date of January 1, 2018. This effective date allows five years for these care facilities to plan and budget for retrofitting with automatic sprinklers. To meet this target, royal assent before Christmas is essential, and what a Christmas present to all of our vulnerable Ontarians in care facilities.

But the process does cause me some concern. Once we have completed the public hearings portion, the bill comes to committee for clause-by-clause consideration. The amendments from each political party are discussed and voted on, the results of which are reported to this Legislature. Now, this is where it can get a little murky, Speaker. It's up to the government to call the bill for third reading—the acceptance of the report from the standing committee, which can be done quickly if the government is willing to do so. Then after third reading, the bill is put with other bills in the waiting-for-royal-assent group. Again, it's up to the government when it puts these bills forward for royal assent.

So our work is far from done once we get the bill to the standing committee. I'll be looking for the support of all three parties to get Bill 54 on to the standing committee agenda and to stickhandle it through all of the processes to royal assent.

When I reflect back over the many months, the many hurdles and the many setbacks for this legislation in both its Bill 92 and Bill 54 forms, I'm quite sad. We could have had a process in place to protect our seniors and other vulnerable Ontarians who find themselves in a myriad of care facilities in this province. We could have had the process in place to give greater protection to our emergency services personnel who are the first responders to fires in care facilities. We could have had this process in place to provide greater comfort to families who have had to take their older loved ones to live in these facilities.

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But we have failed to do so, and that's something that digs deeply into each of us who has had to say goodbye to a frail parent, who was their strength growing up, and leave them in the care of strangers; especially in an older care facility, which may not have automatic sprinklers.

We have failed the first responders who have had to grab and carry frail seniors as quickly as possible to beat the flames and smoke, often ripping their skin or breaking their brittle bones, rather than wrap them in a blanket against the chill of the sprinkler water, which would be easier, and move them gently with that bit of time provided by the automatic sprinklers.

I know this sounds somewhat melodramatic, but it was raised by the firefighters themselves, the Fire Fighters' Association of Ontario that represents the part-time and volunteer firefighters. It was something that I hadn't thought about, but when you're racing against fire and smoke, speed—not gentleness—is the order of the day.

From the beginning of this process, the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs has strongly advocated for this legislation, and they've been joined by many other fire safety organizations, as well as the Co-operators insurance company. In the spring of this year, the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association also came on board with this legislation. Not only have these organizations supported the effort, but the results of five coroners' inquests have called for automatic sprinklers in all retirement homes.

The support is clear from the professionals who know the work, know the dangers and know the things that make it safer. That's why it's been a mystery to me that the government has stalled on this legislation. I can't believe that relatives, friends, neighbours and constituents haven't raised their concerns about these safety conditions in 4,300 retirement homes in Ontario that don't have automatic sprinklers.

We're not talking about hugely remote areas. The recent deaths have occurred in Orillia, Timmins and Hawkesbury. Although not large urban centres, these are reasonably sized municipalities. How insecure must those in care centres in villages and small towns or small rural

communities feel? How can we have left them off the radar screen for so long?

On the bright side of this story is the clear understanding that this is an important issue by the chair of the board of Revera Inc.—which has many retirement homes in Ontario—who recognized the urgency of the automatic sprinklers and guaranteed that all Revera sites would be retrofitted not by the five-year implementation period proposed, but by August of this year. Who was the board chair? Former Progressive Conservative Premier Bill Davis.

This clear forward-thinking by former Premier Davis clearly played a role in the recent Revera retirement home fire in Hanover. The fire was started by an electrical failure in a musical organ located in an apartment. Only one sprinkler head was activated, but it contained the fire to the organ and extinguished it. Four of six floors were evacuated due to smoke and water damage, with a total of 64 occupants evacuated. A number of the residents were permitted back shortly after. Police began the evacuation of residents before the firefighters arrived, and were likely relatively safe from the danger of fire because of the automatic sprinklers. Although there was about \$50,000 of smoke and water damage, there was no loss of life.

A letter in August from Jeffrey Lozon, Revera president and CEO of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, proudly reported that they have more than 90% of the retirement and long-term-care homes across Canada equipped with sprinklers, and the remainder will be completed by the end of 2012. In his letter, he attributes the installation of automatic sprinklers with the successful evacuation of the Hanover retirement home: “This experience has been a telling example for why this initiative has been so important.”

That’s the crux of it. That’s what Bill 54 is meant to do. That’s the security we all want for our vulnerable citizens. That’s the peace of mind our families want when their parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles are in Ontario’s care facilities.

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

Mr. Mario Sergio: I’d like to join the debate on Bill 54. I have to compliment the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for his assiduity in bringing this bill forward once again. I have been listening very carefully to what the member has said, and I have to agree completely: We do need it; we have to do it.

This bill has been receiving the support of all members of the House, if I may say. Early this year, it was because of his doing; he said, “I would like to see the process pick up speed and get on with it.” Therefore, we have now this technical consultation which is supposed to come due in October of this year. We hope this indeed will come to be soon.

The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services expressed support as well. The Minister of Labour and of seniors has spoken in the House in support of the necessity of having sprinklers in seniors’ homes as

well. As a matter of fact, Minister Jeffrey had her own sprinkler bill which was approved by this House.

I have to say, Speaker, in complimenting the member, that, complementing his own bill as well, in 2008, I introduced a similar bill myself which went through second reading in 2009.

Therefore, everything is ready to go, Speaker. We are waiting now again for the technical reports which we know more or less the House will be looking at in a positive way to move the bill ahead.

As the member said, there are some areas that we have to look at and see that the bill indeed will contain everything that is required to make it a good and perfect bill. As a matter of fact, I have to tell the member that, while the bill calls for an amendment to the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, it also requires some amendment and changes to the Ontario fire code. One cannot work without the other. The technical consultation, I hope, will bring forward those recommendation so that we can take a look at them through the public input process which we hope this bill will go through and carry on, and we can have more input.

I also share the view with the member, Speaker, that we have debated these bills before. I say “bills” because this is not the first time, and this is not the only one. So I believe that we should be looking at measures to curtail the time that we’re going to spend on the bill when it comes back so that indeed we can go ahead and give peace of mind to seniors, and their family members as well.

You know, Speaker, sometimes our own legislative agenda here becomes the worst enemy of the people, if I may say that, because we are entangled in this process—not political process but legislative process—which allows members, Premiers and ministers to do certain things within a particular period of time. But there are times, Speaker, when we really have to look into the necessity of speeding up this particular process, look at ways of moving bills as important as this forward in a faster way.

To the member, I have the list myself, and I don’t want to be repetitive, of the number of fires that occurred in different homes, the number of lives that have been lost, and there were numerous. When we look at the costs of implementing the system, Speaker, versus the lives that have been lost, surely no one in this House can dispute that there is no possible comparison. For example, in one of the homes, the cost of retrofitting it after a fire was more than \$800,000; the cost to retrofit with sprinklers was about \$120,000. There is absolutely no possible correlation one to the other, Speaker.

This is one of the reasons that I believe we as a government not only have the responsibility towards the occupants, our seniors and their families, but to society in general. I have to say, Speaker, in the long run this is going to cost the government more money, so there are no real savings for us.

I believe that our Ontario fire marshal is working very seriously and expeditiously in completing the technical

report. I hope that when it comes, we can look at it in such a way that will speed up the process and move this bill forward.

Again, Speaker, I want to commend and congratulate the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for being so—

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Proactive?

Mr. Mario Sergio: Forceful, I would say, in bringing—

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Tenacious.

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Mr. Mario Sergio: Tenacious, yes, of course, and I could use other words, in bringing it again. If I were in his shoes, I would do the same and I would be asking the same of this House. So, on his behalf, on behalf of our side here and on behalf of every member, I am delighted to support it and I hope that we can put a positive end to the presentation of this bill. Thank you.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the debate this afternoon on Bill 54, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, to require retrofitting of retirement homes with automatic sprinklers.

This is a bill that, in large part, has come before this House once before, and I congratulate Mr. Miller, from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, for his persistence in bringing it back. I know it died on the order paper in a previous Parliament, so I give him credit for his stick-to-it-iveness. He has made some changes to the bill that I think make it more acceptable to those who have a retirement home that would be affected by this legislation, extending the period of time in which sprinkler systems would have to be installed. But it is still an issue for some retirement homes, and I hope that it would be part of an ongoing discussion.

I know the government is doing a technical assessment at the present time, and hopefully that will be wrapped up fairly soon. But I share the view of my colleague from York West that you cannot put a price on the loss of a life if it could have easily been prevented. This is something where I think the debate has shifted over the years. I think it has increasingly reached the point where people believe, at this time, that it is an action that should be taken in order to protect our seniors and the vulnerable. The reality is that the mobility level of more and more people who are in homes other than their own has gotten less, not more, over the years, because the ages of people in those facilities have increased as well, which makes the question of being able to safely get out on your own something that is not as certain as it would be if you were fully mobile yourself.

This is a bill that we have discussed in our party, and we're going to be supporting the bill today. We believe that, in the broad sense, it's legislation that is required. I know the Minister of Labour at one time, when she was not a minister, brought in a private member's bill that would have compelled all new homes to have sprinkler systems. So I certainly believe that if that's the case on

the other side in cabinet, the government will certainly be supporting this legislation.

I believe it's a big step in the right direction. There may be some things that need to be discussed. I think it's important that we get the standing committees in this Legislature set up so the bills that are valid and worthwhile, like Mr. Miller's, can be brought to committee so that anything that can be discussed and improved upon can be dealt with there. Thank you very much. Again, I congratulate Mr. Miller.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I enjoyed listening to my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, the member from York West and, of course, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

I am very pleased to stand up today and speak on the bill. Of course, I will be in favour of private member's Bill 54, sprinklers in retirement homes. I also applaud my colleague for his tenacity. We've described some of the verbs that describe our colleague. If nothing else, he is persistent and has a lot of tenacity, and in this particular case it serves him well, because he is doing the right thing to protect seniors in retirement homes.

From listening to each member of each party today, there's obviously full support on all sides of the House, so that is wonderful. But the one piece Mr. Miller brought forward is that the original time he introduced the bill in June 2010, it went to committee and there were obstacles that were put in the way that, unfortunately, turned out to be the demise of the bill, and that's why we're here again today. So, I hope, in spite of our political difference, that everyone in this House will realize that, yes, we are supporting it, but the importance of getting it to committee, having public hearings and making sure it comes back to the House, so that we can vote on this bill that's most important for seniors and protect their lives.

Of course, Speaker, there are too many seniors in our retirement homes who have lost their lives—one is one too many—due to related fires in these retirement homes, and I'm not prepared to continue that trend. I'd like to see the bill passed and brought back to the House so that we can protect the lives of seniors. It's shameful, really, that anyone has lost their life in an institution because of lack of safety adherence. At the time, that's the way standards were; that's fine. But now we're into the future, and we can do something about it. I think it's the opportunity we should take and look into that further.

Mr. Miller also brought up a point that's very valid. We are concerned about services and institutions that are available in our rural communities, and this is something that's a very key piece to that. When there's a fire in a rural facility, we know there's a volunteer service, perhaps, and they don't get out there as fast, so it's even more crucial that we make sure that our rural communities and our seniors living in those facilities are also very much protected, to prevent any further tragedies there.

It was also discussed that there were five coroners' inquests into this situation. Each one has recommended that automatic sprinkler systems be introduced into retirement homes, yet, sadly, no action has been taken. So I hope from that technical consultation that's going on right now—and I'm pleased to hear that this government has expedited it to the end of October, to have the results come forward—that once that happens, that we take into account and get working on this bill a little quicker.

From the time that Mr. Miller has introduced—originally, this bill was called Bill 92, and from that time, as he mentioned, there have been several deaths. But since 2010, there were another two fatal incidents that happened in Hawkesbury, I believe it was. Again, that really—it's almost like I can't have the words to describe how upset I would be if perhaps it was to relatives of mine that had occurred and it could have been preventable. We really need to make sure we understand the severity of it, and that when it goes to committee—this is not a bill that can sit there for years and years.

There are provisions for retirement homes to implement these sprinklers so that they can be proactive for the people they serve. When people go to retirement homes, that is their home, and if you can't feel safe in your home, that's a very sad commentary on the situation that they've been put in, out of no fault of their own as to why they're there.

This legislation is an approach that we talk about as proactive. Mr. Miller has, in a very strong way, explained that he is disappointed that this bill hasn't been passed and pushed forward in the past and made legislation. He's brought it up again, and by him doing that, I think we need to give the seniors the respect they deserve in their homes and make sure that we all co-operate with this situation and pass the bill. When it gets to committee, those are the times that amendments are to be looked at, to make sure it's a fair bill and there are the timelines that are fair for these institutions to have sprinklers.

The other piece of that is—you know, my background is insurance. I would think that when you have a building that has a lot of people in it, especially seniors with mobility issues, when there's a fire, the risk that they are exposed to is so much higher that when you'd have a sprinkler system in there, the risk is mitigated so that there isn't that type of liability that goes back to the insurance company. Perhaps when that happens—I don't know if anyone has mentioned that maybe their insurance rates will go down, because then the risk is lower in that situation if there's a fire. Commercial buildings with sprinkler systems are going to have a different rate of insurance, compared to a commercial building that doesn't have a sprinkler system.

That certainly won't offset the cost of implementing a sprinkler system, but it certainly will be a better loss ratio for an insurance company, which will then also perhaps roll back to those commercial institutions where they can have a little bit of a break.

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Speaker, I just wanted to wrap up by saying that I hope that this bill will—of course, it sounds like it's a

resounding yes today that it will be moved to committee, but the real meat and potatoes of this bill is when it gets to committee. Let's get it back to the House so it can pass, so all our loved ones, treasured seniors, parents and grandparents don't have to face this situation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Before I recognize the next Speaker, I would remind members of the House that we refer to members by their riding and not their name. The last speaker used the name of the mover four times, so I remind you again.

Further debate.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm pleased today to join the debate on fire safety in retirement homes. I can tell you that there's a lot of current activity that is significant, and I hope that all people are very serious about this. This, of course, is Bill 54, retrofitting of retirement homes with automatic sprinklers.

Here are some of the key messages that have transpired with fire safety in recent years.

Most recently, you'll find that Ontario is really taking strong action in many areas on fire and on seniors living in retirement homes. The government is taking steps to make sure that these retirement home facilities are equipped with automatic sprinklers. Very positively, in June, the Premier met with members of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs to discuss sprinklers and other ways to ensure fire safety. In April 2012, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services announced the creation of a technical advisory committee to make recommendations on fire safety in retirement homes and other vulnerable occupancies.

