



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

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de l'Ontario

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 24 April 2012

Mardi 24 avril 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Tuesday 24 April 2012

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mardi 24 avril 2012

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES
AMENDMENT ACT (RENT
INCREASE GUIDELINE), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA LOCATION
À USAGE D'HABITATION
(TAUX LÉGAL D'AUGMENTATION
DES LOYERS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 17, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 19, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of the rent increase guideline / *Projet de loi 19, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation en ce qui concerne le taux légal d'augmentation des loyers.*

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd like to thank the members from our caucus, the member from Burlington as well as the member from Prince Edward–Hastings, for their thoughtful words on this particular bill a few days ago.

You know, while the comments from my colleagues opposite no doubt come from the same desire we all share to make Ontario a better place for families, I'm afraid we're doing the province a disservice by debating a piece of legislation that does so little at a time when families are facing cost-of-living increases directly related to this government's out-of-control spending. It should come as no surprise that I oppose this bill. The spirit behind it may be sound, but in practice, it falls short of the action needed to help Ontario families.

As I speak, there are families across the province waiting as long as three years for a place within an affordable housing unit. We have over half a million people out of work in Ontario; unemployment rates in this province have been beating the national average month after month for years on end now. Yet this bill sadly does nothing to address the fiscal crisis created by the members opposite. It does not respond to the hardship endured by Ontario families, who must wait in line for affordable options while their government does nothing to address one of

the root problems: the inability to keep up with the cost of living.

That brings me to my next point, Speaker, lest anyone accuse me of getting off topic. It's amazing to me that the minister would introduce such a bill that caps the rent increases landlords may enact without considering the costs that her own government has imposed on those same landlords and small business owners over their eight years at the steering wheel. As I say, this bill is admirable in spirit. It attempts, it seems, to control rent increases for tenants and claims to look after those tenants' well-being. Rent increases are an unpleasant fact of life, and I'm sure there are very few landlords who, having cultivated an open and friendly relationship with their tenants, enjoy having to raise rents. Yet revenues must keep pace with the cost of doing business. That's the economic model that Ontario operates on.

So what are some of the factors that increase the cost of doing business? Well, energy rates, certainly; taxes, most definitely; the costs absorbed by day-to-day necessities of running a rental property; landscaping; snow removal in our winter months; and basic maintenance to keep the buildings liveable for tenants and attractive for prospective customers.

Has the cost of energy gone up in Ontario? Yes, it has. Have there been more taxes laden on businesses and consumers? Yes, there have. Has the cost of basic services increased because of those tax hikes? Yes, they have.

My honourable colleague the member from Leeds–Grenville mentioned in this House on March 28 that the cost of operating rental units in Ontario is increasing 6% a year. Yet the minister, as we discussed, seeks to cap rental increases at 2.5% a year. That basically locks Ontario's small business landlords into a 3.5% shortfall, Speaker. It's as if the government is trying to lock our small businesses in the rental housing sector into the same tailspin our province is facing: more and more spending out the door than revenue being brought in. Our province currently spends tens of thousands of dollars each minute more than we take in. Perhaps the McGuinty government is tired of being the only ones in such an unstable predicament. I certainly hope that's not the case, but it seems that way.

So, again, this bill does not address the increased costs currently facing landlords in Ontario because of this government's tax hikes and energy rate increases. Let's just take one example, the HST. When this government brought in the HST, it increased the cost of those basic services like snow removal and lawn care. No landlord worth their salt would allow roadways or parking lots to

go unplowed or lawns to go untended. In fact, in most cases, they cannot, by law. So they pay. And because the cost of those services has risen, they pay more.

Now, I realize I may stand accused of being on the side of landlords and not on the side of Ontario families that can't pay the bills. I want to stress that I do not think the two are mutually exclusive, despite the short-sighted efforts of the bill that we are in fact debating. We must make life more affordable for Ontario families. That's the spirit behind this bill. That's admirable, to some degree. But truly long-lasting affordability and economic growth in Ontario must take both sides, the consumer and the provider, into account. This bill sadly is focused on one to the detriment of the other.

My caucus and I believe that there are solutions, however. Instead of slapping housing landlords with new taxes and new burdens to growth, let's get hydro rates under control. Let's continue to lower business taxes as planned, and let's not put our small businesses, landlords, into a position where they are forced to raise rents at a rapid pace just to keep up with this government's overspending.

Second, let's make life more affordable for Ontario families through sensible economic initiatives, instead of attempting to pass legislation that simply passes the buck to our small business owners.

Third and finally, Speaker, I think there is an elephant in the room that needs to be addressed. The minister and her government can attempt, if they like, to put a cap on rent rates in Ontario, to the detriment of hard-working, honest landlords and cover their ears when real measures for making life more affordable for families are proposed by our caucus. That's their right, I suppose, though ultimately a do-nothing budget and weak legislation accomplishes nothing for the people who sent us here.

Where they do a disservice to the constituents is when they allow \$700 million to walk out the door unaccounted for in an Ornge scandal that put the health care of our families at risk. They do a further disservice to our families when they attempt to block the repeated requests from this side of the House for a select committee that would expose the truth and get answers for taxpayers across the province. In my opinion, the continued debate of weak legislation, while important, is diminished in value in light of this government's refusal to go along with the will in the House in forming a select committee on Ornge. It's for that reason, Speaker, that I call for adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Mr. Nicholls has called adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 0910 to 0940.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask all members to take their seats.

Mr. Nicholls has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I'd ask all those in favour to stand and be counted by the Clerk.

I'd ask all those opposed to please rise and be counted.

I'd ask all members to take their seats.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 26; the nays are 41.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I declare the motion lost.

Mr. Nicholls.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's amazing, when we have some great solutions, the things we'll do to ensure that the opposition is pretty much in full force to hear what some of our wonderful recommendations and solutions are. I thought I would say that just before they had the opportunity of getting up and leaving anyway.

You know, Speaker, it may interest the members opposite to learn that their government spends \$1.8 million more an hour, every hour, than the province actually brings in, in revenue. So with quick math we learned that in the time we just spent voting on the adjournment of the House so that we may get down to substantial issues facing the province, Ontario's economy has lost roughly \$900,000. Imagine what we could do for the families clamouring for affordable housing in Ontario with that money. It's a shame; it truly is.

Speaker, allow me to just quickly recap. We must make life more affordable for Ontario families. That's the spirit behind this bill, and it's admirable, to some degree. But truly long-lasting affordability and economic growth in Ontario must take both sides, the consumer and the provider, into account. Unfortunately, this bill is focused on one to the detriment of the other.

My caucus and I do believe that there are solutions, however. Instead of slapping landlords with new taxes and new burdens to growth, let's get hydro rates under control, let's continue to lower business taxes as planned, and let's not put our small business landlords in a position where they are forced to raise rents at a rapid pace just to keep up with this government's overspending.

Secondly, let's make life more affordable for Ontario families through sensible economic initiatives, instead of attempting to pass legislation that simply passes the buck on to our small business owners.

Thirdly and finally, I think there is an elephant in the room that needs to be addressed. The minister and her government can attempt, if they like, to put a cap on rent rates in Ontario, to the detriment of hard-working, honest landlords, and cover their ears when real measures for making life more affordable for families are proposed by our caucus.

So, Speaker, for these reasons, I cannot support this.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I think the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex spoke very reasonably and compassionately, and I believe he could easily take John

Tory's job on the Live Drive on 1010. He's got that melodious voice, but it shines through. His tone is not just in the sound; it's in its meaning. He's very compassionate and empathetic toward the plight of seniors in Ontario, which is really what he was saying.

Yes, the reasonable part of Bill 19 is rather interesting, because the bill itself, I'd also like viewers to understand—that's the bill right there; there's nothing in it, actually. I don't know why we're spending all this time when we have the economy.

It's important to put on the record, for the Minister of the Environment here this morning, why he adjourned the debate. The reason is because we've been asking relentlessly—and you'll see in question period today—for a select committee dealing with the waste at Ornge, the millions of dollars, the scandalous—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: The Auditor General said it. Everyone has said it. All the officers of the Legislature are clear that there's a problem here. Public accounts is dealing with it. But we need a select committee that can subpoena people like Apps and Chris Mazza and the rest of them. That's why we've called this procedural wrangling: to draw the attention of the public to this important lack of democracy here. That's why the member was making that procedural change, and I support his procedure there, because the people of Ontario need to know that Premier McGuinty can't have a free ride here.

We have trouble in the economy, and this afternoon we'll be voting for a budget that just creates more debt. Who could argue with some of the important public services? No, we don't have a problem with that. But you can't keep spending more than you're earning for long. That's the disservice to the people of Ontario, and I support the comments the member made.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's always a delight to listen to my good friend the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex.

I'd like to remind him that rent control legislation is a Progressive Conservative policy in the province of Ontario. After the 1975 election, there was a minority government. The NDP at that time, under the leadership of Stephen Lewis, campaigned extensively because rents were increasing here in Toronto by some 8%. When Mr. Davis presented his budget, he decided that he was going to be accommodating to the NDP. He brought in rent controls in the province of Ontario to deal with a problem that existed way back in 1975, and we've had variations on rent control legislation since 1975.

I know the member opposite. I would consider him to be a Progressive Conservative, with heavy emphasis on the progressive side of that ledger. I know that when he takes a look at this bill, he will see there are some provisions to help out landlords; for example, extraordinary increases in the cost of municipal taxes and charges or utilities, eligible capital expenditures and increases in operating costs related to security services. So there is a bit of a balance here to help landlords.

He should spend some time and emphasize his progressive roots on this particular piece of legislation. I know that when he takes the opportunity to kind of take a second look at this, he will perhaps be supportive. It will go to committee.

I'd also like to emphasize, Madam Speaker, that 46,000 new jobs were created in the province of Ontario in March, the greatest job increase of any province in Canada. It's good news, and it means there will be investment in housing stock in the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Regardless of the name, I know how to get there, Speaker. Thank you very much.

It's a pleasure to comment on the address by my colleague from Chatham–Kent–Essex, another wonderful address by him. He's proving to be a very, very reasoned and valuable member of this caucus and this Parliament in short order.

But I did want to touch on something, Speaker. I won't use the time in a member's statement, but I did want to inform the House that at 4:39 this morning, our daughter Heidi gave birth to a baby girl, Lilli Elma Joan Couburn, a beautiful baby girl. I have a picture on my BlackBerry; it was taken only an hour or so after her birth. And one thing that struck me very clearly, Speaker, was that her eyes were wide open; she is clearly going to be a Conservative. There's no question about it. So we're very, very pleased. I'm very proud of that and I wanted to inform the House.

0950

But I did also want to talk about Bill 19 and what a fluff piece of legislation this is at a time when this province is in crisis and this government could have been engaged in so many more important things. Our caucus is concerned about, for example, the scandal that involves \$750 million of public taxpayers' money at the Ornge scandal. I know my colleague my friend from Vaughan was wondering what the bells were going on about, but he's not always the most engaged member, because, you know, sometimes I don't see him for a while.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask you to speak to the bill.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, of course—thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The reason that we have rung the bells is because they have refused—even when they promised to establish a select committee to study Ornge, they have refused to do so, and that's why we're ringing the bells, and then we deal with fluff pieces of legislation when this province is in a crisis. We need to do better in this House. Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Today, we're talking about Bill 19, the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, and I wanted to commend the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex for his thoughts on the bill.

We talked about affordable housing in this bill, and the intent of this bill is to try to make life a little more affordable for tenants by keeping the rent increases within the Canadian price index, between 1% and 2.5%. However, the affordability in the rent—when we talk about the cost of living today and what it takes to run a household, it just doesn't encompass rent.

We know today in Ontario that one in five or 20% of Ontario tenant households pays 50% or more of their household income on shelter. So if you can imagine, we talk about affordability. When I think of that, I think, of course, of your rent income but also your jobs. If you have a job, chances are, if it's a good job with benefits, the affordability of your housing is going to be less of a burden on you. That's part of the piece of what Ontarians are facing today; they don't have a good, permanent job with benefits, and they're concerned about how to afford their housing, how to afford to put their kids through school and how to put food on the table.

So though this bill tries to help, it's not enough. We propose that we take the HST off of home heating. That would have helped the affordability, along with the small part of this bill on the rent increases. So it's just not about the rent; it's about having Ontarians have a good-paying job so they can afford the rent, they can afford the heat, they can afford post-secondary education and make life better for them.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Speaker. First of all, I would like to thank the member from Durham, the members from Peterborough, from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and as well from London–Fanshawe. Thank you for your comments. I truly do appreciate all of them.

The member from Peterborough spoke actually very eloquently, but he spoke in the past, when things were different. This is 2012, where energy rates are rising. Unemployment is at an all-time high, and our province is in a severe crisis where we are in danger of having our credit rating lowered, and we know the impact that that will have on the total debt that our province is currently faced with.

My comment is simply, let's not punish small business owners for their desire to provide affordable housing to those who need it most. It's for those reasons, Speaker, that I must say that I cannot support this bill in its present state. Thank you very much, Speaker.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I am happy to rise today to speak to Bill 19, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of the rent increase guideline. Bill 19 amends section 120 of the Residential Tenancies Act with regard to the annual rent increase guidelines. The bill further amends the Residential Tenancies Act.

Bill 19 is the result of the McGuinty government's HST, which added additional costs to several services that landlords require. Examples include snow removal

services, landscaping, many home improvement services and, in many cases, electricity costs and hydro. Landlords have to cover additional costs, and they are small business owners, Speaker, and cannot operate at a loss.

Ontario's economy is in bad shape, and when it comes to housing in the province of Ontario, whether you are a landlord or a tenant or a service provider, the situation is far from perfect. Everyone is facing serious challenges in this province. As we've reminded the government many times, for long over five years now Ontario's unemployment rate has been above the national average. The budget vote that's going to happen soon today doesn't do anything to help the people who are out of work, the almost 600,000 people who are out of work.

The PC Party believes that there needs to be action that results in Ontario becoming more affordable for people to live and operate a business in. Ontario needs to be the number one place in Canada to do business, to create jobs, and to live in and raise a family. Unfortunately, Speaker, the government here today doesn't have what it takes to make Ontario the number one destination.