I can tell you that that particular bill could cover retirement homes, could cover long-term-care homes, various other group homes for individuals with disabilities—blind, deaf, intellectual and, of course, disability itself.

The committee was asked to deliver its initial recommendations this fall, four months earlier than originally planned. These measures are in addition to those in the Retirement Homes Act, which provide stronger protections for seniors living in retirement homes and also include fire safety measures.

The Retirement Homes Act is the first legislation in Ontario's history to provide strong protection for seniors choosing to live in retirement homes. They now bring consistency across the province and could include old municipal bylaws, or portions thereof, where applicable. Further, Speaker, we've been working hard on the Retirement Homes Act for a number of other areas.

It's very important when it comes to fire that a process was implemented this year, in July, that: trains all staff in fire protection and safety; posts in the home an explanation of the measures to be taken in case of fire; provides information to residents about nighttime staffing and whether the home has sprinklers in each resident's room or not; consults with community agencies and response partners to help develop specific emergency plans—that is in place and required for January 1 this coming year.

Staff training on the emergency plan and evacuation procedures is under way, and this process must also be posted in the home.

There are a couple of other things. I won't be able to say the names, so I can't say Mr. Miller, but he did mention a number of fire proponents that were supportive. I'm pleased to give you another one: that the government has made this issue "a priority," and I'll give you the name of the person who spoke these words. That's Kevin Foster, president of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, and he continued on to say that, "The Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs is committed to expediting the work of the technical advisory committee to provide workable recommendations that help improve fire safety for Ontario seniors"—always very, very positive.

I'm going to do a quick wrap-up. I won't be able to say "Mr. Miller" again, but I will say that the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has worked on this project for three years, and this is his second submission. He deserves our gratitude for his persistence and passion on Bill 54. I continue to believe that sprinklers should be available in public use buildings where not already implemented or installed in Ontario.

As the parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for seniors, I thank Mr.—I'll say that name after—the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for his efforts. With an ever-increasing number of Ontarians becoming seniors, these sprinklers and a multitude of other senior services will be needed and required. Our seniors, over time, become more vulnerable in many areas, and we should all band together to support Bill 54. Our seniors need this protection and safety in later years.

I thank the Premier for his proactive initiative and Mr.—I'll just say "the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek" for his Bill 54. I look forward to giving my 100% support when this vote comes forward this afternoon.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I am pleased to rise today and also support the member from Hamilton Creek—Hamilton East–Stoney Creek—I've got to get that right—Mr. Miller, and the Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 to require the retrofitting of retirement homes with automatic sprinklers. You've heard that I think we're all pretty supportive of this bill again—can I say that?—so your tenacity in bringing this forward again is supportive, and to try to move it again to committee and hopefully back to us for third reading.

Across Ontario, there are approximately 700 retirement homes, 400 long-term-care facilities and 3,000 other homes that house vulnerable residents. There's no question that seniors, especially those living in retirement homes and assisted living facilities, are a vulnerable segment of our society. I know as my mother ages, you can see that their mobility is decreased. They just can't move as quickly. They can't think as fast. It's just the reality of life, and they are vulnerable. They have worked very hard all their lives, and they deserve the most protection that we can offer them, which is the intent of this bill that has been brought forward.

I know that people have spoken earlier about the coroner's report into the fatal 2009 fire in the Muskoka

Heights retirement home in Orillia. That report called for the retroactive installation of sprinklers in facilities such as retirement homes. This is actually the fourth coroner's inquest since 1980 relating to fire deaths in retirement homes in Ontario. Since that time, there have been 48 deaths across the province in these homes, including the tragic deaths of 25 seniors who died in a Mississauga fire in 1980. As has been said also, the support that this bill has gathered this time, as well as before: The Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs want the recommendation from the Orillia inquest implemented as soon as possible. It has been echoed by the Canadian Council of Fire Chiefs and the Council of Canadian Fire Marshals and Fire Commissioners.

This bill calls for the implementation date of January 1, 2018. That's a ways away, but it's enough time to give the retirement home owners and operators five years to comply with the legislation, which seems prudent and reasonable, certainly, in my mind.

Even if that were deferred, there are considerable costs, and I think we acknowledge that and we appreciate that. That's why the date has been put into the bill. There's a cost associated with the conversion. We've spoken today about the smaller homes that we have, especially in rural Ontario. When it was debated before in the Legislature, brought forward again by the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, I think the cost of initially installing a straight sprinkler system would be about \$2,000 per unit. So if you did a retirement home of 25 units, you'd face conversion costs in the area of about \$50,000, which is not an insignificant sum. This doesn't include the retrofitting that may have to occur to the hallways and stairwells.

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But the thing is, we need to get the bill to committee. I think we've heard that today. We're all unanimous. We would like the government to help us set the committees up. We've been asking—both opposition parties—for the government to set committees up so we can deal with good pieces of legislation, which I will say this is, so they can be discussed here with the stakeholders.

Let's get some reasonable time periods out there. We can look at retrofitting so there's not significant hardships on both the retirement home owners, and of course, the costs do get downloaded to the residents that are in there. So we have to be cognizant of all those concerns, that those fees don't get too out of reach and that everything is done in a reasonable manner of fees and also a reasonable time period.

Many of our small municipalities don't have full-time fire departments. Our rural municipalities have a lot of volunteer fire departments that come out. Things like retrofitting these retirement homes with sprinklers, obviously, are more critical in some of those areas and are going to buy someone their life probably at the end of the day.

I know that I have some other colleagues here that do want to speak to the bill. I don't want to belabour the point of saying: Let's get it done here today. Let's get it

to committee. Let's discuss it. Let's move it forward and actually implement it in the province of Ontario, and look forward to, hopefully, preventing further deaths.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is such a pleasure for me to speak in support of this bill from the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. He has put his heart and soul into trying to move this issue forward for all of the good reasons that he has laid out for us before.

When you talk about people living in retirement homes, Mr. Speaker, you talk about a captive audience of very vulnerable people. They are often frail. They are often quite elderly, and they certainly deserve our protection. When you hear about the fires going on, when you hear about the deaths that are happening right here in Ontario and that continue to happen, it calls for people like us, people in leadership positions, to step up to the plate and do something. This is what my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is doing today. He is doing his job as an MPP. He is stepping up to the plate and saying that this captive audience of vulnerable Ontarians needs our protection.

So he did his homework. He went out and talked to everybody that works in the field and asked them: "What do you think of putting sprinklers into retirement homes?" You've heard it from all sides of the House. The people that go to those tragedies, the people that are called to the scene when smoke is smelled or flame is seen, know that with a sprinkler, they stand a chance—they stand a chance to make sure each and every one of them gets hauled out of that building and goes on to live another day, with a heck of a story to tell as a bonus.

Without sprinklers, Mr. Speaker, it is a completely different story; it is a story of tragedy. It is the kind of story that keeps firefighters awake at night after they retire. They talk about those kinds of fires as to, why? Why is it that, in 2012, when we know we have a captive audience of vulnerable people living all under one roof and we had an opportunity to act on the bill from the member of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, we sat on our hands and did nothing?

Is there money involved? Absolutely. Sprinklers don't come cheap, and sprinklers will have to be installed in places where they are not. But there is leeway in the bill. We talked about giving them enough time. When you know that you have so many years to comply, then the next time you do renovations—because, yes, buildings have to be maintained—program it in. Do your best to try to get it done.

But at the end of the day, when the opposite gets done—that is, we sit on our hands and we say, "The \$50,000 it would have cost to put a sprinkler in is not worth the life of my grandfather"—we all feel bad about that. We all feel pretty bad, and we look back and say, "My grandfather was worth more than 50 grand. Why didn't they put the sprinklers in?" They didn't put the sprinklers in because people didn't listen to what the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek had to say.

This is an issue that's been debated in this House for way too long. I remember when the Liberal government brought forward their bill on retirement homes. It was a real shame. I've been a politician for five years, but before this, I spent 25 years in health care. Before I even became a politician, I knew that things needed to change in our retirement homes. Then they brought forward this bill that, frankly, gives retirement home owners oversight of their business.

How can we do this to those vulnerable seniors? How could we put people whose number one objective is to make money in charge of handling our seniors? We have a chance here today to step up to the plate, do what we were elected to do and support the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek's bill. I hope we all do.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very pleased to stand and first pay respects to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. We should all know that in 2010, he brought forward a similar bill—that was Bill 92—with the same genuine intention to solve the problem, and today we're debating Bill 54. So I commend you for your commitment, Paul, if I may, and for the experience you related in your remarks of the human lives that have been affected, and that's why you're standing here, as has been said.

I want to compliment my colleague Laurie Scott from Kawartha Lakes–Brock. She outlined all—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): As one of the senior members of the Legislature—I've reminded everybody all day today that we refer to people in the Legislature by their ridings, not their names.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. I thought you were naming me because I got the riding wrong.

I also want to pay respect to the member from Pickering, Mr. Dickson. Pardon me, what's his riding? Ajax–Pickering. He is the parliamentary assistant for seniors. I believe he asked a question of the Minister of Community Safety today and tried to sort of take ownership of the issue. I thought it was a bit of a cheap shot, technically, at the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Oh, come on, John.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, it's not that. I thought it was well intended, but in the spirit of being co-operative here for the issue of public safety, that's why I bring it up. You knew it was members' day today. Don't try to steal it and sort of overshadow it, that the minister is taking action.

They've had five years to take action. They've had five years. They started to regulate retirement homes; they introduced legislation. Do you know what they did with regulating retirement homes? There's a new seniors' tax, a tax on seniors in retirement homes. There are about 7,000 retirement homes in Ontario. There's not one nickel of provincial money in those retirement homes. For seniors today, retirement homes run at about \$3,000 a month to \$7,000 or \$8,000 a month.

This is an issue of public safety. Even the fire marshal has recently said that this could save lives—even the industry itself. In my reading of the bill, it says there's no "one size fits all" for these homes. There would be tax solutions available to get them to write off part of it. Depreciate the cost of fire suppression in the homes and give them a tax credit for it. They could do it tomorrow morning. If they had the will to do it, the industry is there to work with them. The Ontario Retirement Communities Association has made it very clear that they are ready and willing. But many people have avoided the main issue: Who is going to fund it? New construction will be done. How do you deal with the retroactive inventory of stock? There's no one-size-fits-all.

1530

Use a tax measure. Give them a full tax writeoff over a year or two for all the expenses that would be put in place for fire prevention. I'd say, get this to committee. Let's get it right and let's get it done. This will save lives, especially the lives of very vulnerable seniors.

I commend the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. I'm confident today that this bill will pass. The next step, as you said in your remarks, is: How do you get it to committee? There are no committees formed. This place is almost dysfunctional, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Under this House leader.

Mr. John O'Toole: We need to have a House leader here who's able to get this place to function, and that's part of the message that I want to get out today. We're trying to do the right thing and they're standing in the way of getting the right thing done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker. I'd just like to thank all the members who spoke: York West, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, London–Fanshawe, Ajax–Pickering, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Nickel Belt and Durham, especially the member from York West, who has always been an advocate of this situation. I appreciate the input that he has given over the last couple of years that I've been trying to implement this.

Also, the member from Durham has always got his opinion, and we certainly have to appreciate different views on this situation, but what I do realize is that in these types of bills that are for the benefit of the people of Ontario and our seniors, I think everybody on all sides of the House certainly wants to do the right thing to protect our loved ones, and I think they are going to do the right thing. I certainly hope the committees form soon so that these types of bills—not just mine, but other ones that do good in Ontario—certainly see the light of day and get to royal assent. That's the key, Speaker. We can do all we want in this House—we can talk; we can debate; we can do committee work—but until it gets that royal stamp—assent—it's not law in this province. We have to expedite that process on these types of bills that do good for the people of Ontario.

In everyone's hearts in here, I think they really want to do the right thing by our seniors, our aunts, our uncles and our loved ones, and when push comes to shove, I think they'll all do the right thing and this will see the light of day before this 40th Parliament ends. Certainly, we don't know when that's going to happen.

In closing, Speaker, I'd just like to thank everyone for their positive input today and their support of what I'm trying to do. I have been working on this for three years, and it's really nice when you see all the parties come together on situations like this. Thank you very much to all of you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We'll take the vote on this item at the end of regular business.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I move that, in the opinion of this House, a select committee should be established immediately to develop a comprehensive developmental services strategy for Ontarians, and that in developing its strategy and recommendations, the committee shall focus on the following issues: the urgent need for a comprehensive developmental services strategy to address the needs of children, youth and adults in Ontario with an intellectual disability or who are dually diagnosed with an intellectual disability and a mental illness, and to coordinate the delivery of developmental programs and services across many provincial ministries in addition to the Ministry of Community and Social Services, taking into consideration the following:

- the elementary and secondary school educational needs of children and youth;
- the educational and workplace needs of youth upon completion of secondary school;
- the need to provide social, recreational and inclusionary opportunities for children, youth and adults;
- the need for a range of available and affordable housing options for youth and adults;
- the respite and support needs of families;
- how government should most appropriately support these needs and provide these opportunities.

That the committee shall have the authority to conduct hearings and undertake research and generally shall have such powers and duties as are required to develop recommendations on a comprehensive developmental services strategy to address the needs of children, youth and adults in Ontario with an intellectual disability or who are dually diagnosed with an intellectual disability and a mental illness; and

That the committee shall present an interim report to the House no later than April 30, 2013, and a final report no later than October 31, 2013.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Elliott has moved private member's notice of motion number 27. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is truly an honour to rise this afternoon to speak to this motion. Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge and thank the many people who have taken the time today to be here in the public and members' galleries, and the people who have provided support and are watching this debate at home.

The impetus for this resolution motion arose from several sources. The first was the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, which wrote the report several years ago. I had the real privilege of serving on that committee with other members of the Legislature who are here today. We discussed the issue of people who are dually diagnosed, and although the focus of our report at that time was on mental health and addictions, we did believe that the issue was significant and really could form the basis of its own select committee. So I certainly kept that in mind in the past two years and am pleased to have the opportunity to bring this forward today.

Secondly—and I think I'm not alone in this—as members of the Legislature, we hear, on a regular basis in our community offices, from families who are finding it increasingly difficult to support their adult children at home. We can and we must do better for these families, and it's my belief that if we do strike a select committee, we will be able to do just that.