Under the current government we have seen, in fact, the complete opposite. Life is getting more expensive by the day. The debt continues to grow along with the deficit, and Ontarians continue to suffer for Dalton McGuinty's mismanaged finances. Speaker, I've been on record numerous times saying that this is the most scandal-plagued government that this province has ever seen. We've seen the government spend billions—waste billions—of taxpayers' dollars to save seats in Mississauga and Oakville. We've seen a billion dollars wasted in the eHealth scandal. Let's not forget the millions of dollars to cricket clubs. We've seen the Ornge scandal. We've long called for a select committee on Ornge, and I will move adjournment of the debate here today until we get a select committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Mr. McNaughton has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell. Thank you.

The division bells rang from 0958 to 1015.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Members take their seats.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. Mr. McNaughton has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Those opposed, please stand.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 20; the nays are 41.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I declare the motion lost.

It being past 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.
The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.*

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm honoured to introduce two guests today from my riding of Whitby–Oshawa: first, Mr. Jack Snedden, who is here with the Advocis group in the members' gallery; and also Ms. Tammy Rankin is here today, who is a winner of one of the Victim Services Awards. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I'd like to introduce my friend in the members' gallery: Rochelle Zabitsky.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to welcome representatives from Advocis to the Legislature today. They'll be meeting with several members of the Legislature, and we have a reception later. Specifically, I want to name Roger McMillan, who is in the members' gallery; and Mr. Mark Sampson and Paul Sabat, both of whom are from York region. Mr. Sampson is from the great riding of Newmarket–Aurora, and Mr. Sabat is from Richmond Hill. Welcome to Queen's Park. Good luck with your lobbying today.

Hon. John Gerretsen: This week is national victims awareness week. Earlier today, I had the great pleasure of honouring a number of Ontarians who have shown exceptional commitment to helping victims of crime and their families, and I was joined by a number of members from all side of the House. These individuals have travelled from all across the province to be with us today.

So please help me in welcoming, from Gloucester, the Agoro family: Bashir, Abiola, Moji and Shola Agoro. From the Kingston area, we have Colleen Abeles and Manijeh Moghisi. From Thunder Bay, please welcome Sandra Brown; and from Bethany, Kelly Albin. From London, please welcome Dr. Mohammed Baobaid, and also Megan Walker and Sandra Halko, who are here representing the London abused women's shelter. From Whitby, we have Tammy Rankin. From here in Toronto, we have with us Mary Lou Fassel, as well as Karyn Kennedy and Barb McIntyre, who are here representing the Boost Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention program. From Thornhill, we have David Todd Morganstein. From Woodbridge, may I introduce Leanne Prendergast. And finally, representing the volunteers at the Sexual Assault Centre Hamilton Area, please welcome Shabeeh Ahmad and Lisa Boucher.

Congratulations to all of these individuals.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am mindful of a few of the ovations, so I will be a little bit lenient, but the member has been identified already.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce John Spink, my executive assistant, and his daughter Samantha Mellerson, who is visiting us here from Baltimore, Maryland, in the members' gallery.

Also, welcome to Kelly Albin from Kawartha/Haliburton Victim Services, who received an award earlier today. She's accompanied by her father, John, and Laura Ostler, a long-time advocate for victim services.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise in the House today and introduce some guests from the Financial Advisors Association of Canada. With us today, in the east members' gallery, are Julian Wise from the Wise Advisory Group; Kim Sevcik from the Wise Advisory Group; John Cruise from Wise Riddell Financial Group; and finally, Jamie List from Bearing Capital Partners.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome Alan Anderson of Advocis and a former financial adviser in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga; as well as Darren Sweeney, president of the Kitchener-Waterloo branch of Advocis and a financial adviser with Great-West Life. Thank you and welcome.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome to the Ontario Legislature today the family of page Constantine Tofas from the great riding of Scarborough–Guildwood. Today we have his parents, George and Angela Tofas; sister Stephanie Tofas; his aunt and uncle Patty and Sam Mandrozos; grandparents Peter and Voula Mandrozos; and Kosta and Helen Tofas. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'd like to introduce two young gentlemen from my riding, Kris Kisinger and Jeremy Spira, and all the members from Advocis who are also here from my riding, like Andrew Jones and others.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd like to introduce Marilyn and Murray Heintz from Burlington. They're here this morning. Marilyn was just recently nominated as Burlington Citizen of the Year.

Applause.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know that really wasn't for me.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all of those travelling from the great city of Ottawa today to be here with us from Advocis. In particular, I'd like to recognize a good friend of mine, Kris Birchard. He's in the back here visiting from Ottawa.

Hon. Michael Chan: I would like to welcome Nabila Warsi from the wonderful riding of Markham–Unionville. She is the mother of Safa Warsi, who is the co-captain of the pages today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to welcome the members of Advocis, and a special welcome to John Makela. John was also the very first Warton Willie handler. So without a shadow of a doubt, we welcome him to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'd like to welcome Ms. Sandra Brown, who received an award today from the Attorney General for the Victim Services Awards of Distinction, and her guests, Deputy Grand Chief Mike Metatawabin, Mrs. Aidan Brown and Mr. Colin Anthony-Ito. Thank you very much for being here today, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Julia Munro: It gives me great pleasure to introduce to the chamber Al Jones, also from Advocis, but a resident of the York–Simcoe riding.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: If you look at the very top of the west gallery you'll see two very young faces. They are Genit Jeyakanthan, president of the Canadian Tamil Youth Alliance; and he's joined by another very young and active citizen in Ontario, Thivya Shanthakumar, who is the director of the Human Rights Advocacy Council, to get an impression of how our democracy works today.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome my friend Shannon Neely from Prince Edward–Hastings. He's president of Advocis in eastern Ontario.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to welcome, from the riding of York South–Weston, Asquith Allen, VP provincial of York University Young Liberals; also Michelle Johnston, former president of U of T Liberals; and Kayla Lauzon, president of Brock University Young Liberals.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to welcome two co-op students from my riding of Richmond Hill, Yosef Finkel and Elliot Yeboah, sitting in the public gallery.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I also wanted to welcome members of Advocis who are here today: Mr. Greg Pollock, who is the president and CEO of Advocis; Mr. Roger McMillan, chair of the Ontario provincial advocacy committee; Ms. Linda Gratton, vice-chair of the Ontario provincial advocacy committee; Mr. Kris Birchard, national chair of advocacy, also from Ottawa; David McGruer; Kirk Wrinn; and other members of Advocis Ottawa who are here today. The reception is tonight, from 5 to 7 p.m., in the legislative dining room.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'd like to welcome Mr. Mike Skube. He is here with Advocis as well today, from Thunder Bay.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): With us today from Advocis are members from my riding as well. I want to welcome them here.

I also want to welcome my personal guests here to the House from the great riding of Brant: Gerry and Nancy Smits, and Jamie and Suzie Forbes.

We welcome all of you here, and we welcome everyone here to the House today. Thank you very much.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Premier: Premier, I realize that you and your Liberal caucus acted yesterday as people very worried about the future of your careers, but on this side of the House, we are worried about the future of the province of Ontario. Your budget took a very weak response to a serious problem of taking us down the path of a \$30-billion deficit. Now you're digging the hole even deeper.

1040

Premier, I know you see yesterday as a win, because you fail to grasp the gravity of the crisis that's facing the province of Ontario. I see yesterday as a loss for our province, because the task ahead is so much more difficult now that he's increasing taxes and digging a deeper hole with more spending.

Sir, let me ask you directly: How many more hundreds of millions of dollars will we be forced to borrow for your compromise deal that ratchets up spending in our province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's nice to see the Leader of the Opposition back in the Legislature and off the campaign trail. You know, he's been AWOL—absent without leadership—over the last four years. He should have been here talking about how to make the budget better. Instead, he chose to be out nominating candidates. He chose to be ordering lawn signs.

We're proud of the fact that, not only does this agreement with the third party hold the line on expenditure, it reduces the deficit from what we projected.

That leader is not up to the job. He's been absent without leadership, he's disappointed his party, he's let Ontario down. He ought to be ashamed of his performance over the last—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. I will start by being very specific to members.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, I want to say I'm disappointed that the Premier refused to answer the very first question on his climbdown; his increase in spending and his increase in taxes. His finance minister argues that they were forced to negotiate a deal because we refused to negotiate—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Peterborough, come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: They say they were forced to take this deal because the PCs refused to negotiate. I say back, you've shown yourselves very capable of abandoning your principles without any of our help. It seems to come naturally.

Here's the problem: The credit rating agencies are watching very closely to see what kind of one-off deals, waiting for gimmicks, quick fixes, accounting tricks, a "fly by the seat of your pants" approach to fiscal management—we saw that yesterday with unspecified savings. You have not told us how much more this deal is going to cost us by digging the deficit hole even deeper. So I'll try again: Premier, can you tell us exactly how many more hundreds of millions of dollars we'll have to borrow for your climbdown yesterday?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Leader of the Opposition has had four weeks to sit down with the Premier and the leader of the third party, who worked all weekend to get

this arrangement. Where was the Leader of the Opposition? He was AWOL, absent without leadership.

It was not easy for the third party to come to terms with this. They worked hard. While you were out getting nominated, while you were out ordering lawn signs, while you were out abandoning the people of Ontario and abdicating your responsibility, the leader of the third party and the Premier of this province were working together to find an accord that keeps our expenses where they were.

Mr. Speaker, I'll be reporting more completely. We'll actually lower the deficit for this fiscal year. I'm looking forward to that debate.

You have been absent without leadership. You're not up to the job. You should have been at the table instead of—

Interjections.

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

A quick reminder, everyone: When I get to the second warning and I gave a warning, there will be no second warning. I suspect there isn't anyone in this place who wants to get named.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'll try the Premier again, to respond to the deal, or as the finance minister called it, the "accord" he signed with the third party. Premier, you said very clearly over and over again that you had two basic principles; you drew two lines in the sand. You said that you would not increase taxes, and you said that you would not increase spending. Sir, you broke both of those promises. You're increasing taxes and you're increasing spending in the province of Ontario.

Just because the Premier is so willing to toss his principles overboard doesn't mean that we will. We will stand firmly for lowering spending, not increasing it; for creating the right environment for job creation in the province of Ontario. We want to see Ontario as a leader again in Canada, not falling further and further into the hole.

So, Premier, let me ask you a third time. You said that the NDP proposals would cost \$1 billion: Is that right? Is it more? Please tell us how much deeper the hole will be.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Not only has the Leader of the Opposition been AWOL, absent without leadership, now he's using the numbers completely inappropriately and not giving full—I want to respect the Chair. He's not being respectful of the facts here.

Don't take my word for it. Here's what the Guelph Mercury had to say: "Tim Hudak, the Tory leader with a one-word vocabulary—'No!'—will be left looking as foolish and irrelevant as he has since the election last October."

Here's what the National Post says: "Standing aside from all of this is PC leader Tim Hudak, who shunted himself out.... Some have suggested" that he "miscalculated by ceding the floor to the NDP leader...."

Not only did he miscalculate, he did not fulfill his responsibilities. He has been absent without leadership.

This is the right budget, the right plan that reduces the deficit, holds the line on spending and helps to get Ontario back to balance in the time frames outlined.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, I'll say to the Premier, who is only a few feet in front of me here, that I would actually like an answer to the question. You said that this would cost \$1 billion. Is that accurate? Is it more or less?

More importantly, this gets to leadership. The Premier said he had two principles: One principle was that he wouldn't increase taxes; his other principle was that he would not increase spending. He drew a line in the sand and then he backed away from that line over and over again. And just because the Premier of the province of Ontario is so willing to compromise his principles at the drop of a hat, that doesn't mean we are. That doesn't mean the people of Ontario are. We'll stand firmly on our principles to do the right thing in our province.

Premier, let me ask you for the fourth time: Is it \$1 billion, more or less? How much deeper will the hole now be?

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Leadership is about rolling up your sleeves, about working a minority Parliament, which the leader of the third party and the Premier have done, to arrive at an accord that holds the line on expenses and reduces the deficit.

But again, don't take my word for it. Let's hear what the St. Catharines Standard had to say—not exactly a bastion of liberalism, if there was one: "Tory boss Tim Hudak has already said no, unwisely taking himself and his party out of the ... equation."

You took yourself out of the equation. You did not offer ideas. You've been absent without leadership. Leadership is about working together in a minority Parliament. It's about making tough choices. It's about compromise. You were out getting nominated. You were out buying lawn signs. The Premier and the leader of the third party were working together—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to remind the member to focus on government policy.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not looking for the heckling after I get attention and I move to the leader's question.

Leader.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Speaker. With all due respect, leadership is standing up for what you believe in, and why you were sent here to Queen's Park: to fight each and every day for more jobs and for balancing the budget in our province. Leadership means not looking out for the day to day or saving their political skin. It means doing the right thing for the future of our province

of Ontario, making it strong again, making it prosperous again.

Premier, your entire budget is premised on achieving a voluntary pay freeze with the unions, which will require some tough negotiations. In the negotiations with the third party, you basically wrestled Ms. Horwath to the ceiling. You gave away the store. How can anybody believe you'll actually stand up in tough negotiations when you gave us a billion-dollar greater hole and a tax hike that's going to cost us jobs? How can you carry your plan when you caved so easily?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I think the first rule of leadership is, you have to show up. Leading is about standing up for what you believe in. We believe in full-day learning; they don't. They want to give generous subsidies to the horse racing industry. We believe in smaller class sizes; they don't. They want to cut corporate taxes more and more and more. We believe in strong government working together in a minority Parliament with open colleagues who are prepared to negotiate; they don't.

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They were out nominating candidates, they were out raising money, they were calling members of this Legislature names, and they're still doing it, Mr. Speaker. They've been absent without leadership.

This deal, I assure Ontarians again, will not only hold the line on expenses. It will reduce this year's deficit and allow us to build that future that all Ontarians want, one with the best health care and education in the world—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: It seems the Premier is absent today, even though he's sitting in his chair and refusing to answer basic questions.

Premier, you refuse to tell us how much this deal is going to cost and refuse to tell us that if you're going to have to negotiate tough with the unions and hold back spending, why anybody would give you credibility now, after you wrestled the NDP to the ceiling and basically gave away the treasury. It's a billion dollars, a new tax increase.