Finally, there was a tragic event that happened in Whitby on April 29 of this year that made the need for a select committee, for me, crystal clear. A young woman named Holly Harrison—18 years old and full of life—tragically died in a house fire. Holly had both an intellectual disability and a mental illness and had been living in a group home for youth, but when she turned 18 she was no longer eligible for their services, and so she was discharged from the home. She didn't have anywhere else to go at that point, and so she started to couch-surf, as many young people in this situation do, because there were no group homes, no transitional housing and no other support services available to her.

I would like to stress, because I know that she was working with several community agencies in Whitby who tried valiantly to support her—but the fact was that there really weren't the programs and services, there wasn't funding in place for them to help Holly.

Holly shouldn't have died. Her family, who are here with us today, want to hear from us, as legislators, to know what we're going to be able to do to make sure this doesn't happen to any other families. I would like to take just a moment to introduce them. Holly's parents—Mr. Tyson Harrison is here; her stepmother, Chrissy Zevenhoven, along with their daughters, Amber Harrison and Matthea Liston, are here. I truly hope that our discussion this afternoon doesn't disappoint them and we can help provide them with some measure of comfort, knowing that Holly did not perish in vain.

Mr. Speaker, the parents of children with intellectual disabilities have formed the basis of our Community Living organizations over the years. They really operated

under the radar and didn't provide a problem or concern for government because they were true self-help organizations. And the parents volunteered with not much of an expectation—other than the fact that there would be a place for their son or daughter to live when they were no longer there and that they would have a happy life. We can't provide them with that measure of comfort anymore. Families are becoming increasingly desperate as they themselves are aging and finding it very, very hard to cope. What I've heard from people, and I'm sure other members of this House have heard the same thing, is that these parents are exhausted and they're desperate. It's a serious situation that's only getting worse as parents age.

I would like to take a moment to read just two of the emails that I've received from people who really, I think, illustrate how serious the situation is. From the first one:

"It has been obvious to many of us in the Community Living movement that the Ministry of Community and Social Services cannot alone meet the growing demands of these families and that a cross-ministry approach may be the only hope for those in dire straits.

"For example, in the last few weeks a mother was forced to leave her seriously disabled son at the doorstep of her local agency because she, a double lung recipient, could no longer look after him 24/7. Evidently, neither could the agency or the ministry."

Another one that I received from one of my constituents, Betty:

"My son is now 21 years old.... finished school ... essentially, we are putting him in daycare again, just like parents 30 years younger than us are doing for their toddlers, except our daycare is much more expensive, much more worrisome and it never, ever, stops....

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"My husband and I love our son dearly, but the simple fact is that we can't take care of him anymore, at least not to the extent that we've been doing.

"We have done a good job raising and helping him. Now we need a break. Physically. Emotionally. Financially. We need him in a ministry-run group home. He is social, he has lots of potential, and he needs supervision. This is the only feasible option.

"As you know, there are no group homes available. They're out there, but the line isn't moving.

"Please help us by making group homes more abundant. If it's not possible to create more, maybe there's something else that can be done. Maybe senior citizens in group homes could move to senior retirement homes.

"I don't have the answers—just suggestions—but I think that the idea above is one way to loosen up this jammed wait-list for exhausted parents like myself.

"We have negligible support. If it's not my husband or I watching our son, it's someone we pay.

"Our son is currently enrolled in a day program that costs \$1,000 a month to keep him occupied and social while my husband and I attend our jobs. We still have to

pay a worker \$15 an hour on top of that when we can't be there by 4 p.m.

"We have been responsible for every minute of our son's life. That's 21 years, and it will continue for the years beyond our own lives. We are drowning. Please help us. You have the power."

Although this really speaks to housing and concerns that a lot of parents have expressed, it's not just about that. It's about inclusion; it's about giving people the opportunities to become included in our society, to have options to work if they're able to, to have meaningful day programs if they're not able to, and to have social and recreational opportunities. In short, Mr. Speaker, these people deserve to have a life.

It's estimated that there are somewhere between 100,000 and 200,000 people in Ontario with an intellectual disability. Some people are confused about what that means, so just by way of illustration, I would say that includes people with Down's syndrome, autism, and mild to significant intellectual disabilities, among other things. They need support, and we as legislators need to develop a comprehensive plan to deliver it.

I would like to take the rest of my time—and I see I'm rapidly running out—to briefly review the recent history of developmental services in Ontario, why I believe we need a select committee and what I believe a select committee could accomplish.

In 2004, the government made the decision to close regional facilities that had housed people with significant intellectual disabilities for many years. That would be the Huronia, Rideau and Southwestern Regional Centres. That was a good idea, but we needed to put more into community services. Bill 77 in 2008, the so-called social inclusion act, was another great idea. It was meant to recognize that one size doesn't fit all, that we need to tailor individual services, and that people should have input in planning their own lives. It's not just about group homes. But what we need is a range of housing options, from group homes to supported independent living. We need to consider employment opportunities, meaningful day programs and respite for families.

The reality is that for many young people, once they turn 21—and they're eligible to stay in school until they're 21—once they finish, it's like young people drop off the edge of a cliff. What they end up doing is simply watching TV in their parents' basements, because there are no meaningful supports out there for them. I've received letters from Community Living in Peterborough, from Community Living organizations across Ontario that have really supported the need for a select committee and the need to have an overarching organization to coordinate the programs and services to break down the ministry silos. I think that's really key as we move forward to consider all of these disparate needs that need to be addressed. We know what the problem is. What I truly would like to know is what the solutions are. There are some great solutions that are happening out there in the community, but they're few and far between, they're

not connected, and we need to make sure that they're offered across the province of Ontario.

A few things I've heard about that I think are great ideas: One is to have some innovative housing solutions. The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London referred me to a project called Elmdale, which is to create an integrated living and community activity centre for disabled young adults in his community of St. Thomas. It's that kind of outside-of-the-box thinking that we could embrace in a select committee and truly follow.

We need to take a look at employment opportunities. Many people with an intellectual disability automatically are shunted onto ODSP, the Ontario disability support program, not because they want to be, but because there are no meaningful opportunities out there for them. Employers simply aren't hiring them, and they have no opportunities for post-secondary education. We need champions in business, people who will give people with an intellectual disability a chance to have a job. The right job for the right person is out there if we search for it, and we should do it not as an act of charity but because it's a good business practice.

We do have some champions out there. I would especially like to commend Lieutenant Governor Onley for his significant work in this area. I'm proud to say that we also have some champions from my own community. There is a group that has been formed by Mr. Joe Dale and Valerie and Mark Wafer from my community of Whitby called Rotary at Work. They are Rotarians who go around the province of Ontario speaking to fellow Rotarians about why they should hire people with disabilities—with an intellectual disability or a mental health disability—again because you get out more out of it than you put into it. It's a very good business practice.

I'd also like to see a select committee explore post-secondary opportunities. Some of the community colleges in Ontario have what they call CICE—community integration through co-operative education—programs that allow a student to enter a study area of their choice. It's a two-year program. They have learning facilitators who modify the program for them. When they graduate after two years, they will receive a CICE diploma and skills portfolio that will allow them to enter the workforce.

We need to explore these. This isn't something that's core funding of a community college, but I'd like to commend those colleges that have embraced it, including my own community college in my area, Durham College, and Mr. Don Lovisa, who is the president there. I think they're really thinking well ahead of their time.

Finally—and I'm really running out of time here—I would just like to say that we need to think about what kind of society we want to have. We need to look at how we value every person in our community. We should be looking at how we think of everybody, how we can truly include everybody in our community in our society and how we can celebrate their abilities and not really look to how we can accommodate people who have disabilities. This requires a real paradigm shift in our thinking, and

until we get there, we're not really going to allow everyone in our community to live lives of purpose and dignity.

For all the reasons I've talked about in starting off the discussion today, I really would urge all members of this House to support this resolution for a select committee. I think this is truly a non-partisan issue. We can do very good work together to honour Holly's family, families that are here today, families that are listening, and families across Ontario and their sons and daughters. Thank you.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm sorry actually to have to stand on something like this today; that we actually have to have a select committee put in place. But I am happy to be able to stand for the people who have come to me concerning these matters that the select committee would help.

I'd also like to send our best wishes and sympathies to the family of Holly, on behalf of the NDP caucus. I'm very sorry. Things like this shouldn't have to happen. We shouldn't have to have residents—people—falling through the cracks. How is it that we have a system that, after the age of 18 or 21, depending on where they're falling into the system, they have nowhere else to turn? How is it that we have no homes for these people? These are serious concerns.

I know that in Hamilton we had a young woman who, I believe, kind of fell through the same cracks. When I was working downtown, I would see her often. Unfortunately, she fell into addictions and those kinds of things, just because she had nowhere else to turn, and there's always a nice dealer there, waiting to pick up somebody who has nowhere else to turn. They prey on the vulnerable. A couple of years ago, unfortunately, this woman was found dead in an alley at the back of a house. This is what happens because they have nowhere to go, right? So I look forward to this select committee to deal with those kinds of issues.

I know I've always been visited by people in my riding who have children who are now adults switching from special supports at home into Passport and the trouble they're running into there. Families are now expected to become an employer, hiring their own people, unless they're willing to pay a portion of the money they've been given to have that service done for them.

That's a big problem, because the funding didn't change, so the same person who was receiving, say, \$6,000 or \$8,000 a year now has to take that exact same money and figure out how to do that for themselves, or pay an agency to do it for them. At the same time, the wages increased—and don't get me wrong on that one, because the wages certainly did need to increase for people who were providing these services. Some of these workers that I had spoken to, because they've come to me also, were making \$10 or \$12 an hour. Now they're being bumped up, and thank the Almighty for that, because who can afford to survive on a wage like that?

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I just wanted to read here a letter dated June 2011. Then-Minister Madeleine Meilleur stated:

"I want to reiterate that these changes will not impact the amount of funding a person with a developmental disability is currently eligible to receive, and the level of service provided to stakeholders by the ministry will remain the same as we transition."

Speaking to families in my riding, this is not the fact. That's not what has happened. People are falling behind.

I know I have to close down here because I have other members who are really happy to speak to this bill also. I congratulate you on bringing this forward. I know that it's something that needs to be done and I look forward to being part of that discussion.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate. Let me first offer my congratulations to the member from Whitby—Oshawa for bringing forward what I think is another great motion. The last one she brought forward stimulated a number of us to decide to put our partisan differences aside and to work on an issue that had been ignored for far too long, and that was mental health and addictions. The outcome of that has been that I think we have had a government that has been responsive to that report because it was developed by all sides.

There is a good time to have select committees and there is a time that perhaps isn't a good time to have them. I think the choice of a select committee as a vehicle for mental health and addictions, the people that served on that committee and the attitude they brought to the table, made a big difference. If the member is envisioning that type of process again, I think she'll find support on this side of the House and I think she'll find support from the members that decide they would like to serve on the committee should it take place.

It's a very similar motion to the one that helped create the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. People praise that committee and those members that did a lot of hard work on it, not only for the report itself, but for the way they arrived at that decision. That is, we all sat down in the room and decided that this issue was bigger than our partisan differences, that we were going to be able to look at this objectively, not overly criticize each other, not point the finger—this is a very adversarial place. Sometimes things get done; sometimes they don't get done. Often we spend an awful lot of time finding out what's wrong with each other. In the select committee process, what we did is, we looked at what was right with each other. We looked at what good ideas we could bring forward and also, I think, we placed the public on a pedestal. What became the prime objective was to get the information from the public as to what was actually happening out there in the real world.

I'd like to extend, certainly, my condolences and my thanks for coming today to the Harrison family, to Holly's family. If their presence here today can help some of us gain a better appreciation of why this work

needs to be done, I think it's time very, very well spent. I know that it must be really difficult for you to be here today.

We know there's a lot more work to do. I think we have a grasp of what that work might be. Perhaps the value of a select committee is that we would be able to focus that work. One thing that I liked about the select committee—along with all sorts of other things; it was one of the best political experiences that I've had and I certainly am proud of the outcome—is the way that the government responded to it. I'm not here to brag about the government. I think we've done a very good job. I think for the most part the opposition parties have agreed with the response from the government, because they felt that they were part of it. If we can frame this in the same way, if we can take this issue and we can bring it forward in a nonpartisan way, if we can lay it before the Legislature like we did with the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, I think it could lead to the sort of work that's being done right now in mental health and addictions. It could start to be done, then, in the developmental sector as well, because I think that was a really successful process. So I'm not absolutely sure a select committee is the right vehicle for this; I'm pretty sure it is. Certainly, I'd like to see the House leaders get together on this.

I would ask the House, I would ask my colleagues from all three parties, to give their support to this motion today, to allow it to continue along the process. That's what we did the last time around, and we ended up with something that I think is going to stand the test of time, and it's one of the best things that I've seen come out of this House in the nine years that I've been here.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to speak in support of the motion from my colleague the member for Whitby–Oshawa.

I also want to extend my deepest condolences to the Harrison family. I thank you very much for being here and sharing in our debate, as well as the people in the gallery and also the thousands—millions—who are watching at home.

This is a debate that's being watched by many in the developmental sector in my riding of Leeds–Grenville. I can say that the overwhelming response from those in that sector in my riding, when I told them about this resolution, was, "It's about time," and I agree with them. I think it's time that we start listening to the pleas of the clients, the families and the staff who have incredible challenges trying to manage these essential services with compassion.

I believe the select committee is the best way to handle it. I think a lot of good can come out of that process. I'm glad the member for Oakville talked about the mental health and addictions select committee. I know that when people come into my constituency office and I show them the 23 recommendations that that committee had, people say, "That's the solution we're looking for." So I appreciate the work that others, including the

member from Whitby–Oshawa, did on that committee. I'm disappointed that the government hasn't moved forward on the recommendations, but I know that the road map is there, and I think we need it for the developmental services sector.

We need this committee to begin the very hard work of developing a comprehensive strategy to address the critical stresses on the agencies and families that are working, in my opinion, on an unimaginable burden. I spoke to many of the families, the agency staffers, and I hear the desperation in their voices. I met with the Legacy families from my own Brockville and District Association for Community Involvement. I listened to the fear that they have for the future. These are parents who made decisions to care for their children through to adulthood. They are now in their 70s and 80s. Their children are in their 40s and 50s. They don't know what's going to happen to them when they are no longer able to look after them. Speaker, it's heartbreaking.