You know what, Speaker? Leadership is about telling the truth. Leadership is about standing on your principles. Leadership is about fighting for a better, more prosperous future in the province of Ontario, and we will never apologize for doing what's right and looking to the long term: a strong, prosperous province that leads Canada in job creation, not the short-term gimmicks and giveaways that these guys are bringing forward—strong leadership for a strong province of Ontario under the PCs.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Leader of the Opposition missed the boat. Now he's on the dock waving frantically, Mr. Speaker. You know, you might even compare it to leading like a fish out of water. As recently as this weekend, he was at his nomination meeting instead of being with the leader of the third party and the Premier, dealing with the real problems that Ontario is confronted with. And again, don't take my word for it. Here's what

the Hamilton Spectator had to say: "Tory leader Tim Hudak is the odd man out. Despite winning more than twice as many seats as Horwath, he dealt himself out of the budget negotiations by rejecting it out of hand." Absent without leadership: You, sir, are not up to the job. Ontario deserves better from the Leader of the Opposition.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker—
Applause.

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

I understand what happened, but I would ask the member to be quick with the question and I ask for a less animated response from some members.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier this morning. Since the proposed budget was first tabled, we spoke with thousands of everyday Ontarians, and they told us very clearly that they didn't want an election but they weren't happy with the budget. So we made some progress and we put a little more fairness in that budget, and against the government's will, created some fiscal capacity. But people are still worried, Speaker, especially about jobs, and we're going to keep fighting for them. What is the Premier's plan on jobs, Speaker?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Well, Speaker, first of all let me take the opportunity—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I want the Sergeant-at-Arms to ask our protesters to leave.

We will take a 10-minute recess.

The House recessed from 1055 to 1105.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we start the clock, I would just like to offer a reminder not only to all members but obviously to all of our guests: It is not the case and the tradition and the convention here that our visitors participate in any way, shape or form during the debate. That will be maintained. I thank you for your patience, and I appreciate the opportunity to remind everyone that outbursts will not be tolerated.

We are now on the—the leader of the third party.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, yes, I'm sorry. Premier, you have the answer.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank my colleague for the question, but more than that, I want to take this opportunity for thanking her for the work that she did outside of the context of question period, which is understandably characterized by cut and thrust. It has a certain partisan overtone that's understandable and to be expected, Speaker, but there is good work to be done outside this chamber, I would suggest, by all three party leaders. I extend a continuing invitation to my honourable colleague the leader of the official opposition. There is still more work that we need to do on behalf of the people of Ontario, and we are always at our best when we work together.

Speaker, my honourable colleague knows that, among other things, the budget makes a specific commitment to 170,000 jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There are 550,000 people in Ontario looking for work right now, and we won't find balance in this province if those people cannot find a job, Speaker. Would the Premier agree that the job creator tax credit, which would reward companies when they actually create jobs, is better than rewarding companies that ship jobs away?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, on the matter of the job creator tax credit, I have committed to my honourable colleague to have our new jobs and prosperity council give that very careful consideration so that we might consider it, as a government, with respect to the next budget.

There is some good news, Speaker, on the jobs front. Last month, Ontario created 42,000 new jobs. That's 56% of all the new jobs created in Canada. Since the depths of the recession, we've created over 350,000 jobs. That's more jobs created in Ontario than the other nine provinces combined. So I think we're moving in the right direction.

There is clearly more work to be done, but it's important to understand that an important part of the foundation for a job-creating jurisdiction is to eliminate the deficit, and that's why we're so absolutely committed to getting that done too.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the government has been forced to make this Liberal budget a little more fair for everyday Ontarians, but New Democrats know very well that this budget still falls very short for the people of this province. One of the things that's clear is that this province will not recover until everyday folks are back to work.

We proposed the job creator tax credit, which will reward the companies that create jobs. It's an alternative to the kinds of tax giveaways that the government has handed to companies that ship jobs away. The Premier has promised that our proposal will be considered by the jobs and prosperity council, and my question to the Premier is: When is that going to happen?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, we are in the process of deciding who it is that should provide us with some leadership, but I can say that on the jobs and prosperity council we want representation from the business community, we want representation from the labour community and we want representation from academia and any other groups that might have something to offer in that regard.

1110

The fact of the matter is, the Ontario economy continues to evolve. I think it's very important that we develop a broad consensus, in business and labour in particular, as to where it is that we are going to apply our collective muscle. We have some \$2 billion that we

continue to invest in supporting business development and growth in Ontario. Are we using those monies in the best way possible? If we get more input on the part of labour in particular, I am convinced that we could do a better job together to grow this economy and create more jobs.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We all have to roll up our sleeves, get to work and work together to help those people who are still looking for work in this province. We've been very, very clear to the government that they need to do a little bit more, but on some key issues, they're still going in the wrong direction.

Does the Premier agree that forcing layoffs and destroying job-creating infrastructure when so many people are looking for work simply doesn't make sense?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I'll draw to my honourable colleague's attention once again the fact that, as part of our infrastructure plan, we're investing some \$35 billion over three years. That represents, annually, three times as much as they did under the previous PC government; every year, we'll be spending three times as much as they did, and we're doing it in a very challenging fiscal and economic environment.

We understand that that \$35 billion alone over the course of three years means 100,000 new jobs every year. When we build and repair our roads, that represents 26,000 jobs a year. The work that we will do in our schools—2,000 jobs; the work we will do in our colleges and universities—3,000 jobs; the continuing investments we make in our hospitals—26,000 jobs; and modernizing the OLG—6,000 jobs. Again, there are the jobs that will flow from our investments in the northern Ontario heritage fund and the eastern Ontario and the southwestern Ontario economic development funds.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, for the half a million people who are out of work, there's no time to delay on job creation. I have to say that the people who make this province work need to see a real plan to get those jobs created.

The Premier could get started today by moving on the job creator tax credit that the New Democrats support and we have asked them to consider. We want to see a rewarding of job creators in this province because we think that's the right way to go. We want to ensure that our natural resources in this province aren't shipped away to be processed somewhere else, bringing good jobs to northern Ontario.

These are items we put on the table many times. The government says that they're open to these new ideas. When can we expect some action?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think we certainly share the objective to strengthen this economy, to create as many jobs as we can and to process as much as we can by way of our raw materials here inside the province of Ontario. But I would argue that we have perhaps a more

comprehensive and a broader understanding of the global economy, our limits and our potential as a province.

I would also say that we've gone a long way to ensure that we have a much more competitive business environment. We have reduced corporate taxes, we have eliminated capital taxes, we reduced small business taxes, and we did something notwithstanding the opposition of my honourable colleague: We've adopted the HST, a very difficult measure, but it has decidedly made Ontario businesses more competitive.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'd ask the other side to give me a standing ovation after my next question. We'll see if that's going to happen.

This is what people are telling us. Jason from Cambridge writes, "The ... government [is] taking people's jobs away! And not making new ones! ... It's hard times for us working people!" Shane from Brantford says that he's worried about the budget. He worries that the budget "wipes out too many jobs and creates fewer jobs to replace those jobs that can't be replaced." What does the Premier have to say to people like Jason and Shane about a plan for job creation that works for everyone?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would, through my honourable colleague, have her convey to those people that we've got a very strong budget. It takes strong action. It is suited to the times. It lays out a five-year plan for us to eliminate the deficit, which is absolutely essential to inspire confidence in our economy on the part of families, businesses and the international investment community. It protects health care and it protects education. By the way, it protects jobs in health care and it protects jobs in education, which I think is a very important message to send to our public sector partners, and it builds a new foundation for new jobs and new growth. That's exactly what this budget is all about, and I'm sure that my honourable colleague will want to convey that to those people who are contacting her.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is also for the Premier. The consistent thing about your government is a predisposition to making Ontarians pay for your broken promises, for your debt and for your uncontrollable spending, and your budget is proof of that. The budget your government presented was unacceptable to most Ontarians, and it was unacceptable to the majority of us here. You've made concessions at the 11th hour only to keep your government alive. But you have not solved any problem. In fact, you only deferred the jobs and debt crisis, and you've condemned Ontarians, right down to our grandchildren, to repayment.

Is this your idea of accountability and responsible management of our province's finances?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Accountability and transparency are important, and I would ask the member opposite

to deliver to his leader the message that he needs to be part of this, that we need to work together, instead of saying before reading the budget that you're voting against it. You need to show up. You need to participate. You need to stop the name-calling. You need to work together. I think that's what Ontarians expect.

This is not a giant talk radio studio, Mr. Speaker. This is an important place where public business is done. The Leader of the Opposition and the official opposition have been absent without leadership.

We're going to continue to work with all sides of the House to build a better Ontario for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I particularly find it interesting that the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Finance, uses this acronym, so I'll use one too—SNAFU: situation normal, always fiscally unsustainable.

Look, your government has simply done away with the concept of living within our means. In fact there is a real disconnect in your government between your spending and your ability to pay. Your budget certainly doesn't solve the problem.

Only last week, your government voted against a motion put forward by my colleague from Wellington-Halton Hills to systematically pay down the deficit. Instead, you decided to once again raise taxes. As usual, you're only too happy to shift the burden of your failures to Ontarians—their children and their grandchildren.

Some 82% of respondents to a CFRA Ottawa poll say Premier McGuinty is not a man of principle.

Is that your idea, Premier, of leadership?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, leadership involves laying out a balanced budget plan that has been accepted by most independent thinkers. It involves listening to other people when they have suggestions that will make things better.

It's not about talk radio and polls on radio stations. I've spoken to more than 100,000 people through my telephone town halls; my colleagues have had them all over Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, the opportunity still exists for the official opposition to get back to work. Stop the nomination meetings. Quit ordering the lawn signs. Stop playing games. Quit the name-calling. Let's work together to build a better Ontario for all Ontarians.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. As we all know, the ONTC provides 950 jobs in northern Ontario. A lot of people think it's just a passenger train, but it's freight, telecommunications, a ferry service. It also has a railcar refurbishment division. The refurbishment division has got a proven track record. It's got skilled employees.

What I want to know and what those employees want to know is, will your ministry direct the interim board

that you have created to bid for contracts as they come up, or are you just planning to dump the company?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: First of all, I want to thank the NDP for supporting the budget motion. This allows us to work together as we divest the ONTC—

Interjections.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I also want to thank the member from Nipissing for his—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Durham, come to order.

Minister.

1120

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I also want to thank the member for Nipissing, who has given his support to privatization of the ONTC. He's from North Bay, and he understands that the business line is good; the business model isn't. So as we work forward together with the two opposition parties in our divestment of the ONTC, we will ensure that we put in place a transportation system that is effective, efficient and will meet the present and future needs of northern Ontarians.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Unfortunately, although we're trying to work together, the minister did not answer the question.

Via Rail has an outstanding contract for 98 cars and it can't be completed by the company that had the bid. The company is in trouble. They're looking for a new outfit to rebuild these cars.

My question is, can we work together to get those jobs into North Bay—that's the question—or are you only interested in dumping—your word is “divesting”; my word is “dumping.” Can we get those jobs in North Bay?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The third party refers to letters. I'd like to refer to a letter. This letter is from Mike from North Bay. He writes, “The NDP Was No Friend to Ontario Northland.” He goes on to say, “When in power, the Ontario New Democratic Party reduced bus service from Timmins to Chapleau and Wawa, docked the new ferry in Tobermory, cut norOntair service from 21 to six communities and sold off Star Transfer, the trucking firm of the ONTC.”

I look forward to working with the members in the third party to ensure that as this divestment takes place, we have in place in the future a very efficient, very effective, very modern transportation system that will meet the present and future needs of northern Ontario.

ONTARIO FILM, TELEVISION AND DIGITAL INDUSTRY

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Ontario's screen-based industries are key economic drivers for our province. Film and television production contributes over \$2 billion annually to our economy, supports 23,000 jobs, and digital media adds almost \$1.5 billion and 16,000

jobs. In fact, they had their best-ever industry year in 2011. But in order for this sector to continue to grow, it needs to be able to provide jobs and to help our economy. We need significant investment from the province.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, what is the government going to do to support Ontario's film, television and digital industries to ensure that they remain stable and competitive?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member for asking this very important question.

Screen and television projects supported by the province contribute \$1.2 billion to our economy, a \$300-million increase over 2010. In 2011 alone, our government provided about \$290 million in tax credits to Ontario's screen-based industry through the Ontario film and television tax credit, the Ontario production services tax credit, the Ontario computer animation and special effects tax credit and the Ontario interactive digital media tax credit. We will continue to support the film and television sector, because this is a sector that will continue to create jobs and drive our knowledge-based economy.

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

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Obviously we're all pleased to know that the government remains committed to creating additional sustainability and growth. By the year 2014 the global market for interactive digital media products and services is expecting an annual growth rate of 9.7% and \$500 billion. I think industry leaders would agree this is a fairly significant number.

With proper funding, Ontario will remain competitive in international markets and will excel as a world leader in film and television and digital media. Can the minister indicate what positive steps we are taking to enhance these areas, and perhaps share with us if there's any feedback from the industry itself?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you again for the question. Sarah Ker-Hornell, executive director and CEO of FilmOntario, recently said that Ontario's tax credits, combined with the breadth and depth of our infrastructure, talent, technology and expertise, have enabled the Ontario film industry to grow an additional 32% over 2010 and put us at the number one position in Canada.

Speaker, in addition, since 2003 we have invested almost \$1.6 billion in program and tax credit support to the screen-based industries. Under Ernie Eves, the PC government cut \$23 million from film-developing support. In contrast to that, our government will continue to move forward and make investments into our film, television and digital media sector.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. Last week, we had the pleasure of Mr. Alfred Apps's debut at the public accounts committee. The Premier, I'm sure, has been well briefed on the fact that the former president of the Liberal Party of Canada was not very complimentary to his government or to the Auditor General. He was

helpful, though, in that he confirmed for us that the Premier met with the now infamous Dr. Mazza and that there was a discussion during that meeting about Ornge and how well things were going there. Does the Premier recall that meeting with Dr. Mazza, and can he tell us today what the nature of that discussion was?

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

Hon. John Milloy: Again, as we spoke yesterday—

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The only thing worse than Ornge is that caucus.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance is not helping.