I hear the same frustration when I talk to the three executive directors of my Community Living associations: Michael Humes in Brockville, Ted Shuh in North Grenville and Colleen Kelly-Jansen in Gananoque.

In closing, Speaker, I think, speaking to those three, they applaud this resolution because it's the start of a process that they've been desperately trying to get moving. I'm proud today to stand up for those families, those individuals and those workers, to give them a voice and to help voice their frustration. I'm hoping that my colleague's motion is passed and that there is some political will here in the Legislative Assembly to get on with it. Establish this committee and let's look at some solutions.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to stand and to support the member from Whitby–Oshawa in this proposal, this motion for a select committee. I just want to sing her praises for a minute. She has certainly been one of the movers and shakers behind the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, but she has also been a woman that I have co-sponsored a number of bills with. She has always stood on the side of the marginalized, and this is just another example of that, and she certainly stood with them in a non-partisan way.

I want to address for a second the talk from the member from Oakville about the select committee, because I think that's a good example of how something should and could work when all parties come together. It's very much the template that this particular motion is built on.

However, the problem is, Mr. Speaker, that of the 23 recommendations from that committee—23 recommendations that took hundreds of submissions, hundreds of hours, hundreds of miles of travel and probably tens of thousands of taxpayers' dollars—unfortunately, our friends across the aisle have acted on 0.5 of them, and that was over a year ago.

1600

So my hope is that as we all come together—it sounds like we will—to support this recommendation, that we

actually put our shoulders behind it—and I'm appealing to the government side here—that not only do you put it into place, not only do we get the recommendations, but of course that we actually act on them. That's the critical piece that was missing from that former iteration.

I just want to go over a few stats because it's important to share with this House how bad things are. SSAH, which is Special Services at Home, a program that used to provide services to children and adults as of April 2012, now only provides services to children. Here are the waiting list statistics: 8,500 children on the wait-list versus 13,000 receiving service; currently almost 14,000 adults with developmental disabilities are receiving care under the SSAH, with 300 on the wait-list. There's been a huge upheaval—we've heard about that—due to the changes in criteria for this program.

So let's talk about Passport, a program for adults that transfers funding directly to them or their families. It currently serves 3,769 people, but there are 3,763 people on the wait-list. You would literally have to double the capacity to serve all of those people on the wait-list. We know that there are 2,700 people who have had the eligibility for developmental services confirmed, and an additional 2,500 who are currently being assessed for the services.

Residential services: Again, you see these huge wait-lists—over 10,000 people. Again, in the last six months we've seen a huge upheaval in this service. For example, if a person needing those services is over the age of 25, they're going to be transferred to a Passport program, and within this program—we've already heard—they're going to have to administer the funds themselves and become, *de facto*, their own employers.

Let's just take a quote from Community Living Ontario, which says, "Nearly 23,000 people are languishing on waiting lists. Decades of chronic underfunding of the developmental services sector is placing in peril children and adults who have an intellectual disability, their families and the agencies that support them." There's nothing to be proud about this for this government. Nothing in this file is anything to crow about. There's so much work to do and so much need.

I want to give some shout-outs in the few minutes remaining to some of the phenomenal activists in my own riding. They're not just in my own riding; they're activists for the whole province. People like Marilyn Dolmage. People like the Patersons, whom I brought down here over and over for their son Teddy, who were looking for Passport funding, and finally, finally they got a little bit of help from this government. I think they came down three or four times, asked three or four questions. Obviously we can't do this for every family; that's why we need some solutions.

I want to also share a happy story. Marianna Adams—and I'll call out her name—was born with Down's syndrome. Marianna was really a young woman raised by her family and nurtured by her community. When I was back in active ministry as a United Church minister, she was part of our church, and she was one of the solid

volunteers of our church. Because we set up a circle of support for Marianna from the community, because she got Community Living access, because her parents and all the parents in the community came together to look after her, she ended up being partnered with Andreas Prinz, who also was born with Down's syndrome, and they now live on their own. They're a happily married couple. I want to just give a shout-out to Marianna and Andreas. I see them all the time in our community. They're an example of what can happen if we actually do the right things for people. They still need some assistance; the community comes together to provide that. But that's a happy example.

I also want to give my condolences to Holly's family and to all of those more normal—unfortunately—bad, unhappy examples of people who aren't getting the services that they need, and that's the reality of care in this province.

So, absolutely, we in the New Democratic Party support this. Absolutely, we look forward to it being struck and to the recommendations, the only caveat being, please, please, let's make this different from the mental health and addictions committee in that, when the recommendations come forward, let us ask the government to actually enact them. Otherwise, not only is it a waste of taxpayers' dollars, not only is it a waste of time and travel, but it's a tragedy, because all of those who came to depute, who came to testify, who told their stories—agonizing stories, many of them—did not get the resources that they asked for at the end of the day. Let us not have the same situation with this select committee.

Do we support it? Absolutely. It's the first step of many steps. Please don't let it be the last step. Please let the stories of those born with a developmental disability be the stories of Marianna and Andreas, and not the story of Holly. That's what I think we're all asking for here.

Again, I commend the member from Whitby—Oshawa for bringing this forward, as is her wont. It's what she does. Let's not let her down either. She and our member also, of course, from Nickel Belt, who sat on that committee, who did such good work—let's not let either of them down. Finally, let's not let down those people who exist with developmental disabilities and their families, who are in the thousands across Ontario, for whom not much has been done at all in the last nine years.

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

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: First of all, I too would like to express my condolences to Holly's family. Thank you for being here. Thank you for the difference you are making for people in this sector.

I want to start off by talking about how committed the member from Whitby—Oshawa is to identifying the issues and opportunities in this sector.

Shortly after I was elected in October last year and before I was appointed as parliamentary assistant to the Minister for Children and Youth Services, she invited me to her office to meet with all the developmental services organizations in Durham. I was just so pleased that she

did that and included me in that dialogue. Then I believe we had another meeting as well earlier this summer. Just getting together, working together in a non-partisan way in Durham, was so rewarding, that we could identify those issues in Durham. Many of them, of course, extend more broadly to the province.

I just wanted to acknowledge that I know first-hand how committed she is, and that commitment actually extended even further when I coordinated a mental health summit this summer with all the MPPs in Durham, and that included members from the PC Party as well as my colleague Joe Dickson from Ajax–Pickering.

Of course, in that summit, where we brought together service providers in Durham, where we brought together different stakeholders, it was clear that the issues around developmental services were very important, that there were some gaps, that there are some opportunities there, and the member from Whitby–Oshawa was just fantastic in that. She was so supportive, and I appreciated her leadership in that.

There's definitely more work to do, and thus we have this resolution for a select committee. As my colleague from Oakville said, we're not quite sure how it will go forward. Of course, select committees are going to be discussed, decided on and negotiated with the House leaders.

Although there's more work to do, Speaker, I think it is important to acknowledge some of the gains that have been made in this sector. The good news is, we're not starting from zero. I want to just talk briefly about some of those gains that have been made in the last eight years.

The Liberal government has increased funding for developmental services every year since it came into power in 2003. That's something that we can all be proud of. We have taken steps to modernize developmental services in Ontario and made them more accessible, flexible and financially sustainable. Our government has invested more than \$575 million in new ongoing funding for developmental services since 2003. That's a 58% increase in operating funding since 2003. It translates into 2,900 more residential placements, 4,600 more people receiving the special services at home since 2003 and 3,800 adults now receiving the Passport support that other members have talked about.

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Yes, there's more work to do, but we do need to recognize that this has been an ongoing commitment of the government. Most recently, in the 2011 budget, increases went forward for both Passport and special services at home, as I mentioned. We have increased funding every year since 2003, and over 50% of our new investments since 2003 in developmental services have gone to help people in this sector.

As we did in 2011, this year's budget also provided an additional \$25 million for residential services and community-based programming for people in urgent need, such as clients with aging parents who can no longer care for their adult children at home. So I don't think we're starting from zero, but absolutely I agree

there's more work to do, and I'm very pleased to speak today in support of this motion.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the motion of my colleague the member from Whitby–Oshawa to develop a select committee to address the needs of children, youth and adults in Ontario with an intellectual disability or who are dually diagnosed with an intellectual disability and a mental illness, and to coordinate those services.

I think that, as she has rightly said, there is a desperate need out there to address these services. We do have to do a much better job. I want to thank Holly's family for coming here today also. It is quite an act of bravery to deal with these issues and to try to make things better for other people who do encounter really the dysfunctionality that exists out there with developmental services. I know that the service providers—in all our ridings, we've heard stories. I certainly have some valiant people within my riding who do their best to coordinate the services for these vulnerable people.

I know that when I talked to Community Living Kawartha Lakes today, before we spoke, executive director Teresa Jordan talked with our staff, and I want to thank her for that. That serves the Northumberland, Haliburton, Lindsay and Peterborough areas. They stated a statistic that is quite shocking to me, that there are approximately 25 individuals who live in long-term-care facilities with their parents because of the shortage of homes in our area, and they, as one of my colleagues said, are the lucky ones, that they actually have a connection to someone. Unfortunately, they do have to go into a long-term-care centre, which is not the best facility for them, but those are the choices that are out there right now.

The predominant issue certainly is a lot of older parents, 70s, 80s, who have adult children at home that they've looked after all their lives, and they have no alternative places for them to go, no appropriate places. We have to do better than that as a society.

I know that Community Living Durham North, too, which also serves my riding, the front thing on their website was that the member from Whitby–Oshawa has a motion today and to please go and support. So I know that we share Durham, as many other colleagues in the Legislature do. Certainly they're supportive of this initiative that's moved forward.

I know there are other service providers. I know that Kawartha Participation Projects do their best to provide self-directed support, complex care and affordable housing for people with diverse needs so they can live independently a little bit longer, and some supports that are out there.

There are a lot of statistics that you've heard today. There's no question that's true. We're all living it in our ridings, the thousands of people waiting for just the Passport program alone. So if there is a select committee that we can co-ordinate all parties to further this help for

these people, I am certainly 100% supportive. Thank you for the time, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm also happy to support this resolution. I was on that Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions.

I guess I'd like to talk very briefly about the value and the difference between a select committee and a standing committee. Standing committees, which we normally would have set up in this chamber, have very limited scope in what they can review and what they can discuss, limited to specific pieces of legislations, specific ministries.

The beauty of a standing committee is that it can cover so many different ministries, and if anything, what this resolution does is it reinforces just how many ministries need to be part of the discussion: education; post-secondary education; economic development, with the jobs side of it; housing; health; community and social services.

If a select committee was able to delve into the issues raised by the motion, then you actually start looking at the individual as a whole and not try to hive them off by different ministries and solve it ministry by ministry—because if we learned anything from the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, it's that you don't successfully assist an individual if you try to do it that way.

I'm pleased to support the resolution. We could all spend a lot of time talking about individual families within our communities that we have tried to help and have been blocked by waiting lists and by no availability. The scope of the motion is absolutely detailed, but there's also a parameter where it talks about timelines that will motivate anyone who is lucky enough to participate in that committee move.

I hope that what we would see is something that happened very quickly with the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, and that was that the focus very quickly became the families, the individuals; we weren't talking about, "Well, we can't do that because the ministries don't do that"—or individual sectors. We very quickly realized that if we wanted to hear from the experts, then we needed to talk to the families and talk to the individuals impacted. I think that the way that the member from Whitby–Oshawa, our deputy leader, has written this motion, the same thing could happen very successfully with this motion if it's passed. I'm pleased to support it, and it sounds like other members of the Legislature feel the same.

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the motion by the member from Whitby–Oshawa on a select committee on developmental services.

Speaker, as you know, because you were one of the members who served on the Select Committee on Mental

Health and Addictions—I, too, was honoured to serve with the member from Whitby–Oshawa on that select committee. What was interesting about the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, as my colleague from Halton has mentioned, is how everybody came together. There was a conscious decision to set aside politics even though there were members from all three parties. There was a conscious decision that the purpose of the committee was not to assign blame for problems that we all knew needed to be addressed, and that our common focus was a common goal and that our common goal—as you know, Speaker, because you were there—was to find solutions.

It was very rewarding, because we heard from people all over the province about what the issues were, how we might address them, and we did ultimately come to a consensus report. Because of the goodwill that went into the formation of that report, because of the careful thought, because we were able to honestly and frankly talk about what was wrong and how we could fix it, I think that report has had a lot of traction. It has had a lot of traction in the mental health community. I know that there are all sorts of ways in which it has impacted government policy. In fact, those initiatives are still moving forward. I recently spoke with a stakeholder group that looks at children's mental health on how that is still influencing policy which is moving forward. My concern, and I'll be quite honest, is: Can we re-create that in this minority atmosphere, where this House has become so poisonous and the atmosphere is so poisonous? I hope that it is possible to recreate that atmosphere, because it will only work if it is a consensus-driven, co-operative atmosphere.

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What did we learn? Like Holly's family—and thank you so much for being here—one of the things that we heard about at the select committee that I think still needs more focus was the gaps in services for people who have dual diagnoses, that you go to the mental health side of the system and the mental health side says, "We don't know how to handle people with a developmental delay," and you go to the developmental services sector and they say, "Well, we don't know what to do with mental health issues. We just do developmental services." If you've got a dual diagnosis, there's a huge gap. We need to focus on that, because I truly believe that that's a place that needs a lot more attention.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: Haldimand–Norfolk.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. Further to this resolution, there is concern out there that this current government is putting people at risk of social exclusion. Essentially, the Ministry of Community and Social Services has created a crisis for young adults with developmental disabilities. I reference a report by the Special Services at Home/Passport Coalition, where families

were devastated to learn that as of April 1, 2012, adults with developmental disabilities were no longer qualified for SSAH, special services at home, once they turned age 18. Many of these same families worked very hard in 1990 to ensure that the government expanded this program to fit their needs. Now they see this hard work going down the drain.

The ministry tells people that funding is available for adults with developmental disabilities through Passport. Families have found this to be a falsehood, as the funding is totally unavailable to many. And to those where it is available, it's not nearly enough and does not cover all the kinds of supports required.

Over the past several years, we've seen what I consider chronic underfunding of developmental services. Supports in place have failed to better the lives of these people. What we've failed to recognize at times is that those with disabilities are not given rights or recourse to challenge the supports and services they are eligible for or those that they do receive. It's been discussed in this House. We can keep people in their homes, whether they're seniors or people with developmental disabilities. It's best for them; it's best for their families. It's best for the government if we financially assist families. We provide the necessary supports. We keep those with developmental disabilities out of government-run programs, which we know can at times be very inefficient and costly.

Speaker, there is a lot of work to be done for a select committee, and I fully support the resolution before the House today.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will use the few seconds that are afforded to me to give my support to the member from Whitby–Oshawa's motion for a select committee on developmental services. She had come to me to talk about her motion, and this is certainly something that I wholeheartedly supported. So here again, I want to publicly say I support her motion; the NDP caucus will be giving its support to this motion, and we will try really hard to make sure that this select committee actually sees the light of day and that we can bring forward recommendations that will make the lives of people easier.

Sorry for your loss.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Whitby–Oshawa, you have two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I would like to end by thanking a number of people—first of all, the members who have participated in the discussion this afternoon: I'd like to thank the members from Hamilton Mountain, Oakville, Leeds–Grenville, Parkdale–High Park, Pickering–Scarborough East, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Dufferin–Caledon, Guelph, Haldimand–Norfolk and Nickel Belt. I'm truly grateful for all of your comments and reasonably optimistic, given the tone that the debate has taken this afternoon.

The concern that has been expressed with respect to whether a select committee can function in a non-partisan manner in a minority government is a valid concern. But to that I would say that I think this is truly a non-partisan issue, and I think there are members here who are committed to helping the families that truly need our help. To the people out there who are watching and to the people who are here listening today: That's what you've elected us to do. You want us to work together; you want us to find real solutions to real problems. I think there's enough goodwill in this House that we will be able to achieve that.

I'd also like to thank the people in the galleries who have attended here today. I'd especially like to thank Holly's family for being here today, for your commitment to all that you've gone through so recently to make sure this doesn't happen to another family.

With that, I'd just like to say thank you to everyone for participating in this debate today. I really think that, with all of us working together, we can really find some solutions to make sure this doesn't happen to another young person and that we will really come up with a report we can be proud of and that will serve its purpose and really help families that truly need our help. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

WATER TESTING

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 58, standing in the name of Mr. Crack.

Mr. Crack has moved private member's notice of motion number 28. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

FIRE PROTECTION AND PREVENTION AMENDMENT ACT (RETROFITTING OF RETIREMENT HOMES WITH AUTOMATIC SPRINKLERS), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PRÉVENTION ET LA PROTECTION CONTRE L'INCENDIE (MODERNISATION DES MAISONS DE RETRAITE PAR L'INSTALLATION D'EXTINCTEURS AUTOMATIQUES)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Miller has moved second reading of Bill 54. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the member would like the bill—

Mr. Paul Miller: Sent to the justice committee. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): — referred to the justice committee.

Agreed? Agreed.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Whenever it happens.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Elliott has moved private member's notice of motion number 27. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT (AIR AMBULANCES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES (SERVICES D'AMBULANCE AÉRIENS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 10, 2012, on the motion for second reading of Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services / Projet de loi 50, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances en ce qui concerne les services d'ambulance aériens.

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

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. While the House is getting itself back in order to proceed with debate, I just want to take a minute to point out that my daughter Erika is here in the gallery. She's just back from eight months in New Zealand and teaching in Indonesia. Welcome.

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

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm honoured to speak, on behalf of the residents of Davenport, to Bill 50, the Ambulance Amendment Act.

I want to quickly summarize some of the proposals within Bill 50. This bill allows cabinet to appoint representatives to the board of designated air ambulance service providers. It also allows cabinet to appoint a supervisor or a special investigator, as can now be done in hospitals. It allows the minister to issue directives to

air ambulance providers. It allows for amendment of the accountability agreement at any point without consultation with the service provider; that's something that did not occur before. Finally, it offers some protection to whistle-blowers within air ambulance providers.

These are not bad proposals, but these proposals do not exist in a vacuum. We must consider the history behind this bill and how we got here in the first place, to determine whether it really addresses the problems at hand. The reality is that the government had similar tools available to it in the previous performance agreement with Ornge, and the fact is, as we all know, that these tools were not used.

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The reality is that members of the government did in fact have an idea of the waste, the mismanagement, the gross misuse of Ontario's tax dollars, and this government did nothing about it. Members of the opposition and our previous leader, Mr. Howard Hampton, raised concerns about Ornge, asked about Dr. Mazza's salary, filed freedom-of-information requests years before this scandal broke and were stonewalled by this government. Again, this government did nothing.

It took the Auditor General releasing his report on Ornge for the Minister of Health to introduce this bill. Coincidentally, it was introduced on the very same day. Even then, this bill, while offering a few tools for oversight, is dependent upon a government that actually cares to investigate, to make use of the tools available to them to look at their ministries, their services and their agencies critically. Given the history behind Ornge and the reality that the government turned a blind eye to what was happening there, how do members across the aisle expect the NDP and the opposition to trust that that oversight will be achieved with Bill 50?

Bill 50 does not go far enough. I've heard members across the aisle talk about how this legislation was prepared by a senior lawyer from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care who had nothing to do with Ornge. That's good. I'm not a lawyer, though, but I do know that putting all of your eggs in one basket is not the way to achieve proper oversight. Trusting the government alone, and I should say trusting this government alone in particular, to monitor organizations like Ornge when they've failed to do so is not proper oversight. It's not a solution that reflects the reality of the problems that we are facing. It's not a solution that will address and prevent the problems that Ontarians have had to pay for in this case, sometimes with their lives.

The solutions that the government is offering in Bill 50, while not innately bad, have in many ways already been tried. We trusted the government to make use of oversight tools, the oversight tools that were available to them, and we were let down, all of us. We need to do this better. We need the government to do this better. We need to prevent this type of situation from occurring again. We need to ensure that proper mechanisms and tools are available to the public, opposition and stakeholders to help prevent this type of scandal from occur-

ring again, whether within Ornge or within another government service.

There are significant ways we can increase accountability and oversight. We can achieve better oversight by allowing parties to access information about Ornge through freedom-of-information requests. That way, we'll not be limited by the will of the government of the time in terms of what information is disclosed and what questions are asked. I think that organizations that know that they are subject to FOIs behave more responsibly and transparently. Then, hopefully, we can avoid another situation where a minister can beg ignorance over the million-dollar salaries being paid out to one of their agencies.

We can achieve better oversight by enabling the Legislature to call Ornge to government agencies. The ability to call an agency to a committee of the Legislature is one of the only tools the public and opposition parties have to hold the government to account. By calling them to government agencies, to that committee, we can ask the tough questions, peel back the layers and get at the truth.

We can achieve proper oversight by involving the Ombudsman. As an independent third party, the Ombudsman provides oversight that is an essential element for responsive and democratic public services. In Ontario, we need somewhere to turn where something goes wrong. This should be a third party whose key interest is the well-being of Ontarians, not covering up for errors under their watch.

The fact that this government has been unwilling to grant this oversight really raises questions about how seriously they take this disaster and how invested they are in preventing a future one. Unfortunately, Bill 50 does not include these measures of oversight. This is something our party will be taking up in committee.

While I was preparing my notes for today, I could not help but think about the budget bill, Bill 55. As we learn more about Ornge, we hear not only about the mismanagement, but about the deliberate fleecing of Ontarians, the deliberate ways in which members of Ornge set up a complex web of corporate schemes to benefit themselves and to make millions of dollars off of a government service intended to assist Ontarians in times of emergency.

I cannot help but remember that this same government snuck into the budget bill the power to privatize all government services where they deemed fit, and that the government is still actively seeking an opportunity to privatize services and programs. Even just today, there were announcements of privatization plans within our transit system.

Yet when an absolute disaster, a tragedy, results from privatization and for-profit schemes, this is how the government responds. The government still refuses to take any responsibility. They hide the truth. They refuse to allow a committee to be established even though it was the will of the Legislature, something the Minister of Health promised to respect. They present half-baked

legislation like Bill 50, and they boldly claim that it is enough. Speaker, we all know that it's not enough and that the changes that must occur, in all honesty, go far deeper than this bill.

There are a number of government bills before the Legislature where one of the key problems with the bill is the question of accountability and oversight. This concerns me, it concerns my friends here and it concerns all Ontarians. I hope that the government is ready to put in hard work to swallow their egos and listen to the members of the NDP and the opposition in committee because, evidently, they need some assistance in establishing effective mechanisms of accountability and oversight. We will gladly provide that assistance.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Mr. Jim Wilson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Simcoe West.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the waiving of notice for Mr. Klees's ballot item for private members' public business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is there consent to waive notice for the movement of the motion? Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I move that notice be waived for ballot item number 61.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT (AIR AMBULANCES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES (SERVICES D'AMBULANCE AÉRIENS)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We will revert to the rotation in questions and comments again. I recognize the member for Guelph.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to respond to the remarks on Bill 50 by the member from Davenport.

I'm sometimes quite amazed when I sit in the House about how little of the testimony that we've heard at public accounts on Ornge actually seems to have been really heard. The member went on about how everybody should have known what Mazza was making and why didn't we reveal that, because the then leader of the third party had an FOI.

What we've heard at the public accounts committee, Speaker, is that not even the chair of the board of Ornge knew what Mazza was making. In fact, between the time he appeared to us the first time and said the compensation was all in order and the time he appeared the second

time, he had actually changed his story. He had discovered in the meantime, between his first and second appearance, that in fact there was compensation he didn't even know about as the chairman of the board. So this whole sort of fiction that "Oh well, the minister should have known" is just that. If the chair of the board can't even keep track of where the CEO's salary and other compensation is coming from, there's a problem.

We admit there's a problem. That's what this legislation is about. In my view, one of the most important things is that the minister will now have the authority to send in a supervisor to Ornge and to take over and to find out what's really going on and to make sure that it's properly managed. That's what Bill 50 does.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I respect the member from Davenport raising the issue.

If you look at the preamble of the bill, a section there says, "Protection is provided" in Bill 50 "for whistle-blowers with regard to designated air ambulance service providers." The real story is that the minister actually said—article 1, the minister assures that no whistle-blower would be fired for testifying about Ornge, February 22. The real story here is, saying one thing and doing another. This is why no one has trust anymore for the minister and for anything to do with Ornge, and I'm not surprised

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Here's an August 5 article from the Star. It's by Kevin Donovan and Tanya Talaga. It says, "Ornge Investigation: Whistle-blower Suspended After Testifying at Probe." It goes on to say, "Veteran helicopter pilot Bruce Wade was suspended with pay Thursday along with another unnamed Ornge employee. Both work out of the Thunder Bay regional centre."

There are employees at many levels within the organization who agree with our suspicions. In fact, it was questioned here by Mr. Klees for months on end, and yet the minister sits there smugly, almost laughing at the rest of us for trying to get to the bottom of another Liberal scandal.

Today, getting off topic a bit, we questioned the Minister of Energy on the matter of privilege, and that minister was almost smiling in a very cynical way, kind of like a lawyer looking at the judge, giving him the eye in terms of—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no. In fact this is the same issue on Bill 50.

I wouldn't trust a thing they said. That's the real truth here. It's about trust. That's what Premier McGuinty has lost: the trust of the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to add to the comments of my colleague from Davenport, who quite succinctly demonstrated the need for us to have the proper oversight, the need that was lacking, ultimately, from the

inception of the Ornge air ambulance program, a program that was designed by those movers and shakers in the Liberal Party who had connections and developed them quite profitably in the delivery of the service. We know that individuals made out handsomely through the delivery of the helicopter service. We know that patient care was compromised. We know that we had to dig. We know that the OPP has had to investigate. We know that monies were lost—\$25 million—completely vaporized. Add that to the \$190 million for the Mississauga gas plant, and we're getting up and up in the numbers, money that is just absolutely vaporized by this government without any tangible results in the end. It is one of the reasons that I believe the government needs to be changed ultimately. That's why I'm here: to ensure that we put competent people in place, and competency.

Certainly, I am happy to play a role in highlighting some of the issues that Ontarians are concerned about, which are, of course, the proper use of their money, the proper delivery of our vital health care services, and the accountability that has been missing within this government. So I'm pleased to join the debate.

I hope that the government takes our recommendations seriously when it comes to giving oversight and whistle-blower protection some credence in this bill, because it certainly is not built into it. We will have to force that upon them, and I'm happy to do so.

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: I just wanted to start off by responding to some of what we heard.

Lynne Golding was the solicitor for Ornge from 2000 on, and she was there till 2009, and so we have to look at the facts that came out for that.

I'd like to say who drafted the new agreement and who drafted Bill 50. It was Carole McKeogh. She was deputy director, legal services branch, a most senior person in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. She came to committee, and we asked her questions. I'll just read from Hansard: "I've been a deputy director with the legal services branch of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. I became involved in providing legal services for the ministry in connection with Ornge in January 2012. At that time, I was asked to prepare an amended performance agreement between the ministry and Ornge. This amended agreement was signed by both parties on March 19, 2012. I was also involved in the development of the proposed amendments to the Ambulance Act"—which we're talking about now.

This is the senior solicitor for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, deputy director with the legal services branch: "In my view, the amended performance agreement and the proposed legislation, if passed, provide a strong and effective response to address the concerns identified in the Auditor General's report on Ornge. I would like to speak to you briefly about these two initiatives."

This was a senior person who was brought in—it was partially because of her seniority but partially because of

the workload, she said—to draft the new performance agreement and to draft Bill 50. It will take some time to go through a lot of what she said, but in Hansard here, and I'll read from it later, she has said definitively that this new performance agreement and Bill 50, the new legislation, will provide the oversight that Ornge is working toward.

That's what we want to do in this House: Get that bill passed so that we can go on with making Ornge more transparent and more responsible.

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

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you to the members from Guelph, Durham, Essex and Ottawa–Orléans.

Speaker, it's clear that this government would desperately like to change the channel. It's also clear that the people of Ontario have lost faith in this government. They simply don't trust them, and it's clear they shouldn't be trusted. This government refuses to listen. It continues down the path of privatization and then acts surprised when their private friends take the money and run. We know that we have to change the channel in a real way.

As my brother here from Essex said, we need to change the government. We're tired of this government making deals with their friends and insiders. We're tired of the lack of transparency, whether that's in the environment file, where the Environmental Commissioner continues to give scathing reports about the way the Environmental Bill of Rights is being denied. We're tired of the government withholding documents. We've got to make it clear: It's not this Liberal government that's important; it's about the people of Ontario.

When I hear members on the other side try to downplay this or distract from this issue, I think about the hundreds of millions of dollars that have been flushed down the drain, and how badly we need that money for people in my riding and in ridings across Ontario. There are people who need hospital beds. There are people who need their schools repaired. They need programs in their schools. They need child care. They need welfare. They need a jobs strategy. Instead, we have a government that is absolutely disrespectful with the hard-earned money that taxpayers in this province pay every day.

Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

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

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I rise today to voice my concerns regarding the government's Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services. This Liberal government has put forth this bill as a knee-jerk and self-serving reaction to divert attention from their leading role in the Ornge air ambulance scandal.

If you have been following the Ornge scandal at the public accounts committee of the Legislature, I'm sure you'll agree that the Liberals' serious incompetence in this file is outstanding. It is alarming that this government has potentially left Ontarians at risk because an air

ambulance may take too long or may not come at all. I look forward to the results of the coroner's inquiry regarding the deaths that occurred during Ornge's operation since 2006.

Ornge was a start-up company with no aircraft, although it was tasked with the operation of Ontario's air ambulance service. They had little more than a hope and a dream to set up this not-for-profit firm. The former CEO, Dr. Chris Mazza, drew a paycheque of \$1.4 million that was not disclosed on the sunshine list. Other Ornge executives received paycheques that should have been disclosed as well. Not only were the paycheques exorbitant, but they were kept secret.

Ornge set up for-profit entities to circumvent the rules of salary disclosure as well as leverage public dollars for private benefit. Only 3% of the profits came back to the public purse. These for-profit companies were started in order to sell Ornge's business model for air ambulance service to the world. No one asked Ornge to do this. No one asked Ornge to go worldwide at all, particularly before they had mastered the provision of air ambulance service here in Ontario.

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Since January 2006, Ornge was paid over \$730 million by the province of Ontario. In return, we have a mediocre air ambulance service that may still be proven to have put lives at risk. We have several former employees of Ornge with graduate degrees from university paid for by the province. We have a former CEO that had the company pay for the mortgage on his house. We have questionable business deals and possible kickback payments. Last but not least, we have a fleet of Ornge-designed helicopters that were supposed to be dependable workhorses but that don't even allow medical technicians to perform CPR on patients being transported or to use the same intravenous tubing that hospitals use.

In response to question after question in this House and at committee, they duck, dive and dodge the simple fact that they are at fault in this failed scheme. This government allowed this operation to be organized this way. The Minister of Health did not need the special powers that would be given by Bill 50; the minister has had the power to intervene in Ornge all along. This minister's lack of judgment told her not to act to protect Ontarians. Nothing in Bill 50 reverses that fact, nothing in Bill 50 brings the culpable to justice, and nothing in this Bill 50 prevents another scandal.

This government, through its minister, abdicated its responsibility and let Ornge play around with taxpayer money like it was water. This government allowed patient care to be trumped by personal profit and grandiose schemes. This government still does not accept responsibility for this awful mess.

This Liberal government does not value oversight and accountability. It is plagued by its own managerial shortcomings because it skims over the details of a business deal, trusting lawyers to close loopholes. They shrug off accountability as disruptive to their agenda. They shirk their responsibility to provide oversight because

they've got better things to do—I guess other things like growing the size and cost of government, as they have been doing.

This government fails to protect the taxpayer. It started as soon as they took office in 2003. In their first budget, this government brought in the biggest single tax hike in Ontario's history, the \$600 health care premium or health care tax. On its surface, this egregious tax grab was to fund Ontario's growing health care costs. Instead, it was wasted. Wasted on what? Well, the first thing our hard-earned tax money was flung towards was eHealth. This was the government's first billion-dollar boondoggle. EHealth relied on consultants, many of whom were Liberal insiders picked fresh from government. These consultants were allowed to let questionable contracts because this government didn't put in proper controls. Paid for with public dollars, the majority of these contracts were piecemeal, filled with ad hoc change orders, and didn't deliver what was promised.

Recently, I brought this up with the former head of the Ontario Medical Association, and he confirmed that we are nowhere close to a usable system of electronic health records. Years and years after McGuinty and his Liberals took us down this path, the job is still not done. Today, eHealth has 700 employees, billions of dollars wasted.

Unfortunately, the Ornge scandal is not over. The public accounts committee has not finished its work. The committee must come forward with its recommendations. Only then will the public be reassured that the bleeding has stopped. Only then will we have confidence in the administration of our air ambulance service.

Bill 50 does not solve the problems found with Ornge. As we know, the minister had the power all along to intervene, to ask questions, to change the direction of this agency. Without a vigilant and capable health minister, Ornge could happen again. Without a minister who is willing to step in and make things right before things spiral out of control, Ornge could happen again.

The main reason we know about the problems at Ornge is that employees of the beleaguered agency came forward with their information. These are the whistle-blowers we admire for their courage and dedication to good government service, although many people did not come forward because they were afraid of losing their job. Proper whistle-blower protection was not there to remove their apprehension. We need to protect employees who come forward. We need real whistle-blower protection. Bill 50 does not provide across-the-board protection for whistle-blowers.

As an example of this government's contempt, this bill imposes limits on which individuals are protected and who these individuals can approach with information. If this government was serious about protecting whistle-blowers, this bill would provide a formal process through the Office of the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman would reassure any individual that their confidentiality is secure and their concerns will be properly investigated. Given that Bill 50 does not provide any new powers to the minister and Bill 50 does not adequately protect whistle-

blowers, Bill 50 amounts to little more than a smoke-screen for this government. It gives the appearance of a strong response to the Ornge scandal. In truth, the strong response was required from this government years ago when the problems were beginning to rear their head. In fact, these problems could have been prevented from the start by an ironclad performance agreement with this agency.

This health minister and this government cannot run from their mistakes. Bill 50 is not worth our vote. I cannot support this government's weak attempt at accountability and oversight. This bill will not put us on the right path. We all need to vote this bill down.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Just to add my comments to what we've already heard, I wanted to read into the record some of what Liberals have said about the scandal at Ornge when they were called to testify.

George Smitherman, for example, who is a contender for the leadership of the Liberal Party, I gather, but who was a health minister, said that "the ministry bears a lot of responsibility." He also said, "I cannot imagine a circumstance where I would have tolerated a situation where Dr. Mazza ended up making \$1.4 million." So he certainly felt that the Ministry of Health had responsibility. He said, "The real question I have is, at what point did they decide that they were dealing with what I described as a rogue entity, and what steps did they take at that time to bring it to heel?" We in the New Democratic Party couldn't say it better.

Mr. Apps, a lawyer for the Liberal Party, I gather, who was intimately involved in the scandal at Ornge, said that "the government was thoroughly, painstakingly and, in all cases, truthfully briefed in advance of Ornge taking any of these actions." I mean, I can't imagine more damning evidence than that. This is from their own party. This is not from opposition members. This was in sworn testimony before the committee.

We're talking about \$200 million that was spent with no recompense, \$25 million—bang—out the window, and nobody knows where it went, and again, all under the presumed oversight of a ministry that clearly was in breach of their responsibilities. Don't take my word for it, Mr. Speaker or those listening. Take the Liberal Party's word for it: their lawyer, their former Minister of Health. Listen to them. We hope that the current Minister of Health does.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I listened really carefully to the members opposite. What we have before us is a well-thought-out bill. In a large government, every government has things in the governance scale that go askew. There is no government in the history of Ontario that hasn't had major problems, from Walkerton to a certain health minister in the NDP government who had to resign in this place.

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The measure of a government is, do you take responsibility for fixing it? The Auditor General was brought in. The police were brought in. The Auditor General has reported on a thoughtful set of measures to correct this. The opposition parties have played politics with this, who have had one of the longest periods of endless, unrelenting, repeated committees that have produced nothing but talk. So you can't support the Auditor General and the government's position. After endless committee meetings, you seem to be clueless. You haven't come up with a single alternative amendment, proposal or solution. Every third party who's looked at this said that these reforms are correct and necessary to correct it—not just for Ornge, but they set a new standard.

There's one party in this House that's actually recognized that this was ill-conceived and problematic and has corrected it. Where are you? Where are your solutions? Why has this committee been all about talk, no accountability, no resolution? This sounds a lot like the way you guys ran things when you were on this side of the House: not taking responsibility.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: I think if anyone's been clueless throughout this whole process, it's been the government. Admittedly, there have been major problems. Even if I go back to the time when we were in government, our current House leader, who was Minister of Health, when there were some issues facing him as Minister of Health, stepped down until the issue was resolved—I think an admirable thing to do. He took his seat back in his ministry when it was found that there was no problem. I think it would have been incumbent upon the current minister to do the exact same thing.

We see the creation of layers of bureaucracy from this government to create smokescreens for their problems. We saw it with the LHINs and the CCACs. They even used school boards at times as smokescreens to try to blur their responsibility and accountability for actions they take or don't take—even worse.

The absence of any whistle blower protection in this bill is, in and of itself, a giant miss. How do you miss this? In my own riding in Barrie, I know of an employee of Ornge who wants to come forward. He won't come forward because he knows his job is in jeopardy. We've already seen at least one person lose their job over their exposure of what's happening at Ornge. How can you have a major piece of legislation like this, that's supposed to fix a problem at Ornge, that doesn't do anything to protect the very people who can bring forward the information that we need to know to find out what really is wrong at the core of this Ornge?

It's window dressing. If the stores in the city of Barrie downtown had this much window dressing in those empty shops, we'd be laughing. Let's talk about actually doing what's right and clearing up this problem. This bill clearly doesn't do it. We need to get to the core of this issue and deal with the real problems, not just put

window dressing on them, as this government continues to do.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I've said it before; I will say it again, because I think it is incredibly poignant: It's not about taking responsibility for fixing the problem, as this bill attempts to do. It is about taking responsibility for creating the problem in the first place.

We have some fundamental, ideologically opposed positions on whether Ornge should have been created in the first place. It is an exercise in privatization, one that this government has embarked upon for every major policy initiative that we've seen—that I've seen in the nearly one year that I've been here. They want to outsource and privatize the ONTC. I'm fearful that they may want to outsource our teachers in this province and turn to a chartered school type of system because it seems like they're on the radar, they're in the crosshairs. It is a full frontal attack on the public institutions of this province. They can't figure out a way to manage some of the most vital operations. They want to privatize casino gambling in the province, let Donald Trump come in and broker deals with the horse racing associations. I'll tell you, Donald Trump isn't going to do that. He's going to take all the money, all the profit he can, because he's a capitalist. When you deal with capitalists, that's what their goal is: to gain as much capital as possible. Donald Trump isn't going to give you a good deal, and neither did Chris Mazza. Now you're finding that out today, and you're trying to put Band-Aids on it without any more accountability, without whistle-blower protection. I don't think Donald Trump would want whistle-blower protection built into any agreements either.

I'm fearful that this government goes on any longer than it absolutely has to deliver these vital services.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I believe it's incumbent upon the government to have a quorum in this House. I don't think we have a quorum.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): A quorum is here, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I understand a quorum is present.

The member Carleton–Mississippi Mills, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I'd like to thank the different members for their comments: the member from Parkdale–High Park, the member from Toronto Centre, the member from Barrie and the member from Essex.

The problems with Ornge that are not solved by Bill 50 are the complete lack of oversight and accountability. The oversight and accountability should have been and could have been provided by the government, by the Minister of Health. She had all the power and she had all the authority to do that, and Bill 50 is absolutely unneces-

sary. It is window dressing, as my colleague has mentioned, to try to cover up the real problem.

This lack of oversight and accountability has resulted in the waste of millions of dollars. We've had terrible service. There have been people's lives put at risk because of poor air ambulance service.

We wasted an awful pile of time in this Legislature discussing a problem that could have been solved by proper oversight and accountability that could have been in place and should have been in place—was in place—and the minister failed to act long ago. This House could have much better spent its time talking about constructive things like how to run this province better, rein in our spending and do a good job of government.

Whistle-blower protection would have helped. This bill does a little bit of that, but it's not good enough.

The problem of Ornge is a common one with this government. We've seen the same thing with eHealth. We've seen it with Presto cards. That will only change when we adopt a philosophy of good government oversight and good government accountability.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's amazing to me, Speaker, that the government that brought in this legislation will not get on their feet and defend it. That is the strongest argument that we can have about the weakness of this legislation.

They're bringing in legislation, all of which, with the exception of the whistle-blower contents of it, the minister has the authority to deal with now. This bill is nothing but a stall tactic. They don't want to discuss this subject. The fact that they don't want to speak to it is the strongest argument that we have.

The authority they have in this case rests in the hands of the minister. She can do all the things now that this bill purportedly gives her authority to do. So this bill becomes redundant. It's already in her hands to do most of what this bill gives them the authority to do.

The fact is that they don't want this bill to be debated; they don't want this entire issue of Ornge helicopters to be talked about. The fact is that two of the three members that we had on the estimates committee when this issue was before them when they were having hearings on Ornge were intimidated, were threatened with intimidation or actually intimidated. The member for Haldimand-Norfolk received subpoenas, received cease-and-desist orders in the mail. Those kinds of things just don't happen in Ontario. My experience with Canadian politics goes back to the point when—I think when I was six months old. My mother told me that I was taken to a victory—I wasn't six months, I was four months old—in the August 8, 1943, election, when my grandfather was elected in Peel—not for the first time. But my politics goes back to that point. I've been involved in politics ever since, and I've never seen anything like this scandal.

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The minister from Winnipeg talks about how every government has their problems. Not like this, they don't.

You couple this with the \$190-million fiasco of the cancellation of a power plant that should be a Liberal election expense—I mean, these kinds of things are beyond the pale, especially in Ontario politics. Third World countries may have things similar to this, but not in Ontario. But here we are debating, or not debating, in the case of the government, the kinds of things that are happening in the Ontario that I love, in the Ontario that so many Ontarians love. People remember how Ontario was the leader in every aspect of Canada, and now we're not. Now we are not.

The member for Newmarket-Aurora received an absolutely despicable letter that was circulated around this chamber; it was circulated to the press—none of it substantiated. None of it could be substantiated; none of it's true. But it's out there. I was disappointed that the Speaker ruled that—he washed his hands of it. He could have initiated an order to have it investigated by the OPP. It's extremely difficult to trace an email. It's difficult and somewhat expensive, but it can be done. There isn't an email sent that can't be traced. But the Speaker decided that it wasn't worth the effort of this chamber. I'm afraid that decision may have just opened the floodgates. Let's see if there aren't innuendo and emails coming out against any one of us. That could happen in the future.