House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, as we spoke yesterday, as we've spoken numerous times in this Legislature, the public accounts committee is in the middle of hearings into the Ornge situation. The member referenced the testimony of Alfred Apps. Tomorrow, the committee will be sitting again. We'll be hearing from a long list of witnesses who have been agreed upon by all parties working together: Barry McLellan, a board member of Ornge; Tim Shortill, chief of staff, Ministry of Finance; Carole McKeogh, deputy director, legal services branch, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; and the list goes on.

Mr. Speaker, there's an opportunity for members on all sides of the House to pose questions to these witnesses and put together a report of their findings in terms of Ornge. I think it's time that the honourable member lets the committee do its work and look into a whole range of matters—

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

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, how can the government House leader possibly know the answer to the question that I put to the Premier; namely, what was the nature of the discussion that you had with Dr. Mazza?

I presented to Mr. Apps a memo that he, Mr. Apps, wrote as direction to Dr. Mazza, his client at the time, prior to a meeting with the then health minister. In that memo, his direction to Dr. Mazza is as follows, "My advice: Downplay meeting with the Premier, perhaps not even mention it at all..." Well, Speaker, I wonder why he would get that direction from Mr. Apps, and I wonder if the Premier has had the same instructions to downplay his meeting with Dr. Mazza, which is why he's refusing to answer the question today.

I ask the Premier one more time, does he recall his meeting with Dr. Mazza, and can he tell us what was discussed at that meeting?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

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

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, if the honourable member wishes to conduct committee hearings here on the floor of the House, perhaps he can talk about the relationship between his party and Kelly Mitchell, who is

a top Hudak insider. He received \$400,000 specifically to lobby and schmooze PC MPPs for Ornge and its subsidiaries. Kelly Mitchell received lobbying contracts while serving as a board member at Ornge for its profits. He was the top fundraiser and close adviser for the PC leader's leadership campaign. Mitchell and his company donated over \$17,000 to the PC Party's 15 candidates and personally donated \$7,500. If the member insists upon holding committee hearings here on the floor of the House, we'd like to know a little bit more about Kelly Mitchell.

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ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, can you tell people in northern Ontario why you think it's okay—and we agree there should be a subsidy to GO Transit—but you're not prepared to provide a similar subsidy to the Ontario Northland?

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

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The reality is that we provide a subsidy to the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. We have for many, many, many years. The member from Timmins—James Bay knows that. It's now at a point that we can no longer subsidize the ONTC to the tune of in excess of \$100 million a year. We understand that the business line is good; the business model isn't. And so, in our divestment, we will look to put in place that type of model which will provide an effective, efficient transportation system that will meet the present and future needs of northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I wish the Premier would answer the question because ultimately the decision is yours, Premier—and that is, we agree that we agree that GO Transit should get support from the provincial government. It is an essential part of the infrastructure transportation here in southern Ontario. We agree that we should do more in order to be able to support transit authorities across this province, in Hamilton, in Toronto, in Ottawa, in Sudbury and Timmins. But why is it that this government refuses to support an essential part of the infrastructure of northeastern Ontario with the Ontario Northland Commission?

So I ask again: Why is the government not prepared to give the vote of confidence to northeastern Ontario in the way that they have here in Toronto?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: First of all, I think the comparison is not a fair comparison. Let me tell you why. There are 57 million riders of GO Transit. There are 320,000 riders of the ONTC. That's not a fair comparison because if you break it down, the subsidy to GO Transit is less than the subsidy to the ONTC. We now subsidize riders to the tune of in excess of \$400 per ride. That's not sustainable. That cannot continue to be in place, and we are going to look at a model that is more effective, more

efficient, and will meet the present and future needs of northern Ontario.

NON-PROFIT HOUSING

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I have a number of co-operatives in my riding of Ottawa Centre as well as the Co-operative Housing Association of Eastern Ontario.

Minister, I'm pleased to have fostered a good relationship with these residents and organizations, and they have consistently brought to my attention the challenge that co-op housing providers have faced with dispute resolution. The way co-operative housing is currently managed, co-op tenants and co-op housing providers cannot resolve their disputes through the Landlord and Tenant Board. Instead, to resolve such issues, they must go through the much more costly and time-consuming legal system.

As I'm sure the minister knows, these additional costs, sometimes as much as \$5,000 per dispute, can be quite a lot for co-operative housing providers to take on and adds to the already high demand on our courts.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, could the minister please tell us what action our government is taking to ensure a fairer system is in place for other non-profit housing providers and remedy the problem?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to thank my colleague for his work with the co-op sector. Our government realizes the vital role that co-op housing providers play in providing affordable housing in the province. That's why I'm pleased to say that we've recently introduced the Non-profit Housing Co-operatives Statute Law Amendment Act, 2012. What this act will do, if it's passed, is allow co-ops to apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board to resolve certain disputes, things like persistent late payment of rent, illegal behaviour and wilful damage. It will streamline the process and create a more cost-effective process for co-ops in three ways: It would save our co-op providers time and money; it would bring Ontario in line with other jurisdictions in Canada, such as Manitoba and Quebec; and it would relieve our courts from hearing approximately 300 co-op eviction cases per year, allowing them to devote those resources to other higher-demand needs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I know that co-op residents and stakeholders will be pleased to know that the government has heard their concerns and is taking action. Minister, as I mentioned in my question, the co-op sector has been active in highlighting this issue and others to members like myself and to the government. I've always been pleased with the constructive approach and good ideas they have brought to the table.

Would the minister tell us how the government has an engaged the co-operative housing sector in preparation for these proposals, and what are their reactions about our proposed legislation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Actually, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has conducted substantial consultations with our co-op housing stakeholders. The co-operative housing federation—and it represents the vast majority of the 550 non-profit co-ops in Ontario and works with the government to ensure that the interests of co-ops in Ontario are protected—is completely supportive of the proposal. The Premier committed to them last year, actually, to move quickly in our government's mandate to reform the current co-op eviction process, and that's what we're doing.

I should also say that I'm happy to see the support that we've already received from the opposition parties on these proposed reforms, including a letter from the leader of the third party, who wrote a letter to the co-operative housing federation in September showing support for changes to the legislation. So, as the bill proceeds through the legislative process, I remain hopeful that we'll have unanimous support for this change to the co-op federation.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Your government likes to play the Ring of Fire card every chance you get. You played it in the throne speech a couple of years back. You played it in the last couple of budgets. You throw it out there every time someone challenges your tepid Grow North plan while you simultaneously gut key northern infrastructure.

Frankly, there's no substance to your plan and nothing to your Ring of Fire posturing. Years later, all you have to show for it is more high-priced help to coordinate a growing staff who are doing precious little to make the Ring of Fire a reality. Minister, when are you finally going to live up to all the bluster and get on with creating some prosperity and jobs, like Drummond recommended?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I've got to be perfectly honest, Speaker. When it comes to the Ring of Fire, we won't do what this party did; we won't be absent without leadership. Tim Hudak is away without leadership. The last thing Ontarians want is an unnecessary election. As we work towards realizing the potential of the Ring of Fire, we will work with anybody who is interested to ensure we maximize the potential that is the Ring of Fire.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Minister, how long do you think you can keep stringing people along? It's beginning to look like no one in the McGuinty government knows what's going on—not MOI, MNR, NDM, MAA or EDT. Who exactly is coordinating this train wreck?

Last week, Perrin Beatty praised the federal government for tackling regulatory inefficiencies, and he specifically named the Ring of Fire. Meanwhile, your government can't make a decision on whether there will be a road, which direction it will go or who will own it. First Nations want to know, mining companies want to

know and miners want to know: What is happening with this most basic key piece of infrastructure—the road to the Ring of Fire?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The reality is, the road to the Ring of Fire is going to be filled with job opportunities for those in northern Ontario. It's going to be filled with job opportunities for those in the supply and services sector of the mining industry. It's going to be filled with jobs for those who are in the exploration and development business. It's going to be filled with jobs for those who are mining companies. The reality is, those consultations, those discussions, are ongoing. We are moving very, very positively and favourably, because we understand, as a government, that in order to ensure that we maximize the potential of the Ring of Fire, we have to do it in a very, very businesslike way and in a way that ensures that that potential is realized for everyone in northern Ontario, including—

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

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. After three days of hearings at the public accounts committee and more than a dozen witnesses, this government's role in the Ornge fiasco is becoming increasingly clear. Here's how Alfred Apps puts it: "The government was thoroughly, painstakingly and, in all cases, truthfully briefed in advance of Ornge taking any of these actions. If the government had raised any objection to anything, I am confident that Ornge would not have proceeded."

Will the Premier admit today that his government is to blame for the fiasco at Ornge?

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

1140

Hon. John Milloy: Again, we have a parliamentary committee which is seized with the matter. In terms of the member's specific questions about government actions, the Minister of Health had an opportunity to go in front of the public accounts committee. My understanding is, she stayed for two and a half hours—although only requested for an hour—with senior officials, where she outlined the measures that she took when she learned about the inappropriate activities that were taking place at Ornge—the activities that she took in terms of replacing the board, in terms of the new CEO, in terms of, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, having to call in the OPP because of suspicions that came out. The committee is seized with this matter, the committee is continuing its work on it, and I think we should allow the committee to do its work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Back to the Premier: Mr. Apps went on to say that Ornge "wanted to brief the government, wanted to brief it broadly—finance, health, economic development and trade, the Ontario Financing

Authority. We obviously left it to the government to decide who" attended "those briefings."

As we heard from representatives of these ministries, it became clear that your government knew of the bizarre corporate structure; your government knew of the high salaries; they knew of the relationship between Ornge and the Liberal Party, yet we are to believe that those who could take action were never informed. How much longer will the Premier and the health minister tell this House that they knew nothing until December 2011?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, the Minister of Health gave a very lengthy explanation of the decisive action that she took, the action that was taken on the part of the government.

In terms of this question, Mr. Speaker, that the opposition seems to go over and over again as to when people were briefed or informed: Again I'll remind the honourable member of correspondence that was received by her party in 2010 outlining many of the issues at Ornge which she now finds disturbing. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we learn about the official opposition and the contacts that they had at Ornge in terms of written briefings and, of course, through this individual Kelly Mitchell, who was paid some \$400,000 expressly to schmooze and lobby the members of the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, if members want to hold committee hearings here on the floor of the House during question period, they have a lot of answers to provide about their conduct over the last several years.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, it's the responsibility of government to protect our communities, our families and, most importantly, our children. Ontarians worry when they hear about shootings in the news media. Torontonians and Ontarians have a right to feel safe when out on a family outing in the community, taking their kids to school or parents to a doctor's appointment. Minister, what are you doing to deal with gun violence in Toronto?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me say thank you to the member for Willowdale for this important question. I want to assure your community that safety is of paramount importance to this government. That is why we have invested more than \$100 million in three initiatives geared toward combatting gun violence, including the guns and gangs task force. In 2006, we worked closely with Toronto Police Chief Blair to establish the Toronto anti-violence intervention strategy. Since 2006, under TAVIS, the Toronto Police Service has led over 19,000 arrests and the seizure of more than 1,200 firearms. Plus, last year, Toronto recorded its lowest murder rate in 25 years. Mr. Speaker, TAVIS is working.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: Minister, that's not the only thing that I'm concerned about. My constituents in

Willowdale often ask me: On a proactive basis, what are we doing to prevent crime, to prevent future gun violence? Making arrests and seizing weapons is one way to fight crime, but as we all know in this House, prevention is a powerful tool as well.

Minister, what preventive measures are you taking to protect Ontarians and Torontonians from gun violence and other crime?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Crime prevention is a very important component in the fight against crime. We've invested \$5.2 million in the Safer and Vital Communities Grant program, which is aimed at preventing and reducing crime. For the fourth year in a row, we've doubled the RIDE grant program funding to \$2.4 million across the province.

This is much different from the previous government and its federal cousin. The federal government claims to be tough on crime, only to download costs on the province. The previous provincial Conservative government fired 500 police officers across the province.

Our government is committed to protecting Ontarians, and it shows. In December, Maclean's magazine reported that Ontario is the safest province in Canada.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Consumer Services. Yesterday, Minister, I asked what you're doing to protect consumers from being gouged at the pump. You actually said a lot, but I was shocked that at no time did you even mention the word "gasoline." I've never heard, in my time here, a more out-of-touch answer.

But Minister, I'm a good sport, so I'm going to give you another chance. Maybe your staff have provided you with some better talking points, or maybe, just maybe, you've actually visited a gas station in Ontario. So Minister, I'm going to ask you: Can you tell me the average price per litre of gasoline in the province this morning?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for the question. I'm certain that the member opposite knows that that is an issue which falls under the federal jurisdiction. Also, I am certain that—

Interjections.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: This is a great opportunity for me to talk about consumer protection and the commitment of our government to consumer protection in the province.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Mr. Speaker, our government is a strong ally of consumers, and we have a great track record on consumer protection. We have improved consumer protection—when they buy cars, make funeral arrangements, book trips etc. We have placed caps on the cost of borrowing for payday loan agreements. And in 2012, Mr. Speaker—

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

Mr. Steve Clark: Minister, I know one thing for sure: None of your Liberal colleagues passed over for cabinet are going to use any of your answers to prove what your government's doing for gas prices. Yesterday, you talked about cellphones, vacations, funerals and purchasing a car. At no time did you talk about gasoline. Okay, you did; you blamed the feds. You can't have a McGuinty minister without making sure they do that somewhere in their answer.

Well, Minister, as I told you yesterday, the federal Competition Bureau is doing something: They're charging retailers. Why is it that all you have done is to then add new taxes to increase the pain at the pumps for Ontario families?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: It is certainly an apropos time for me to talk about the strong actions that we are taking, Mr. Speaker, as the Ontario government with our proposed legislation to help eliminate the cell shock that many consumers get from opening wireless service bills for their cellphones, smart phones and other similar mobile devices. Under our proposed legislation, if passed, Ontarians will benefit in a number of ways, Mr. Speaker, including that contracts will be written in plain language, contracts will spell out which services come with basic fees and which would result in a higher bill, and that providers would need express consent before they renew, extend or amend a fixed-term contract, with a cap on the cost of cancelling a contract. And we will require—

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

JOB CREATION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Families in northwestern Ontario want jobs and they've looked to this government to help bring those jobs. One of the few times of optimism was in 2009, when this government announced the creation of 100 jobs at the Aspenware plant in Dryden. Last week I received an invitation to the grand opening of the new Aspenware Generation Two plant in Vernon, BC. Will the government explain to this House and the people of Dryden why those promised jobs are in another province?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate the question. I think, as the member would also know if she was speaking to the Aspenware people, that they are indeed in conversations with our government and with our ministry about future opportunities. She will also know that a decision was made very specifically to make sure that the operation was commercially viable before they continued their discussions with us.

The fact is, we have so many pieces of actually very positive news related to the forestry sector in terms of the incentives that our government has provided to a number of industries, certainly when one looks at the opportunities that are happening at Resolute Forest Products, in

terms of the commitments they've made to expand their operation in Thunder Bay, to expand the sawmill, the work that they're doing in Iroquois Falls and other places as well. Our government continues to support them in terms of a northern electricity rebate plan. The fact is, we are excited about those opportunities. Those discussions continue, and I look forward to them happening in the future.

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

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Dryden has been hit hard with the loss of 800 forestry jobs since 2004. The city of Dryden has invested millions of dollars in building an industrial park to house this Aspenware facility because they took this government at its word. The industrial park is done, but the primary tenant is setting up shop in Vernon, British Columbia, because this government could not deliver on loan guarantees and wood supply.

We know this government is supporting jobs in Tennessee, but what is it doing for the people who actually reside in Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I think the member is being disingenuous. If she has had—

Interjections.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: No, if she has had conversations with the Aspenware people, she will understand that indeed we are in discussions with Aspenware and have been for some time.

Indeed, may I say, when one looks at the northern Ontario heritage fund and the amount of support that has gone, including, may I say, to the industrial park that you reference in Dryden, the member also knows—we were together in fact when there was a very significant announcement made related to the Centre for Research and Innovation, the bio-economy, between Domtar and a major US research firm in terms of finding new value-added opportunities for the forestry sector.

So the opportunities are there. We're continuing to look towards the future. We're in discussions—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I continue, I did finally click in and I would ask the member to withdraw his comment earlier in his answer.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Withdrawn, Speaker.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Today with us in the west members' gallery is a personal friend and the former MPP for Brantford in the 32nd and 33rd Parliaments, Mr. Phil Gillies. Welcome.

DEFERRED VOTES

2012 ONTARIO BUDGET

Deferred vote on the motion by Mr. Duncan, seconded by Mr. McGuinty, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the budget motion.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1153 to 1158.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Will the members take their seats, please?

All those in favour will rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Dickson, Joe	Meilleur, Madeleine
Balkissoon, Bas	Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John
Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	Moridi, Reza
Bentley, Christopher	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gerretsen, John	Naqvi, Yasir
Best, Margaret	Gravelle, Michael	Oraziotti, David
Bradley, James J.	Hoskins, Eric	Piruzza, Teresa
Brotten, Laurel C.	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Chiarelli, Bob	Leal, Jeff	Sorbara, Greg
Colle, Mike	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Coteau, Michael	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crack, Grant	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo
Craitor, Kim	Mauro, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Damerla, Dipika	McGuinty, Dalton	Zimmer, David
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	
Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Leone, Rob	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLaren, Jack	Shurman, Peter
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Dunlop, Garfield	McDonell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
Elliott, Christine	McKenna, Jane	Walker, Bill
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Harris, Michael	Milligan, Rob E.	Yakabuski, John
Hillier, Randy	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff
Hudak, Tim	Nicholls, Rick	
Jackson, Rod	O'Toole, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 52; the nays are 37.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1202 to 1500.

ESTIMATES

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I have a message from the Honourable David C. Onley, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2013, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly—Toronto, April 23, 2012.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. On a point of order: I'd ask unanimous consent for members in the Legislature to wear the purple ribbon in recognition of World Meningitis Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Unanimous consent has been sought for wearing the ribbon. Do we agree? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm very pleased to introduce three financial professionals from Peterborough in the members' west gallery: Judy Ruttle, Linda Gratton and Nick Devere-Bennett, who are members of Advocis, Peterborough. I'm very proud of their work in the riding of Peterborough. Every year, they sponsor a fundraiser for the Peterborough Regional Health Care Centre to raise necessary dollars for a number of activities at PRHC, and we want to welcome them here this afternoon.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to welcome John Willoughby, a constituent who's an associate of the financial advisers, and welcome the Advocis group here today to educate us on financial planning.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's my pleasure to introduce, in the east members' gallery, Vahan Ajamian and Mark Atikian, members of the Armenian National Committee of Toronto.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'd like to introduce Andrew Johnson, one of my constituents, and a member of the Advocis group, sitting in the members' east gallery.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE ANNIVERSARY

Mr. Michael Harris: I rise today to mark the 97th anniversary of the Armenian genocide.

Beginning on April 24, 1915, the Armenian people were subjected to widespread suffering and loss of life at the hands of the Ottoman Empire.

In recent years, the Canadian government officially recognized this tragedy, first in the Senate and then in the House of Commons, where members passed a motion that acknowledged the Armenian genocide of 1915 and condemned it as a crime against humanity.

I applaud the Armenian community's efforts to acknowledge their past while working with other Canadians to build a future based on mutual respect. I invite all Canadians to remember the Armenian genocide as we work together to prevent terrible tragedies like this from ever happening again.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise today to talk about the Toronto District School Board. Like boards right across this entire province, they are facing a very bleak future in terms of their students. Eight long years ago, this government promised to review the funding formula. Eight years later, nothing at all has happened in terms of that funding formula.

Now the school boards across the province, and particularly the Toronto District School Board, are being forced to make gut-wrenching decisions. Instead of this government doing something positive like eliminating a needless EQAO, they are making the boards do some dirty work. The boards are being required, in my riding, to make the very tough choice of closing schools, changing the grades and programs, changing the school boundaries and inconveniencing families, and possibly busing.

The Toronto District School Board has set up an accommodation review. They are having four open houses in my riding: one at Victoria Park school on April 30, one on May 1 at Selwyn school, one on May 2 at Gordon A. Brown school, and one on May 9 at O'Connor Drive school, all between 6:30 and 8:30.

I am asking the members of the community to please come out—the parents and members of the community—to make their views known. It is really quite unfortunate what is happening in inner-city schools in Toronto and, in fact, in schools all across the province because the funding formula doesn't work anymore.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE ANNIVERSARY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Today is a very significant anniversary for many in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham as well as across Ontario. Today we reflect on the horrific time endured by over two million Armenians between 1915 and 1917.

Ninety-seven years ago today, Armenian civic leaders, intellectuals, doctors, businessmen and artists began to be rounded up and killed. Women and children were loaded onto trains headed for the Syrian Desert or led on forced marches into isolated and deserted lands. Embarking with little food and few supplies, women and children had little hope of survival.

Fifty Armenian orphans from the genocide, later known as the Georgetown Boys, arrived in Canada on June 30, 1923, through government support and the donations of ordinary Canadians. It was a unique event in Canadian history, an event commonly referred to as Canada's noble experiment, as it was Canada's first humanitarian act on an international scale.

I was grateful to be invited by Mark Atikian, a constituent of mine, through the Armenian National Committee of Toronto, to join Armenian Canadians once again this past Sunday in commemorating the tragedy of the genocide at the Armenian Community Centre in North York. It was a moving and sobering service as we thought of man's inhumanity to man. Let's keep all our friends of Armenian heritage in our thoughts today.

HOCKEY

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise in the House today to congratulate and recognize the Owen Sound Jr. Attack Crescent Midgets, who are the 2012 Ontario Hockey Federation champions. The Junior Attack Crescents clinched the title with a convincing 6-1 victory over the London Bandits in the championship game in London on April 16.

The provincial title was celebrated with a parade of fire trucks in Owen Sound. I know, I won the all-Ontario junior fastball championship and had a similar ride, and it's a memory that stays with you for a lifetime. Head coach Trevor Cunningham, along with assistant coach Scott Amyot, trainer Carl Linthorne, and manager Rhonda Vander Ploeg, did a great job preparing the team for a challenging season and a great playoff run.

As the Crescents' motto says, "Each player gives 110% every time they step on the ice, whether it be at practice or a game." I would suggest this approach obviously paid off handsomely.

The dedicated players are captain Tyler Cunningham, assistants Brandon Eagles and Nate Kramer, Jerred Kiss, Skylar Leblanc, Kyle Linthorne, Adam Roy, Ryan Hamelin, Tyler McCracken, Josh Bumstead, Dylan Carder, Tanner Bastien, Chris Baker, John Morris, Lauchlin Elder, David Vander Ploeg, Nick Bruce and Brandon Vanderschot.

The Junior Attack defeated the Schumacher Cubs in the semi-final 7-3 to advance to the championship. The work and dedication displayed by these fantastic players deserves recognition. I'm very proud of our team and I'd like all members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating the Owen Sound Jr. Attack Crescent Midgets on a fantastic win and a great year, and wish them the best next season.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Jonah Schein: I rise today to speak to the mixed emotions of hope and despair that I feel in this Legislature this afternoon. Despite the incredible work of our leader and our team here, this morning a Liberal budget

passed that will hurt vulnerable Ontarians. Countless Ontarians will go to bed tonight worried and hungry. Despite our best efforts, child care spaces are at risk and will close. Jobs will be lost. Transit services in the north are in jeopardy. Health care services and educational supports across this province are at risk.

I despair because when people came to Queen's Park, they came to say, "Put food in the budget," and they meant every day of the year. Instead, people on Ontario Works will barely be able to eat one more meal a month.

But I'm hopeful that things are going in the right path, that we're getting stronger, that our movement is getting stronger, that workers and students are mobilizing and organizing and that I can count on my home team in Davenport, who are brilliant. Our staff is brilliant, our volunteers are incredible, and they always have my back. I'm hopeful that our incredible team here at Queen's Park, under the steady and compassionate leadership of Andrea, has forced real concessions from this government that will really make this budget fair and, in concrete ways, will help people. They've won millions of dollars for public services. I'm hopeful that one day soon, we will be strong enough to introduce an NDP budget in Ontario that will be fair and equitable and that we can be entirely proud of.

VICTIM SERVICES AWARD OF DISTINCTION

Mr. Phil McNeely: I rise today to formally congratulate the Agoro family, from Blackburn hamlet in my riding, for being among this year's recipients of the Victim Services Awards of Distinction. Bashir and Abiola Agoro are in the gallery today and I thank them for coming to Queen's Park.

1510

In June 2002, 18-year-old Dapo Agoro was at a dance club with a group of friends when he was stabbed to death while trying to break up a fight. His sudden and tragic death had a devastating impact on his mother, Abiola, father, Bashir, and sisters Moji and Shola, but rather than succumb to the darkness that accompanies any tragedy of this type, the Agoro family decided to turn their tragic loss into a triumph of the human spirit.

In 2005, they created the Dapo Agoro Foundation for Peace in honour of his memory. The foundation seeks to promote non-violent conflict resolution through a variety of initiatives, including the Dapo Agoro Peace Award, which is presented every year to a student in his former high school who best demonstrates the traits of leadership, tolerance and the pursuit of non-violent conflict resolution.

This June will mark the 10th anniversary of Dapo's passing, and the Agoro family plans to mark the occasion by gaining official non-profit status for the foundation. This will allow the organization to increase their fundraising efforts and expand their programs.

The Agoro family has been through a lot. They continue to stay committed to their faith and each other.

Their mission to promote non-violent conflict resolution among youth is a fitting tribute to the memory of their son and brother.

Once again, I would like to extend my congratulations to the Agoro family for receiving this year's Victim Services Award of Distinction and wish them continued success in their mission to promote non-violent conflict resolution among our youth.

AGAPE CENTRE

Mr. Jim McDonell: Our province is a great place to live in, and we know we can count on our community and support networks when we need them. In my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, a key member of such a network is the Agape Centre. For many years, they have been operating a food bank, a soup kitchen and a thrift shop.

Ontario is facing some challenging times. Unemployment has been above the Canadian average for more than five years and food bank users are on the rise. Pressures beyond unemployment, such as wages rising slower than inflation, rising energy costs and taxes, are keeping people in need.

This summer the Fountaingate Christian Assembly is generously donating the use of a three-acre garden for the production of fresh fruit and vegetables. I am pleased to know that the residents of my riding who require the use of a food bank will not just get more, but healthier food this summer.

The Agape Centre is funded by residents who donate items to the thrift shop, food for the food bank and soup kitchen, and generous financial donations. The food bank is almost at capacity and they will need to raise even more funds to afford a part-time garden attendant. I wish them all the success that they fully deserve in their fund-raising efforts.

Mr. Speaker, Agape provides a valuable service to Cornwall and surrounding areas. I commend them for their hard work and dedication and I commend the Fountaingate Christian Assembly for their generous donations.

ADVOCIS

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm pleased to welcome to the Legislature, for its seventh annual Queen's Park day, Advocis, the Financial Advisors Association of Canada. Advocis is the largest voluntary professional membership association of financial advisers in Canada. For more than 100 years, Advocis members have provided financial services to Ontarians, delivering financial security and peace of mind to families and individuals in every part of our province. Its 5,000 members across Ontario not only offer advice but are licensed to distribute life and health insurance, mutual funds and other securities regulated by the Ontario government.

Professional financial advisers and planners are critical to the economy, helping consumers make sound and

informed financial and investment decisions that ultimately lead to greater financial stability and independence. As an association, Advocis works with decision-makers and the public to demonstrate the value of qualified financial advice and to strive for an environment in which all Canadians have access to the advice they need.

With members in nearly every community, Speaker, Advocis is uniquely placed to partner with MPPs, government and community leaders on issues related to financial services and advice. Once again, it is my privilege to welcome Advocis to the Ontario Legislature today, and I invite all members to join them for a reception this evening at 5 o'clock in the legislative dining room. Thank you, Speaker, and welcome to Advocis members.

COMMUNITY AWARDS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to rise to give a cheer to two communities in my riding of Durham who were recently awarded funding from Molson Coors. The Molson Coors Community Cheer program awards funding to local projects, with a focus on building active and social communities across Canada. Hundreds of communities apply from across Canada, and I am proud to say that two of the 21 members just announced recently are from my riding of Durham.