So the level of this House, with these kinds of scandals, is dropping month by month, week by week, day by day. It's a tremendous concern. All Ontarians should be concerned with this issue. We've made the simple request that the Premier should attend the committee hearings, and the Premier has so far denied that request.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would urge the member if he could at least keep his remarks to the bill in front of us.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm sure you would. You know one of the things that this bill talks about—most Speakers would not interrupt a member. I'm not arguing with you, Speaker; I'm just pointing out the fact that most Speakers would not interrupt a member that was attacking a Premier. Most Speakers don't take that kind of a position. You have. The Speaker of the House has.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Halton, the Speaker is standing.

I would just say to the member, I gave you five minutes. I was listening to everything that you said, and I asked you if you would speak to the bill.

Carry on.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Thank you, Speaker. You know, the whistle-blower legislation that's involved in this piece of legislation is weak beyond imagination. A pilot from Ornge came and testified before the committee. Less than three days, or was it four days, later, he was suspended. I think his name was Bruce Wade. He was suspended, and then Ornge asks us to believe that the suspension was in process long before he showed up at the committee. They ask us to believe that. Would there be anybody in this House, outside this House or anybody

who heard that story who would believe that this pilot was going to be suspended even though he didn't attend the committee? I think not.

Now, if a whistle-blower comes in and talks about the things that are happening—and let's be clear about the things that are happening at Ornge. It is alleged that there are many, many trips of land ambulances that were billed for payment but were never taken. That's a prima facie case. If those allegations are proved true, somebody's going to jail. Some of those allegations may come very close to members over there. I wait for that day, because the Ontario I love and the Legislature I love don't put up with this kind of nonsense: the nonsense of Ornge, the nonsense of power plants, the nonsense and the expenditure of taxpayers' dollars that goes on and on and a Premier who won't be accountable for it.

Ontario is on the brink. We can go forward in a progressive way or we can continue along the track that this government has put us on—this government, which has brought Ontario down to this level. It's quite disgusting, to the point where the government now is so afraid of dealing with Ornge issues, they won't even reconvene the committees. That's their last stall tactic. The committees need to be re-established. It's been going on now for two or three weeks of debate. I'm not sure if this has ever happened before in Ontario, and yet it's happening now. You're threatening the very threshold of democracy with your actions right here in Ontario. That has happened. You won't reconvene the committees because you're afraid; you're terrified of what's going to happen in those committees. You are going to be found out. There is no such thing as secrets in this world, and you are going to be found out for what you have done.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities come to order.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: That's okay. I think I'm done here.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I just want to continue with some of the other Liberals' involvement in Ornge, on the heels of what the member from Halton has said. For example, we talked about some of the other Liberals' involvement and what they had to say, like the former health minister. Here we have Premier McGuinty's former chief of staff Don Guy, who billed an average of \$3,670 a month to the law firm Fasken Martineau to provide strategic and public policy advice on Ornge—\$107,000 in total. Or the Liberal Party president, Alfred Apps; again, I noted his comments on Ornge. Working for the same firm, he billed Ornge and the public over \$9 million—I'll repeat that figure: \$9 million—and, of course, the firm's work involved advising Ornge on setting up a web of for-profit subsidiaries, compensation for its executives and whether the organization needed to disclose the \$1.4 million paid to Chris Mazza. So we see that not only were the Liberals intimately involved in the structure of Ornge, not only

were they being briefed, but they were briefing. They were part and parcel of Ornge.

To respond to some of the comments I heard earlier about Bill 50 being the solution, this bill has no real whistle-blower protection, no real public disclosure of salaries—it wouldn't cure the Chris Mazza problem—and critically, no Ombudsman oversight. So when they ask what we suggest, that's what we suggest, along with a select committee that can actually delve into Ornge. There's no question about our recommendations; we've been making them since this fiasco began. The opposition has been very clear about the recommendations and very clear that Bill 50 does not provide those recommendations' answers. Will we send it to committee? We want to, because we're going to amend it so that it does.

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: I want to say I'm very proud of Ontario, I'm proud of this Legislature, and I think the statement by the speaker earlier certainly questions the integrity of the Speaker. I've never heard that before in this House. I think that is terrible.

I also want to correct something. The solicitors for Ornge from 2000 through to 2009 and 2010 who spent \$9 million—it was the Lynne Golding firm. She happens to be the wife of Minister Clement, who brought in the initial work on this in 2000 when he was health minister. I just want to clear that. She's living with a Tory; she's probably a Tory.

I want to get back to the agreement, why Bill 50 is important. I want to say that there is whistle-blower legislation here to protect whistle-blowers. The person who got fired happened to say that he was very—he swore that he would bring down Ornge and he poisoned the workplace. That was the evidence I got out of committee hearings. I think if you have someone working in something as important as air ambulance, you don't want that poisoned workplace. This is what another pilot said was there and was the result of that statement. So I think that should be clarified as well.

I don't have much time, but this is the senior solicitor from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care: "To conclude, the amended performance agreement and the proposed" Bill 50 "changes were introduced in response to the issues at Ornge identified by the Auditor General. They were designed to increase Ornge's accountability and transparency, and to protect the public interest." And all during her say before the committee, she said that this was a good agreement. It answered what the Auditor General wanted. It gives us the transparency. It gives us the responsibility we need.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's interesting to hear some of the discussion here over this afternoon and quite frightening. When you hear the excuse, "Well, the minister didn't know because the chair didn't know"—I wasn't aware that it's a ministry of one. Did they not have the

oversight? I heard very clearly in the few meetings I went to from the witnesses that they did have the oversight. All they had to do was stop the funding, and that would have gotten anything they wanted. They were very clear on that.

It's interesting. We hear the speak that comes out here and how it's really—I don't know if I'm allowed to use the word "deception," but that's what I see it as. They talk about the legal firm that was there. I was there for that session too. What they're not saying is that their advice was different. Their advice was not to allow this to happen. But Ornge and the government did not take their advice, nor did they let them know they weren't taking their advice and they had another firm hired. So let's be truthful here when we talk about what those witnesses actually said. Yes, they did.

We look at some of the bad decisions. You look at the whistle-blowing. I'd like to know, what did this government do to investigate what happened to the suspension? Did they actually look at it, or was this just—I mean, this is just a red herring bill, trying to change the channel. You talked about previous governments. Yes, the ministers did resign. They stepped aside when there was any instance that they may be at fault. We don't see this in this government—and they were reassigned back when they were cleared, and not if they weren't. But where is this type of responsibility? We don't see it anymore. Certainly, the whole time I've been here, first of all, you've spent denying. It was very clear that the member from the NDP—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions or comments?

Point of order, the member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I was going to speak for two minutes. I was going to do two minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): You just did one.

The member for Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to join the debate here again. We have real concerns with Bill 50. It does not go far enough. The details of the bill do not go far enough. The fact that we cannot use freedom of information to get the information we need means that it does not go far enough.

That this government will still not appear before a select committee means that they will not be accountable. That the Premier still refuses to appear before a committee and answer questions means that we lose faith in this government. That there's no Ombudsman oversight means that this bill does not go far enough. That too much power resides within the executive of the government means that there is not enough oversight and that there is not enough whistle-blower protection. That's all very clear. We also know that with proper intention, the government could have done the right thing, that we could have avoided Ornge. The government was warned about it, and they chose not to do that.

I think it's also important, though, to reflect, as the member from Essex said before, that this is an ideo-

logical difference, that we in the NDP strongly believe in public service, that we believe that privatization leads to this kind of corruption, that there is always somebody—the Donald Trumps of this world—who will always get their cut, and our job in this Legislature is to protect the people of Ontario from that kind of cowboy capitalism.

I see tempers flaring here, and I actually appreciate that. I appreciate the frustration in this chamber. I see it with the government because they know that they've done wrong. They know that they should be ashamed of themselves here. They know that privatization of our services is not in the public interest—or at least I would hope that most of them know that. I see members from the Progressive Conservatives also frustrated because they can't bring this government to committee.

And the frustration that I feel is about the fact that there are people in this province who are denied services, who are denied programs, because we've given their money away.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Halton, you have two minutes for reply.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the comments from the members from Parkdale–High Park, Ottawa–Orléans—I'm not sure what his fixation is on Lynne Golding. Yes, she was a lawyer. Yes, she worked for Ornge till 2009. The company certainly went downhill after that. I would point out to the member that she is married to Tony Clement, she doesn't "live" with him, and the connotation that you leave is, quite frankly, disgusting. But I'm beginning to expect that from people on the other side.

The member from Stormont–Dundas–Glengarry, who talked about the Liberals trying to change the channel—he's right on with that one. You've been trying to change the channel by not putting in the committees, by doing all kinds of diversions, by threatening people who sit on the committee. You've taken this House to a new level, a much lower level, much—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask you to withdraw that comment that members of government have threatened two members of your party.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Withdrawn. The two parties, and I would make the comment—I'm not debating with you, but the two members of our caucus were threatened, and I don't know who else would do it, but be that as it may.

The member for Davenport was also very eloquent. He talked about the—

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You just ruled about 30 seconds ago that the remark mentioned by the member from Halton about threatening two members of his caucus was inappropriate. You ruled that he should withdraw that. He withdrew it, and then he stated it again in his speech, so I think he needs to be reprimanded for that or at least told not to keep mentioning any threatening. It's unparliamentary and—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I certainly did not hear the exact words, but if the member did, I would ask you to withdraw it, and that would be your choice.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: If he takes exception to it, then I've been successful. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. But he was also very successful in that he used up all my time, which is the way that they—

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

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope that I can add some comment, without being too inflammatory, on Bill 50.

Now, let's put things in context. I think my good friend the member from Halton spoke with the deepest passion I've heard him speak with in some time. I think he was thinking of a gentler time, before the media and before the television, when his grandfather Kennedy was the Prime Minister of the province of Ontario. I could tell by his emotional tone that he felt the offences on both sides. People become very aggressive here. I think often the Speaker tries to get us to redefine the dignity of the place from time to time. So I'll put that out there. I do have the greatest respect for the member from Halton, and I understand the emotion and the sentiment he brings to his heartfelt remarks.

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I guess Bill 50 itself has to be put into context. The context pretty generally is this: It was an Auditor General's report—probably the AG was tipped off somehow on things untoward going on. In fact, you can tell by reading some of the transcripts that that's indeed what happened. There were people within the organizations who resigned. They didn't say anything, just "I'm outta here. This place is falling apart or corrupt." It's true. I'm not making any of this up for the levity of those viewing today.

When the Auditor General made his remarks, whistles and bells went off. But also, the taste of trust had been broken, both with the employees—and this is another health scandal. That's why everybody kind of links this into eHealth. It's an inability of this government to administer and to take the proper action or responses to lack of disclosure and accountability.

I think that's what the Auditor General was saying in a general way. And when we tried to call this issue before the Auditor General's committee, the public accounts committee, there was all sorts of manoeuvring, if you will, to prevent certain people from attending, people from the ministry as well as the minister herself. In fact the Premier was asked. He tends to in the House, because he's covered by the privilege of the Legislature—but before committee he's almost like a subpoenaed witness. He could be held accountable for things that may or may not have been brought to his attention, as was brought to the attention of the Minister of Energy, by not producing the reports on which he made decisions on behalf of the people of Ontario. He was basically found in contempt on the two energy plants. That's why they're related. We

feel in the Ornge thing, they've done everything to protect the Minister of Health.

Mr. Wilson here, the member from—I'd have to look at my schedule to see his riding is Simcoe-Grey—when he was Minister of Health, he had to step aside. He chose, after some questioning, to step aside. It fractured his career. He was a great minister—Minister of Energy. It was several different ministries that Mr. Wilson had. That minister has now been tarnished, quite frankly. I don't say that in a personal way. Once a minister has been found in contempt by the ruling of the Speaker—and there's now some discussion about will he produce the reports.

We're in the same boat with Ornge. There has been countless millions of dollars wasted. If you look at transcripts, you say, "Holy smokes!" They bought this company from a company that was already providing air ambulance service to the Ministry of Health on contract. They bought it, formed a company, and in that company, they went out and spent millions of dollars on property, millions of dollars on equipment.

The equipment itself, even the helicopter pilots were saying—and I'll be honest. The city of Oshawa airport was trying to have a depot. The operators were telling me, Mr. Speaker, that you couldn't do CPR properly in the interior design of the helicopter. The member from Peterborough had a letter to the minister under procurement about an operator from Peterborough that could provide the interior design for air ambulances. No, they went to Italy.

Then we find out that the person who was hired by the Italian company made \$200,000 or \$300,000. They weren't fit to play tennis. Those kinds of things may sound personal, but they are evidence that the thing was completely—and the people, the professional pilots and that inside the organization must be so disheartened. These are professional people who want to operate a public service with the highest level of standards.

What's the problem here? We should be throwing the doors open and getting this cleaned up. Forget the politics of it all—although at the end of the day, I remember people blaming Mike Harris or Ernie Eves for all these things. The buck stops at the top. I'm sorry; that's how this business works.

There really is no perfect answer to any question, but truth should prevail. When you provide barriers to truth and lose trust with the public, I believe you've been damaged—as the minister was basically accused of that damage. In fact, Minister Bentley wasn't the minister at the time that some of these inappropriate decisions were made. Now they're saying we agreed. Well, why did they sign the original agreements, whether it was Mississauga or Oakville? They made stupid mistakes. Yes, of course we agreed with closing them, but the issue is, the error was when they signed the contracts. They try to make it look like we're the ones who—no, they made a mistake. We agreed with it. So we're right; they're still wrong, because that's going to cost another billion dollars.

This is how it's related. When you see one thing is broken and you suspect another thing is broken—let's

say Ornge, in this case. We said the same thing in eHealth. Even this week, the diabetes registry is not working. They spent \$19 million and don't know anything. In this case here, there's a lot wrong.

Why aren't we having a full public inquiry? That's what Mr. Klees has been trying to get. The politics of that is, doing the right thing is the right policy. That's good politics: to be honest and straightforward with the people and take your hits.

As I said, Mr. Wilson, when he was Minister of Health—I had the privilege of working with him.

That's the honourable thing here, to start by being trustworthy and being responsible—whether it's the Minister of Health stepping aside, or whether it's the Minister of Energy stepping aside or indeed it's the Premier appearing before a committee to get this thing dealt with.

If I go back to this whole energy thing, it ain't over, Mr. Speaker.