I'm pleased to congratulate the communities of Greenbank in Scugog township and Bowmanville in Clarington.

First, congratulations to the Greenbank Hall and Park Board committee, who received \$15,000 to replace and upgrade aging park bleachers at the local baseball diamond. Second, congratulations to Bowmanville, receiving \$25,000 from Molson's. It was the final step of a \$450,000 campaign for a new fish bypass channel, a trail extension and an outdoor education area in the Bowmanville Creek Valley lands.

I'd like to thank and congratulate the young volunteers, Steve Kay and Erin O'Toole, who co-chaired the "A River Runs Through Us" dinner, where they raised \$85,000 and had General Rick Hillier as guest speaker.

Congratulations to the dinner committee, all young people from high school in their past: Kevin Anyan, Tori Kay, Jennifer Knox, Amy Logan Holmes and Tyler Smith.

Congratulations also to Frank Lockhart, who is president of Valleys 2000, and to the co-chairs and fundraiser chairs, Harold Hammond and Al Strike.

This has truly been a community event. I'd like to congratulate old and young working together to make our community better and thank Community Cheer; that's the Molson Coors Community Cheer program.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received the report on intended appointments dated April 24, 2012, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

MEMBER'S PRIVILEGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yesterday, I made reference to hearing a point of privilege from the member from Burlington. I am prepared to hear that point of privilege today. The member from Burlington.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I rise on a point of personal privilege. I provided you with the appropriate notice, and I will proceed—can I proceed?

In accordance with standing order 21(c), I would like to bring your attention to a point of privilege. Since Monday, April 16, robocalls have been placed to my riding. As a result, my office has been inundated with over 1,500 phone calls to my office.

I raise this issue with you not only because it involves a breach of my privileges, but rather because this point of privilege is about the need to preserve the privileges of all members. I feel for this reason that this is a matter worthy of serious consideration.

First, I will provide you with a brief background of the issue at hand and will then discuss a parliamentary precedent that supports me.

On April 16, 2012, I was notified that robocalls were being sent to my constituents by the Ontario Liberal Party. Callers were informed that I was being told to vote against the budget. They were told that a vote against the budget would force a needless election, and they were told that a vote against the budget would put funding for Joseph Brant Hospital in jeopardy.

I have forwarded to you a copy of the script that appeared in the Thursday, April 19, 2012, edition of the Hamilton Spectator.

In the course of the recording, my constituents were instructed to press 3 on their keypad to be directed to my office.

I recognize and do not dispute that I must serve my constituents and address any concerns that may come up regarding my riding. However, the issue at hand is that due to the inaccurate and fearmongering statements that are being sent to constituents, I have now had to focus on the 1,500 phone calls. As a result, my privileges as a member of this Legislature have been infringed, and I have not been able to perform all of my duties as MPP.

One duty that an MPP is required to do is to provide assistance to constituents on any provincial matter, which

I will refer to as “casework” throughout the rest of my submission.

Casework consists of assisting people with issues that they may be having with ODSP, welfare or something as simple as helping them with a driver’s licence or health card replacement.

However, due to these calls, my voicemail was regularly at capacity, which has provided constituents with difficulty in reaching their member for assistance. In addition, these phone calls have tied up my phone lines throughout business hours, impacting those who use their services most: ODSP recipients, seniors, welfare recipients and those seeking unemployment help.

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This campaign has severed my connections with those residents, which severely limits my ability to serve Burlingtonians. Not only have these robocalls tied up my phone lines, but they have prevented me from following up with ministry officials and from working on pre-existing casework.

It concerns me greatly that partisan robocalls are tying up non-partisan resources and ultimately preventing me from representing my constituents to my greatest ability. Legislative phone numbers should not be used in partisan campaigns.

The most cited definition of parliamentary privilege can be found in the 23rd edition of Erskine May, which defines parliamentary privilege as “the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively ... and by members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions...”

Furthermore, O’Brien and Bosc break down the peculiar rights as the rights members share collectively and the rights each individual member has. In particular, I draw your attention to a member’s right to be free from obstruction, interference, intimidation and molestation. Because these calls get redirected to my office, they obstruct and interfere with part of my parliamentary duties and thus constitute a prima facie breach of privilege.

O’Brien and Bosc also state that “the unjust damaging of a member’s good name might be seen as constituting an obstruction if the member is prevented from performing his or her parliamentary functions.”

They illustrate this using a ruling from former House of Commons Speaker the Honourable John Fraser. In his 1987 ruling, Speaker Fraser stated that “the privileges of a member are violated by any action which might impede him or her in the fulfilment of his or her duties and functions. It is obvious that the unjust damaging of a reputation could constitute such an impediment.”

I pride myself on representing my constituents and being able to help them when they need assistance. As a result of the robocalls tying up my office phone lines, I have received numerous complaints regarding the service that I provide, which ultimately has damaged my reputation as an accessible MPP. It troubles me that due to these robocalls, some of my constituents feel that I am

inaccessible as an MPP. This is not a reputation that any MPP on any side of the Legislature would want to have.

Lastly, O'Brien and Bosc quote a May 6, 1985, ruling from former Speaker of the House of Commons the Honourable John Bosley, which is very pertinent to this case. The ruling states: "Any action which impedes or tends to impede a member in the discharge of his duties is a breach of privilege."

I am certain that the government will provide you with the ruling from Speaker Jeanne Sauvé, which stated, "While I am only too aware of the multiple responsibilities, duties, and also the work the member has to do relating to his constituency, as Speaker I am required to consider only those matters which affect the member's parliamentary work."

However, I will suggest to you that getting information for our constituents from ministers and ministries and assisting our constituents relating to problems with Ontario's programs is a significant part of our parliamentary work, and is very much of our parliamentary work. Casework does not only occur when we are in our ridings. Many times we are required to do it while at the Legislature and at Queen's Park. If you rule that casework is not a part of our parliamentary privileges, you would be saying that casework is only a courtesy to our constituents, as opposed to being one of our duties as provincial parliamentarians.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, MPPs' functions are not limited to the Legislature. It is imperative that we remember that our role as a parliamentarian is not limited to the Legislature, and that we are required to assist our constituents' needs. This is why I urge you to look into this issue.

My ability to serve my constituents has been hindered as a result of my privileges being impeded. It has been impeded both by my inability to assist them, to focus on these phone calls, and, more importantly, because my reputation as an accessible MPP has been damaged due to these robocalls.

Should you rule that this case is a breach of members' privileges, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion to send this case to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

I thank you for looking into this. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your time. I look forward to your ruling on this serious matter.

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

Hon. John Milloy: I rise to respond to the point of privilege that the member from Burlington has raised in the House.

This morning, I received notice from the member and a copy of a letter that she sent to you. In her letter, the member from Burlington states—and she's just outlined—that since April 16, her constituency office has been inundated with calls from individuals from her riding. The member further states in her submission that it's her belief that the large volume of calls being received by her constituency office are a result of robo-

calls, which she alleges have been placed by the Ontario Liberal Party to her constituents, advising that the member was being told to vote against the budget, which would force an election and jeopardize funding for a hospital in her riding.

As a result of the calls into her constituency office regarding her vote on the budget today, the member believes she has been unable to conduct casework in her constituency office. As I say, she has obviously just finished her presentation on this matter.

I would like to first point out that the member herself acknowledges that members' privileges do not extend to constituency work. I agree with the member, and point the Speaker to O'Brien and Bosc. At page 61, O'Brien and Bosc states, "The privileges of members of the House of Commons provide the absolute immunity they require to perform their parliamentary work...."

O'Brien and Bosc elaborates on this principle, at page 109: "In order to find a prima facie breach of privilege, the Speaker must be satisfied that there is evidence to support the member's claim that he or she has been impeded in the performance of his or her parliamentary functions and that the matter is directly related to a proceeding in Parliament....While frequently noting that members raising such matters have legitimate grievances, Speakers have consistently concluded that members have not been prevented from carrying out their parliamentary duties."

Speaker, I suggest that the member has not shown that her privileges have been breached. First, the member has not pointed to any parliamentary work which she has been precluded from performing as a result of the alleged robocalls; rather, the member's complaints related entirely to the performance of casework in her constituency office. To my knowledge, the member has continued to be able to perform all of her parliamentary work and has not provided any evidence in her letter or otherwise to the contrary.

Secondly, the member has merely laid out allegations that she has been hindered in her ability to conduct constituency casework. The member has not provided any evidence to show that this is in fact the case.

Finally, Speaker, I'd like to point you to a recent decision from Speaker Scheer in the House of Commons which involves similar circumstances. You may recall that in this instance, the MP from Mount Royal argued that robocalls hindered his ability to perform his duties as an MP. In that case, Speaker Scheer found that no breach of privilege had occurred. On December 13, 2011, Speaker Scheer ruled on this issue, arguing that although the member's constituency office had been bombarded by telephone calls, emails and faxes, the Speaker had "great difficulty in concluding that the member has been unable to carry out his parliamentary duties as a result of these tactics."

Once again, Mr. Speaker, having reviewed the presentation that has been made and the material that was submitted, I would argue that this does not constitute a breach of privilege. Thank you.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It is indeed a privilege to be able to comment on the member's point of personal privilege and her privileges as a member. I am afraid, however, that I would have to side with the government House leader on this one. Certainly, one would want to comment that such a campaign done by a sitting government is egregious and certainly deserves comment. However, I would have to agree with the government House leader that it is not an abuse of privilege for the reasons he stated, because privilege has to do with the member's capacity to do her job in this place. Were it not so, one could imagine that the huge volumes of email campaigns that are undertaken by constituents for a variety of reasons, the huge volumes of calls that, again, are undertaken by various stakeholder groups, many of them partisan in nature, would also have to be ruled against.

So that is my input, and I hope it helps.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I certainly agree with some of the comments from the member from Parkdale–High Park when she said it's—I'm going to change her language and say it's reprehensible that the member from Burlington's riding would be targeted. I know the member for Cambridge was also targeted, and I think our Oakville way and Halton, as far as we can tell anyway, Mr. Speaker, with these robocalls, which clearly the government instigated because, when we first brought it up in the House, the Minister of Health knew all about it. She had done a tour of the hospital, aware the robocalls were going on at very the time she was touring the hospital. She was using the exact language in the press conference that she had at the hospital in Burlington, the exact language that the robocall was using. The minister didn't deny it in two or three rounds of questions in this House. So clearly it comes from the government.

Just in response—because we're going to ask you to set new ground on this, Mr. Speaker. It's nice that we always cite old precedents, but we're in the Internet age; we're in an advanced technology age. Surely to goodness the ruling shouldn't be just confined to something that happens in this building. Surely to God, as the honourable member says in her very articulate letter and presentation, our casework is in our constituency offices. It is wherever you are, folks, nowadays with a BlackBerry on your hip or a tablet in your hand. To say that casework can only happen up in my office, 201 north wing, or sitting right here—by the way, we discourage people from tapping away in here, and we are not allowed laptops, so it's hard to respond to your constituents and do your casework in this House. I think we're going to ask for a broader definition of what actually are the duties of a parliamentarian, because I know that's what has been cited by the honourable House leader for the government.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the House leader, as I was listening, said that the breach of privilege has to stem

from a procedure in this House, in this Parliament. Well, the procedure in this Parliament that all of this refers to is the upcoming budget vote. That is a procedure in this Parliament, so I think that's relevant, and I would ask you to take that into consideration.

Surely to goodness, as I said, we would ask that we expand our horizon on this thing and not cite things that happened a hundred years ago. We're in the high-tech age, and I know all of our colleagues in this House work darned hard almost 24/7. Certainly, when we're at home and when we're in our apartments at night, we're doing casework, we're doing our parliamentary work, and that should be considered in this case, Mr. Speaker.

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

Just a technical reminder; this is probably not the time to say it, but I need to say it because it really drives them nuts. When you turn away from the microphone, it's very difficult for them to pick it up. So I would remind all members to please face your microphone so that Hansard can make sure that we pick it up.

The second thing I'd like to mention is, if we're going to continue, I would like you to be brief, if there's anything new to add to it. I'm getting a sense of where this point of privilege is going, so try to be brief, please.

The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, Speaker. Can you hear me? Just kidding. Thank you very much, Speaker.

First of all, I want to thank my colleague from Burlington, Ms. McKenna, for raising this point of privilege. I think it's vital that she stand, as is her right as a member, to challenge actions on the part of the government.

I know that my colleague our House leader from Simcoe–Grey has articulated some of the points. I want to be very clear about one thing: I believe she has made a prima facie case, as she cited precedents in the past with regard to a member's work and the vital work they do. I want to make it very clear, when the House leader uses the term “alleges”—Speaker, we have basically received an admission from the Minister of Health that they are aware and knowledgeable about the content of those robocalls.

It was not simply about a budget. Yes, it was precipitated by the budget vote, and they used that as their reason for making those calls. But she went on to say—unlike, as cited by my colleague from Parkdale–High Park, where people get involved in an email campaign, which is generally orchestrated by a third party not involved in the governing of this province, this was a robocall campaign about the budget and the member from Burlington that was orchestrated and initiated right in this House, in the offices of the Minister of Health. This is why her privileges have been violated.

A part of that robocall was not the suggestion that, “If you feel this way, you may want to contact the member.” No. It was well orchestrated: “Simply push 3 and you'll be connected.” It was very well organized and orchestrated and was designed specifically to impugn the

right of that member to do their job. Everyone here who has a busy constituency knows—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This is an extremely important and serious issue, and the bantering back and forth is not helping me focus on the points being made. I ask all members to give everyone the respect they deserve in hearing this.

Member, continue, but be brief, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Her ability to do her work was clearly impacted by the actions of the government. Therefore, I say that in my humble opinion, Mr. Speaker, and as the member has in my opinion also duly indicated by citing precedents from O'Brien and Bosc and others, her privileges as a member of this assembly were indeed trod upon by this government.

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

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to speak in support of my colleague the member for Burlington's point of privilege. I also was going to raise a point of privilege on this matter, but I thought, to save some time, that I would just support the member for Burlington's point of privilege.

I do want to address a couple of points that were made in the comments and commentary from people who have had the ability to speak on this already. I think one of the issues that was raised was preventing an MPP from performing his or her functions as an MPP. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I actually have gotten calls here in my Queen's Park office. I have actually fielded those calls myself. I'm not sure if Ms. McKenna has done the same thing in her office, but it's just a courtesy to relieve some of the stress our staff are being put under. In the process of doing that, I think our functions have been impeded, because we had to spend some time doing that.