They talk about Lynne Golding making so many millions of dollars, through the very respected firm, by the way. Are they accusing the firm—Fasken's is the name of the firm she worked with—of being a bad firm? They should say that outside. If that's what they think, if that's what they actually believe, say it outside. Those firms that provide legal advice to the ministry or to other companies are professional people. They're more professional than the people I've heard speaking here today, including me. So let's not dump them into this.

That whole energy thing is going to cost just short of a billion dollars. I'll tell you why. The clear money is \$300 million for the one plant and \$190 million for the other plant. No, the lawsuit is about loss and risk and damage to the company and their investors. That will be in the courts. The courts aren't free, Mr. Speaker. You know it. If Lynne Golding's company charged so much billing, that's because the mess inside Ornge was so bad that the Auditor General—and they hired the best to get to the bottom of it.

They make fun of those people trying to uncover the truth. That's like laughing at a judge at a murder trial. I don't think it's appropriate.

Bill 50 says they're going to do something about this whole thing for the whistle-blower. I'm in support, by the way, of whistle-blower protection, but if you read the section on it—I've read it—the section in here is pretty wordy. It isn't clear. Quite frankly, it looks at interpreting what they call "retaliation." They're trying to define what retaliation by the employer or the government would be.

Almost every investigative report has to flow through the minister, and now we can't get the ministers to release reports—who said what, when, and all these kinds of things.

I have lost complete confidence in the government. This is only a symbolic gesture. Bill 50, as some people have said, is a shell game. It is. It's nothing, really. It's a deflection so that the Minister of Health won't be held more accountable. She was in charge. She has the keys. When the gun is smoking and it's lying in the desk, you know who's guilty. That's what I say. They would have

stepped aside if they had the honour of this particular Legislature.

This is about trust. At the end of the day, do the right thing. The people of Ontario will understand. The more you fight them, you will pay.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank my colleague the member from Durham for his passionate speech. He raised some very valid points, some that I had not yet considered.

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The fact that any of the complaints will now have to go through the ministry for an investigation prior to any remedies where an employee would bring about concerns: That's interesting, considering we are having a lot of troubles at this point getting documents from various ministries, particularly the Minister of Energy.

I can't imagine that Ornge as an entity will ever be allowed to leave the scrutiny of the public. I don't think they are able to take a step in the wrong direction now with the level of scrutiny that is not only provided, thankfully, by the opposition parties in the House, but also the heavy scrutiny by the media, considering its faults throughout the year. But our concern here on this side of the House is the pattern that is being set here with Bill 50 that really waters down some of the oversight provisions when the government builds these private enterprises, or arm's-length agencies with private undertones. That's what we're concerned about.

I don't think they're getting it right. We think, ultimately, they got it wrong in the first place by even embarking on this venture. Imagine what we could have done if you had done it right: an entity whose sole purpose was to deliver the service of emergency care through air ambulance, fixed-wing or helicopter ambulance. Forget the spinoffs and the expertise and trying to turn it into a corporation. Deliver the service, deliver it right, and provide it to the people of the province of Ontario.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: There seems to be a disconnect between reality and some of the members opposite. Sections 7.7 and 7.2 are all about whistle-blower protection. As a matter of fact, 7.2 puts down one of the clearest definitions that I've seen, and I'm very familiar with whistle-blower legislation in municipalities. This is excellent, state-of-the-art protection of whistle-blowers. What your problem with it is, I can't—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: No. The member from Halton is heckling me again, which I find really interesting because he was so indignant about respect for the House. The member of a party who tabled a budget at a car parts dealer and manufacturer, which was probably one of the biggest insults to this Legislature and its process, has the nerve to get up and lecture us. The member from Halton, whose colleagues the member from Lanark—Frontenac—

Lennox and Addington and the former member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound banged their desks there for days, ignoring the Speaker like two-year-olds, is lecturing us on decorum in the House.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. I'd ask the member from Peterborough, the member from Halton and the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry to come to order.

Minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I can only imagine that former Premier Kennedy hopefully saw better behaviour from his party of the day than this one has.

I have watched a lot of Legislatures. I've had the pleasure of serving in public service at all three orders of government. I never refer to the member from Halton as if he's from Hamilton. Maybe he's joined the municipal wing of his party; they seem to be confused about where Windsor—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister, I'd ask you to keep your comments to the bill.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: At least on this side, Liberals know where Windsor and Winnipeg are.

Mr. Speaker, the reason I'm having to respond to this is because most of what came from the members opposite was ridiculousness and didn't address the issue. But if you want to go four to four on decorum, sir, we have nothing to learn from you, and if those things have found you—if you find those things so offensive, you must be offended when you look in the mirror, sir.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: I have listened with some interest to the debate. Having been involved in the public accounts hearings on the Ornge scandal for the last number of months, having heard from witnesses who have come forward, and having had a conversation as recently as yesterday afternoon with one of those witnesses, Mr. Bruce Wade, who after appearing here was suspended—the grievances filed against him were filed by one of the witnesses who came forward to sing the praises of the Minister of Health and the current acting chief executive of Ornge. And it turned out that every one of those grievances was unfounded after an extensive investigation. He was restored to his position. He was suspended again three days later for medical reasons, supposedly, and was told by the new management of Ornge that he would have to be subjected to a medical exam by a doctor appointed by Ornge—unheard of. That is Ornge. That is the new executive management of Ornge. Intimidation of witnesses—that's what's happening; and a defence of the status quo by the government—that is what's happening.

That's why we look forward to this bill, yes, getting out of this House and into committee so that we can once again get to work and expose how shallow this piece of legislation is. It is nothing less than smoke and mirrors, and what the government should do is get on the side of what is right rather than defend the indefensible.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I just wanted to continue to add. I talked about Alfred Apps and what he had to say about this government's culpability in Ornge, and Don Guy and what he did in terms of that culpability, and what George Smitherman, the former health minister, had to say about this government's culpability.

But interestingly enough, way back in 2010, on November 16, our former leader Howard Hampton also asked Deborah Matthews, then newly in that role, if she would check into Chris Mazza's funding, check into Chris Mazza's salary. You can check Hansard on this. This was 2010. They promised. Mr. Rafi, for the minister, promised to get back to Mr. Hampton at that time—and never did. So this is going back almost three years. Not only did the opposition question the government about this; not only did their own folk warn the government about this. I think it's pretty obvious to the people of Ontario, and certainly the editors of the Star, that this government is culpable where Ornge is concerned.

The question here before us is, is Bill 50 the solution? And our answer in the opposition is, no, it's not. It doesn't go far enough. Certainly we hope to move this bill on to committee. We're going to amend it so that we hope that it does go far enough, because we need Ombudsman oversight, we need real ministerial involvement, we need transparency and we need, as you just heard the member from Newmarket say, a different way of organizing Ornge that is not in place today. That's what we need. That's what we hope to get with Bill 50 at committee, and that's what we haven't had. We haven't had it since 2010, when this government knew full well what was going on at Ornge, and certainly the hearings proved that, although we're still asking for a select committee on this as well. That's what we're about in the New Democratic Party—transparency, responsibility, and actually some value given to the taxpayers and what they want, because they are the final arbiters.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member for Durham, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A very lively and interpretive kind of response, I would say. The member from Essex I think made a couple of very good points, and I'll come back to that in a moment. But I want to thank the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. He talked about decorum. I think we ought to stay away from that a bit. It's Thursday and people tend to be a bit more vocal about things.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Edgy.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, edgy.

I thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora. I have the greatest respect for the time and effort that he has spent in trying to get to the bottom of this scandal.

Let's face it, that's what Bill 50 is. It's more or less a shield against the minister, because they've admitted guilt. Why would they put in a new governance model if they weren't guilty of having a bad one? So they're

guilty. The courts have found them guilty and now they're just trying to cover it up. If you look at this, they're all appointed political hacks. Almost all of the board appointments are through order-in-council, which are political appointments. I don't say they're not competent people, but they'll be loyal to the Premier.

I would say that the final member, from Parkdale–High Park, speaks with great insight and passion.

But the member from Essex—let's end on this point today—brought up the purpose and the connection between Ornge and the power plants. Here's the connection: The power plants is a contempt order by the Speaker. Now here's the other connection: Minister Matthews, the Minister of Health, is going to be challenged on contempt in the coming days. The House leaders know this. She was requested by the member from, I think, Kitchener–Conestoga for information. That information has not been produced. Another example of—the word “cover-up” may be out of order, but I would say the words I would use are “not coming up with the material.” What are they hiding?

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like more time on this.

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

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services. Let me say at the outset that it has been incredibly enlightening being here in the House over the last 10 months or so to get a close-up view of the controversies boiling around Ornge. I would like to commend the dedicated efforts of my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora and the member from Nickel Belt.

Once a poster child for the province's health care thinking, it has become cemented in the public's mind as a poster child for all the worst practices of this government. Watching the minister's footwork and listening to her wordplay has been especially instructive. To hear her tell it, she was little more than a patsy bamboozled by forces beyond her control. This from the head of the very government ministry that helped construct this house of cards.

The minister's words on the new performance agreement are especially fascinating. I find it somewhat astounding that when this government was constructing its 2005 performance agreement with Ornge, they couldn't seem to agree on the matter of performance. The government didn't think to integrate measures that would ensure that the performance metrics of this agency were tracked at all to ensure that it was always delivering the best possible care for Ontarians. To listen to the Minister of Health tell it, that's just the way things kind of turned out. If you only had the minister's talking points to listen to, you might be convinced that the entire Ornge debacle was some kind of fly-by-night operation that hoodwinked the province. But of course there are other accounts.

Speaker, it is extremely hard to look on Bill 50 as anything other than a wag-the-dog reaction to the Auditor General's scathing indictment of the agency and the government that was supposed to oversee it. Both documents were released the same day, after all. Bill 50 is not as constructive a reaction as you might hope for. It's not proactive in the right spirit. It seems like it was created as a tool of deflection before anything else. This government has been getting hammered over the parade of scandals at Ornge for months, Mr. Speaker—months. It's not as if they lacked advanced warning; they had been getting red flags in their faces for months if not years before their scandal broke open on the front page of the *Toronto Star*.

Even after releasing his 2011 annual report, a damning 460-page doorstop that catalogued the mismanagement and free-form spending sprees of the government, the Auditor General had to double back to Ornge so that his staff could map out the enormity of what had gone wrong—another 42 pages. Things got bad, and then things got worse. I guess you know the tune. So here we are trying to bolt the door after the horses have bolted.

The minister always takes great pain to pay tribute to the men and women on the front lines of Ornge, and I would like to salute them as well. It's certainly not their fault that they were set adrift by this government. They went above and beyond, making the best of whatever they were given. I have enormous respect for the professionalism, expertise and composure of Ontario's first responders and front-liners. The pilots, the paramedics, the engineers, dispatchers and administrators at Ornge should not become collateral damage of this government's mismanagement. These individuals hold our communities together whenever and wherever the fabric of our communities is strained, frayed and torn by suffering and tragedy.

I would like to thank the whistle-blowers at Ornge who stood up for patients and Ontarians when the ministers would not. Without their courageous disclosure, we would only have learned a fraction of what we know now. Without them, the abuses and the indulgences might have carried on without restraint, and this agency could have strayed much further into the fog.

Yet despite all of that, or perhaps because of that, the bill before us does not seem to attach much real value to whistle-blowers. In fact, the legislation arguably reins in whistle-blowers by failing to extend across-the-board protection to all individuals. The message that the government sends is that it's fine for some employees to be whistle-blowers, just not all employees. It's okay for whistle-blowers to reach out to some people in the name of protecting the public interest, but not others.

When you place restrictions on this kind of disclosure, you turn acts of conscience into thought crimes. How shameful is that, Mr. Speaker? It certainly speaks to a certain kind of alliance to transparency and accountability. It captures a prickly defensiveness and stubborn resistance to inspection. It almost suggests, dare I say it, a certain degree of moral cowardice. Anything less than

comprehensive whistle-blower protection is simply a camouflaged muzzle law.

This is the government's mask slipping again, just as it did a couple of summers ago around the secret G20 law that led to a massive violation of Ontarians' civil rights, just as it has around any number of thin government bills that do more to perpetuate the Liberal spin machine than promote the well-being of Ontarians.

Ironically, what Bill 50 does is underline the failures of this government and its Ministers of Health. I say "ministers" because this mess has been curated by three separate individuals who occupied that office. They are each uniquely flawed, and yet they share one thing in common. They stood idly by, were blind to the red flags and deaf to appeals. There is no reason to believe that amended legislation or Febreezed performance agreements will change those fundamental failures of oversight.

Yet these ministers had their heads in the sand, completely out of touch with this critical component of the most resource-intensive ministry of the entire government. They didn't think to question, couldn't be bothered to use the tools at their disposal, indulged the worst and naively hoped for the best: that nobody would find out, that nothing would go catastrophically wrong.

When we talk about the excess at Ornge, we should not just be talking about an unthinkable waste of precious resources and the haphazard management of a critical link in our health care sector. There was also an excess of entitlement.

Despite the defensive posturing of the Minister of Health and the detached internal dialogue we've seen from some of her colleagues, the fact remains that this government had every authority, had the tools needed to wade into this organization and get it sorted out. We've heard numerous times during this debate that the Minister of Health who presided over Ornge had the power to intervene at any point to stop the circus, to bring the

sideshow to a halt and restore balance and discipline. We've heard legal opinion that under article 15 of the original 2005 performance agreement, as well as the Independent Health Facilities Act—again, Mr. Speaker, there were clear and repeated warnings around Ornge, warnings about a dark whirlpool of financial irregularities; awestruck accounts of sky-high executive salaries; grave details about operational shortcomings that put the lives of staff and patients at risk. All of it was brushed under the carpet by some of the highest-ranking members of this government. It's shameful, Mr. Speaker—shameful.

Where was this leadership years ago when the seeds of this scandal were first scattered on the wind? And where is the leadership now? Is Bill 50 really the best this government can muster? Obviously committee work will tune things up, but as a starting point, Bill 50 is sorely wanting. It seems to point to the fact that this government has not truly absorbed the lessons of its scandal, which is a scandal in itself.

We have logged enough time together in this House to have a fair bit of shared familiarity when it comes to Ornge. We should all be able to agree that we want to fix it once and for all. If and when this bill goes to committee, it should be amended to reflect a wholesale commitment to transparency and accountability.

Open it to independent inspections by freedom-of-information law. Afford the Ombudsman oversight and investigation powers over Ornge. Demonstrate to a shocked and skeptical public that this government is worthy of their trust, that we hold their best interests paramount. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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 of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
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 Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
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 Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	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 Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
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