One of the other things I wanted to mention with particular reference to the nature of the robocalls is the fact that these robocalls had inaccurate and fear-mongering information and statements that were expressed. If you get a phone call from constituents who have an issue and it's based on what you've done in this House, you can explain that away. But if you are trying to correct misinformation, to correct allegations that you are somehow not supporting the hospital, in the case of Ms. McKenna and myself, in our ridings, if we're spending time trying to correct a record which has not explicitly been based on fact and what has happened in the Legislature—I think that is one of the most troubling things of the robocalls: the fact that they are spreading misleading and fear-mongering information.

If I can just be very brief in terms of what that record is, Mr. Speaker, let me just say that since I have been elected in October, I had the privilege of raising the first private member's business in this House. That private member's resolution stated an expressed vote on hospital infrastructure projects right across the province of Ontario, including mine—Cambridge Memorial Hospital—which was actually voted on in this Legislature. I have to

say that the voting record will show that members of my party—Ms. McKenna from Burlington, myself and the members of the PC caucus—and all members of the NDP caucus voted in support of that motion, an explicit vote in support of our hospital expansions and those projects in our ridings. That is fact. That is based on what we have done, the conduct of what we've done in this place. The words that we've said, the statements that we've made, on record, in Hansard, show and express support on the part of myself, the member for Burlington and other members for their hospital expansion projects.

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Now, the allegations being made on the robocalls, Mr. Speaker, actually were included in the member for Burlington's letter, I believe. There was a transcript that was provided to the Hamilton Spectator. Included in that transcript was an affiliation to the Liberal Party of Ontario.

Also, I want to address the fact that the government House leader said that these are allegations of robocalls being placed on behalf of the Liberal Party. It's not just the Minister of Health who essentially agreed to it, but it was also the Minister of Finance, during question period last Tuesday, who basically agreed to the fact that they are going to continue to place phone calls in opposition ridings to—in my view—distort the facts and distort the record that we have had on this.

The allegations made and the reason why I believe they're inaccurate statements that we have to address, that we have to contend and compete with, relate to the fact that they're equating the budget vote with a vote against our hospital expansions. As I have endeavoured to discover and explore that very notion, Mr. Speaker, the only way that this budget could affect a hospital project is if it's specifically negated in the budget document.

On page 40 of the budget document, what we see are some projects being negated, none of which include Cambridge Memorial Hospital, in my case, and Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital, in the case of the member from Burlington. So in essence, a vote against this budget is not a vote against Cambridge Memorial Hospital because it hasn't specifically been negated. This comes from information that we've received from the legislative research branch. This is where we've discussed and discovered the protocols with respect to what happens during budget votes.

Again, these robocalls were deliberately trying to confuse the voting record and the specific support that myself and Ms. McKenna have had for our hospital infrastructure projects. I want you to take that into consideration because it's in the nature of responding to the phone calls that we're having to correct the misinformation that's being spread about what we've done. I think that if we do engage in these campaigns, we should be focusing on the correct voting record and the correct statements that we've made. In essence, that's what we find in Hansard.

I also want to point to some parliamentary precedent that would also be important, I think, in this case, Mr.

Speaker. In 2009, NDP MP Peter Stoffer raised a point of privilege in the federal Parliament concerning a mail-out known as a ten-percenter which went to his riding. The ten-percenter said that Mr. Stoffer was in favour of keeping the gun registry. Mr. Stoffer had opposed the gun registry since being elected. Former Speaker of the House of Commons the Honourable Peter Milliken ruled that a prima facie breach of privilege occurred because the mailing sent to his constituents “did distort their member’s true position ... and, at the very least, had the potential to create confusion in their minds.

“It may also have had the effect of unjustly damaging his reputation and his credibility with the voters of his riding and, as such, infringing on his privileges by affecting his ability to function as a member.”

I think the member for Burlington and myself would argue that our reputations have been unjustly attacked in the minds of our voters and the people who have received these robocalls.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, a similar case occurred in 2005, when NDP MP Brian Masse also had a ten-percenter sent to his riding that was inaccurate and was wrong about his position on the gun registry, funding for the RCMP, and also his voting record. Speaker Milliken had ruled that a prima facie breach of privilege occurred and “his ability to function as a member of the House has been interfered with.”

Mr. Speaker, I would like to add those cases of precedent to your deliberations on this matter.

Once again, I want to offer my wholehearted support to the member for Burlington on her point of privilege, because I feel unjustly affected by these robocalls as well. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): First let me thank the member from Burlington for making her point as thorough as she did, and I thank all the members who made comment on this case. I’ll reserve my ruling and report back to the House as quickly as possible. Thank you so much for this important discussion.

It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m looking for my petition here now. It reads as follows, from the riding of Durham:

“Whereas there is a growing body of evidence confirming industrial wind development has serious adverse effects on host communities;

“Whereas over” 1,035 “people in Ontario have reported serious negative health effects from industrial wind development, and at least a dozen families have” had their homes bought out to silence them;

“Whereas Ontario’s Green Energy Act has ended local planning control by stripping municipal councils of their rights;

“Whereas 80 municipal councils, representing two million Ontarians, called on the” McGuinty “government to put in place a full moratorium on industrial wind development until an independent epidemiological health study is completed, proper environmental regulations and protections are put in place, and local democracy is restored;

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

“Immediately put a moratorium on all industrial wind proposals; fund an independent ... study to develop safe setbacks; legislate those findings; develop stringent environmental protection standards for natural areas; and require all projects to comply with regulations based on science,” not politics.

I’m pleased to sign and support this and give it to Georgia, one of the pages.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Miller: Once again, I have another 2,000—over—petitions to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I have a petition from residents from the great riding of York South–Weston addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with the petition. I will sign it and send it over with page Constantine.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

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

“Whereas a report from Ontario’s Auditor General on the province’s air ambulance service, Ornge, found a web of questionable financial deals where tens of millions of taxpayers’ dollars have been wasted and public safety compromised;

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“Whereas Ornge officials created a ‘mini-conglomerate’ of more than a dozen private entities that enriched former senior officers and left taxpayers on the hook for \$300 million in debt;

“Whereas government funding for Ornge climbed 20% to \$700 million, while the number of patients airlifted actually declined by 6%;

“Whereas Ornge was paid \$7,700 per patient transported by land ambulance despite subcontracting this service for \$1,700 per patient, a full \$6,000 per patient less;

“Whereas, after receiving questions of serious concerns at Ornge from the opposition in 2010 and early 2011, the Minister of Health did not provide adequate oversight, ignored the red flags and reassured the Legislature that all was well; and

“Whereas, on March 21, 2012, the Legislature voted to create a special all-party select committee to investigate the scandals surrounding Ornge;

“Whereas such a committee provides protection from disciplinary action against employees who testify;

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

“The government of Ontario immediately appoint a special all-party select committee to investigate the scandals surrounding Ornge.”

TOURISM

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition which reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas tourism is a vital contributor to the economy of northwestern Ontario, bringing hundreds of millions of

dollars into the province’s economy from other provinces and the United States, unlike other regions in the province whose target demographic is people who already reside in Ontario;

“Whereas northwestern Ontario’s tourist economy has been under attack by government policies such as the cancellation of the spring bear hunt, the harmonized sales tax (HST), the strong Canadian dollar and difficulties passing through the Canada/United States border; and

“Whereas studies have shown that tourism in the northwest nets significantly more money per stay than other regions of the province, in part due to visitors frequenting historical sites, parks and roadside attractions that they learn about through travel information centres;

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

“To keep the travel information centres in Fort Frances, Kenora and Rainy River open permanently to ensure that northwestern Ontario maximizes the benefit of our tourist economy.”

I proudly support this and will give this to page Talin.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thanks to Jer’s Vision, I have received a petition with thousands of signatures in support of Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act.

“Whereas all Ontario students have the right to a school environment where they feel safe, welcome and respected;

“Whereas school boards must take preventative measures against bullies and issue tougher consequences for those who participate in bullying;

“Whereas creating a safe and positive learning environment is an essential part of helping students succeed in school;

“Whereas schools across the province must support any group promoting understanding and respect for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities;

“We, the undersigned, believe in supporting all students who experience bullying in our schools. We feel the Accepting Schools Act (Bill 13) will make a real difference in the lives of youth in our community and especially LGBTQ youth.”

Speaker, I agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it via page Dia.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Frank Klees: I have a petition from my constituent Cynthia Bultje of Newmarket, and I read it into the record.

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act.

“Whereas Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, by identifying only four specific groups and using primarily homosexual and gender issue bullying examples, provides a narrow focus to the bullying issue; and

“Whereas this should not be a legislation designed to appease a special-interest group or address a narrow political agenda; and

“Whereas it has not been proven that the special-status clubs will lead to a more inclusive environment; and

“Whereas the legislation will result in curriculum that may be in conflict with the values of various faith families; and

“Whereas the legislation, as stated by the Minister of Education (Laurel Broten) during her speech at second reading, is intended to ‘change the attitudes of society’ rather than addressing the wrongful actions of the bully; and

“Whereas churches and traditional-principled schools renting publicly funded school facilities would be forced to abide by an undefined ‘provincial code of conduct’ which could be in opposition to their ‘constitutionally protected faith’; and

“Whereas the legislation will interfere with the right of Catholics to create an education environment that is consistent with their faith;

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend Bill 13 to address these issues:

“Broaden the legislation to uphold the worth of all children who may be bullied for all reasons;

“Send the message that the bully’s actions are wrong for any reason, regardless of why they target the victim;

“Require tenants renting public school facilities to follow federal and provincial laws, rather than an undefined provincial code of conduct;

“Require school boards to respect the federally protected rights of all faith groups, as children from these groups are often bullied by their peers, the community and the governments;

“Remove references to the formation of specific clubs for certain groups (these clubs are not proven to lead to a more equitable environment) and place the emphasis on correcting the wrongful actions of the bullies;

“Include statements protecting the rights of all people, including the religious rights of individuals and groups—a segment of society that is often bullied because of its convictions;

“Ensure accommodation for any child whose parent identifies the curriculum to be in conflict with the values taught at home.”

SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition which reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Healthy Foods for Healthy Schools Act has taken away students’ right of free choice when it comes to dietary decisions, it is requested that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario review the act and consult all students of Ontario regarding the conditions and changes in the act to better meet our choices and desires;

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

“Review the act with the consultation of students of Ontario. Make changes to the dietary restrictions and healthy education components of the act.”

I support this and will give this to page Ranbir.

IMMIGRATION POLICY POLITIQUES D’IMMIGRATION

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario entitled “Respect for Diverse Communities.”

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

“Whereas the settlement of new Canadians to the province of Ontario remains a joint responsibility of the federal and provincial governments;

“Whereas the settlement of new Canadians to the province of Ontario remains a function of the departments of citizenship and immigration at both the federal and provincial levels;

“Whereas Ontario still remains the destination of choice for new Canadians in our federation;

“We, the undersigned, ask that the province contact its federal counterpart, including but not limited to the Honourable Jason Kenney and his department, and notify them:

“That the proposed reduction in the number of centres in the GTA authorized to perform immigration medical exams, the IMM 1017, is ill-advised;

“That the reduction in number of centres in the GTA where services are offered in French is ill-advised;

“Que la réduction du nombre de centres dans la région du grand Toronto où les services sont offerts en français est mal avisée;

“That the virtual elimination of centres where services are offered in the GTA in the languages of Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Farsi, Tamil and Arabic is ill-advised, and that it not only will inflict undue hardship on those cultural communities but is generally discordant with the Canadian values of openness, pluralism and diversity.”

I certainly support this petition, Speaker, will affix my signature and send it to you via Sabrina.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have a petition here signed by thousands of people and addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

“Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks

and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario....

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

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

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

I proudly affix my name to this petition.

1600

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition from Scarborough–Agincourt addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which states:

“Whereas creating a safe and positive learning environment is an essential part of helping students succeed in school;

“Whereas bullying, homophobia and gender-based violence are unacceptable;

“Whereas we need to do more than just tell bullied kids it gets better—we need to work together to make it better now;

“Whereas the Accepting Schools Act would, if passed, help to end bullying in our schools;

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

“That the elected members of all parties help make our schools safer and more inclusive by supporting the Accepting Schools Act.”

I fully support this petition. I will affix my signature and send it with Constantine.

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

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has assented to certain bills in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

An Act to proclaim the month of May Jewish Heritage Month / Loi proclamant le mois de mai Mois du patrimoine juif.

An Act to proclaim October 13 in each year as Major-General Sir Isaac Brock Day in Ontario / Loi visant à

proclamer le 13 octobre de chaque année Jour du major-général Sir Isaac Brock en Ontario.

An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012 / Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2012.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ACCEPTING SCHOOLS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 POUR DES ÉCOLES TOLÉRANTES

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 19, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to bullying and other matters / Projet de loi 13, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui a trait à l'intimidation et à d'autres questions.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I rise today to speak to Bill 13, which, as the members of this House are well aware, attempts to tackle the serious problem with bullying in our schools. While its goal is indeed admirable and the purpose noble, there is a better way, and I believe that better path is to adopt Bill 14, proposed by my PC colleague the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, after taking literally years to consult and do research to come up with her legislation.

Speaker, this debate is about publicly funded schools having the means and the mechanisms available to both students and educators to tackle and eliminate bullying in whatever form that bullying may take. No student should be bullied for any reason. It's my sincere belief that when holding both Bill 13 and Bill 14 up to serious and objective scrutiny, Bill 14, the PC bill, is a more comprehensive and thus stronger piece of legislation to deal with the scourge of bullying in our schools.

Bill 14 focuses on three areas: prevention, accountability and awareness. It gives students, parents and educators a strategy to raise awareness and prevent bullying. But it goes further than that. It also offers up a process to resolve the conflict, collect data and report to the Ministry of Education. As well, the definition of “bullying” in Bill 14 is far more comprehensive and focuses on the behaviour of the bully as well as the impact on the victim. Sadly, Bill 13 does neither of those things. How are we to know how serious the problem is, whether it's getting better or worse, if there's no mechanism or system in place to track these incidents?

But there's one more area where our Bill 14 rises to the occasion. It's an area I'm going to take some time and expand on here. It has a concise definition of “cyber-bullying.” This is an absolute imperative of any anti-bullying legislation that should pass this House. It's such a huge part of what we're dealing with here. Passing an

anti-bullying bill in the year 2012 without it would be like trying to split the atom by rubbing two sticks together.

An Ipsos Reid survey of Canadian teens done last year came up with the following findings with regards to cyberbullying: One in five Canadian teens has witnessed online bullying; 25% of kids between 12 and 15 have witnessed cyberbullying; 25% of girls and 17% of boys have witnessed online harassment; 51% of all teens have had negative experiences with social networking; 16% said someone posted an embarrassing photo of them; 12% had said someone had hacked their social media account.

As well, according to Pew Research statistics posted by Microsoft, two in five American parents report their child has been involved in a cyberbullying incident, and one in four educators have been cyberharassment victims themselves.

Speaker, educators surveyed consider cyberbullying as big an issue as smoking and drugs. Some 38% of girls online report being bullied, compared to 26% of online boys.

To not even acknowledge cyberbullying with a formal definition in the bill is more than a glaring oversight; it's a fundamental deficiency. Frankly, Bill 13 falls short in many areas and is incomplete. In short, it does not address the root cause of bullying.

Our party strongly believes in tackling bullying head on. Unlike Bill 13, our bill does exactly that, and in four critical areas. First, Bill 14 deals with both the reporting and the investigation of bullying incidents in our schools. Next, it makes school officials and boards accountable directly to the ministry when it comes to bullying. It also has an education and a public awareness component that is perhaps the most critical element of all when it comes to the prevention of bullying. Finally, Bill 14 makes an accommodation for remedial education for bullies to teach them that bullying is unacceptable.

Our bill also requires that anti-bullying lessons be incorporated in the provincial curriculum from JK to grade 12. Again, this is an area where Bill 13 falls short. It's inconceivable to me that a piece of legislation aimed at anti-bullying, at ending bullying, would overlook this incredibly important piece of the puzzle.

I also want to point out that we have made genuine efforts with members opposite to negotiate a marriage of these two pieces of legislation, Bill 13 and Bill 14, to make our schools the safest possible place for our children to grow and learn. Instead, we get incendiary quotes from the minister that, quite frankly, misrepresent reality and do nothing but poison the spirit of co-operation that should take precedence on an issue that's so important to the safety and well-being of Ontario's children. Sadly, the members opposite have refused to compromise in any meaningful way, and would rather resort to chest-thumping than brainstorming a solution.

In closing, I would like to pay tribute to a school in my riding, école Odyssee in North Bay, and in particular to teacher Sylvie Vannier. Sylvie and the students at

Odyssee have been at the forefront of the anti-bullying movement that we've seen swelling over the last year. They started an anti-bullying Twitter account even before these two pieces of legislation were brought before the House. You can find it at @nonabullying.

I can tell you, Sylvie is incredibly dedicated to this cause, and her students have rallied around her efforts. To her and them, I offer my heartfelt congratulations on being a shining light in this fight against bullying. I urge Sylvie Vannier and the students at école Odyssee to continue in making a difference. I hope other schools in my riding and across Ontario can follow their example.

Right at this moment, in committee room 1, the Standing Committee on Social Policy is meeting to consider Bill 14. I am pleased to see that, but I also believe that we should be having an all-party select committee on Ornge. I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Nipissing has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1612 to 1642.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask all members to take their places.

Mr. Fedeli has moved adjournment of the debate.

All in favour, please rise and be counted by the Clerk.

All those opposed, please stand and be counted by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 28; the nays are 43.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I declare the motion lost.

The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, I would urge all members to honour their commitment to an all-party select committee, and I ask for adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Mr. Fedeli has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1644 to 1714.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask all members to take their seats. Order.

Mr. Fedeli has moved adjournment of the debate. All those in favour, please rise.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Adjournment of the House. Isn't that what I said? No?

All those opposed, please rise and be counted by the table.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 23; the nays are 37.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I declare the motion lost.

Questions and comments? The member for Scarborough–Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: I rise here to speak in support of Bill 13. The member from Nipissing, in his remarks about the cyberbullying—in the bill, section 2 says specifically that the definition of bullying includes electronic. So, clearly, the bill does talk about cyberbullying.

The other piece I want to share with the House, Madam Speaker, is that last Friday I had an opportunity to visit Mr. Pollard and the grade 6 students at Kennedy Public School, because the students at that particular school were concerned about Bill 13. They had numerous questions for me, but they fully support this piece of legislation. One student, Cindy, said to me, “Why are the politicians at Queen’s Park not taking this bill seriously and, furthermore, why are they not passing the bill?”

At the end of the day, not only is this bill important for our children, the Toronto Star, last Saturday, in the—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. I’d ask all members who have conversations going on at this time to either cease or take them outside the chamber.

The member for Scarborough–Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Last Saturday, the Toronto Star spoke very clearly to all of us. They said, “If ever there were a” bill “that deserved to pass quickly and in a non-partisan manner, it’s this one.” The article also makes reference to these facts: “Bullying is a cruel practice that has far-reaching consequences for the victims and even for the bullies themselves. Opposition MPPs should put the needs of kids ahead of their desire to embarrass the government.”

I strongly urge everyone in this House to support the bill.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It’s a pleasure to be able to rise again to speak to this piece of legislation, which is what we are sent here to do: to debate, to talk about important issues of the day, to protect the people who have sent us here.

What has occurred today is that our member from North Bay has stood up and has spoken at length—

Mr. John O’Toole: It’s Nipissing.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Nipissing; I do apologize—has talked to this piece of legislation. We are, of course, engaged in trying to encourage this government to do what this House has called upon them to do, which is call for a select committee.

However, Madam Speaker, I will inform this House that today Bill 14 was supposed to have been discussed at social policy. Bill 14, of course, is the bill put forward by my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo. It is a bill that passed unanimously through this House and should have started with meetings on not only clause-by-clause but on public hearings. However, given a procedural power play by this government—and they know full well that what

you can do is call for this Bill 13 to be called so that Bill 14 could not be dealt with at committee—procedurally, what this government has done is tie up Bill 14 at committee, a bill that parents across Ontario agree with, that parents across this nation think is the leader in anti-bullying legislation.

If we want to call the truth here today—the member, I do apologize, is new and may not understand the rules and procedures of this House, but I will tell you, Bill 14 was passed. Bill 14 should be in committee. This government is delaying the anti-bullying legislation. They should tell the truth to the parents, they should tell the truth to the teachers and they should tell the truth—

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

1720

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, before I pass my comments on the remarks made by the member for Nipissing, I would just like to quote to my colleague from Nepean–Carleton standing order 71(d)—she was complaining about a procedure in the Standing Committee on Social Policy. The standing order reads as follows: “No bill shall be considered in any standing or select committee while any matter, including a procedural motion, relating to the same policy field is being considered in the House.”

Speaker, the reason that the Standing Committee on Social Policy was not able to come to order, correctly called by its Chair, was because the standing order itself dictated it.

Now, Speaker, we have had seven bells, representing 12 hours and 55 minutes worth of debate—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I’d ask the member to restrict his comments to responses.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Let’s then go to a chronology of what has happened here. On February 23, the Minister of Education met with the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. On February 27, the minister provided the member with a list of elements of her bill which could be included in the Accepting Schools Act. The minister wrote to the member for Kitchener–Waterloo on March 28. Staff met with the member on March 20. The minister wrote to the MPP again on April 11 to inform her that the bulk of her bill could be included in the Accepting Schools Act, and on April 18, the minister gave the member for Kitchener–Waterloo proposed amendments that included more than half of her bill in legislative language. What are we doing here? Let’s get both of these into committee. Let’s get it passed, let’s get it adopted and let’s get it enacted.

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

Mr. John O’Toole: Madam Speaker, I think it’s important to put on the record that the member from Nipissing is committed to fairness in everything I’ve seen him do in his time here, and I think it’s important for viewers to understand and respect the fact that he moved two procedural motions, one adjourning the debate, the other adjourning the House. The purpose of that, the motive behind that, was the lack of compliance or co-

operative spirit by the McGuinty government that would normally be expected here.

Premier McGuinty—his cabinet group—refused to have a select committee on reviewing the scandalous waste at Ornge. The viewing public may not get that, but I think the member from Nipissing was fair. He really gave them due notice of the motive for his procedural wrangling. Now really, what's important—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Madam Speaker, it's—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd urge the member to speak to the bill.

Mr. John O'Toole: I am speaking to the motive.

I'm quite concerned. The argument has been made by our critic Ms. MacLeod that Bill 14 is before committee. That bill has been broadly accepted across the province of Ontario—certainly in my riding of Durham—and if you're actually listening to other members, you'll find that there's an ability to achieve something here.

All of us are opposed to all forms of bullying, okay? But what we find is that there's bullying happening over there. They're bullying us to support them. That's the issue here. That's why these procedural things. Our House leader, Mr. Wilson, has made it clear when working with your House leader: Set up a select committee and this will end the ineffectiveness of this chamber.

In all fairness, we believe that what you're doing now—the public and the children here—we feel that we're being bullied. We feel that we have to agree with you on everything. Now, we could—

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

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Oh, that's right: Response from the member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. When I left off, I was speaking of Sylvie Vannier, the teacher at école Odysée in North Bay and her students who are incredibly dedicated to this cause. I spoke of her website and her Twitter account. She and her students have rallied around her efforts, and to her and them I offer my congratulations on being a shining light in this fight against bullying. I urge the students to continue to make a difference. I hope other schools in my riding and across Ontario can follow their example. Indeed, it would be a tragedy and a shame if the efforts of Sylvie Vannier and the students at école Odysée were to go for naught. If we pass legislation that is incomplete and doesn't address the root cause of bullying, that has no way to track the problem or offer up processes or solutions to deal with it, we risk the possibility of doing just that.

So I say to our members and to our members across the floor, as the member for Nepean–Carleton has said, we ask that we stop delaying the debate on our Bill 14. Let's do this for Sylvie, let's do this for the students, and let's do this for all students all across Ontario. Let's get serious about this Bill 14 that our member has proposed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I believe we have unanimous consent to deal with the matter pertaining to tonight's late shows. I seek consent to reschedule the late show standing in the name of Ms. MacLeod from tonight at 6 p.m. to tomorrow night.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is there consent? Agreed.

Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: I am pleased to rise today to provide a voice to the many parents and students who contacted my constituency and Queen's Park offices, concerned about the important issue of bullying.

We all know that bullying and violence in our schools is having a devastating consequence on children across this great province. We know that when students feel safe, they achieve success. Unfortunately, this is not the case in our schools today.

Consider these sobering statistics: Bullying occurs every seven minutes on the playground and every 25 minutes in the classroom. Half of all Canadian adults were bullied as a child or teenager, according to a recent Harris/Decima survey for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada. Some 71% of students have identified bullying as an ongoing problem; 46% of grade 12 students surveyed by the Ontario Student Trustees' Association admitted to having been either the victim or the perpetrator of bullying.

This is not acceptable, and it's why we need to do everything in our power to make our schools a safe place for our kids. It's also why we, as legislators, need to take our responsibility to protect children seriously.

Madam Speaker, many organizations in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga and the region of Waterloo are taking action to stop bullying. I'd like to highlight a few examples of the good work being done in my riding.

Take the region of Waterloo's public health department. They're working with some 100 elementary schools to decrease bullying among children and youth. The local Big Brothers Big Sisters of Waterloo Region has also worked to raise awareness about this issue by holding fundraising bowling events called Bowl for Kids Sake. This unique fundraising campaign challenges individuals and businesses to step up and strike out bullying in Canada by supporting the work of volunteer Big Brothers and Big Sisters. The John Howard Society of Waterloo region, which has been a long, strong anti-bullying advocate, offers workshops to schools and community groups on bullying prevention and other social problems encountered by children and our youth.

Finally, February 29 was Pink Shirt Day at many of our Waterloo region schools. By wearing pink, students and adults stood together to raise awareness about bullying and the detrimental effect it can have on students. The Waterloo Region Record's Newspapers in Education, along with the Kitchener Rangers, supported the day by selling pink T-shirts.

To augment all this good work, members here of this House and this Legislature need to develop a comprehensive approach to dealing with bullying. Our constituents expect no less. They're eager for us to address the widespread bullying that affects nearly one third of all children in our Ontario schools today.

So, now is the time for us to work together, to protect our children and ensure their safety. Unfortunately, though, the Liberals seem content to play politics and push through their flawed bill while outright ignoring Bill 14, the Anti-Bullying Act.

Madam Speaker, Bill 14 is a comprehensive anti-bullying bill that focuses on prevention, accountability and awareness. It provides students, parents and educators with a strategy to raise awareness and prevent bullying, as well as a process to resolve it, collect data and report to the ministry.

The Liberal bill does none of these things and fails to address the root causes of bullying. We tried to sit down and work with the Liberals to negotiate a merged bill to make our schools the safest place possible for our children.

Ironically, the Liberals' unwillingness to listen to the opposition parties' request to appoint a select committee on Ornge is a textbook case of bullying. Because of their

resistance to this very important proposal, I have no choice but to move adjournment of this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Kitchener–Conestoga has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1731 to 1801.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask all members to take their seats.

The member for Kitchener–Conestoga has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour, please rise and be counted.

All members who are opposed, please rise and be counted.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 22; the nays are 37.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I declare the motion lost.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The House adjourned at 1803.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre de Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Innovation / Ministre du Développement économique et de l'Innovation
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
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	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
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	
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
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	
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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Milligan, Rob E. (PC) Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West 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) Munro, Julia (PC)	Richmond Hill York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
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
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
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	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Grant Crack, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
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Yasir Naqvi, Teresa Piruzza
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Soo Wong
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Joe Dickson, Rosario Marchese
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Todd Smith, Jeff Yurek
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Phil McNeely, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns, Monique Taylor
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Shafiq Qaadri
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Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
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Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
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Liz Sandals, Jagmeet Singh
David Zimmer
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Ted Chudleigh, Dipika Damerla
Cheri DiNovo, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Ernie Hardeman, Tracy MacCharles
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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