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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 4 March 2013

Lundi 4 mars 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 4 March 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 4 mars 2013

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'd like to introduce, in the east members' gallery, the family of my page, Rhea Basu: father Anin, mother Sonia and sister Ayesha. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to introduce, in the gallery, my executive assistant from North Bay, Mr. Craig Dellandrea.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to introduce, in the members' west gallery—actually the public galleries out to the west—Mark McKinnon from the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: We have a page from my riding, Jaden Dilda, and joining us today, as I understand, are his mother, Kelly; his father, Richard; two sets of grandparents—grandmother Lena, grandfather George, grandmother Dianne Hersey and grandfather Doug Hersey—and aunt Rochelle Barber. I would like to welcome them to the House.

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm really pleased to introduce the parents and sisters of Lauren George, who is a page here from Niagara Falls from Prince Philip school. I know they're not in the members' gallery, but I know they're here because I had my photo taken with them. I'm going to introduce them. They are: Jennifer George, the mother; the father is E.J. George; and sisters Erica George and Vanessa George—a wonderful family from my riding of Niagara Falls.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today Ajax page Jessica Kostuch's mother, Wendy Kostuch, and close family friend Wendy Kelly. They are sitting in the gallery this morning. I'm sure that Jessica is honoured to have you both here this morning to show your support. I welcome you to Queen's Park.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I want to join my colleague from Niagara Falls in welcoming long-time friends, actually, who had lived in Fort Erie—E.J. and Jennifer George and their daughters Erica and Vanessa—here today because Lauren George is a page captain. I go a long time back with—well, Jennifer is obviously younger, so not that long ago, but her husband, E.J., who joins us—we went to elementary school, high school and then Western King's together. We spent some time carousing, if that's parliamentary, Speaker. But I do want to say, if he says

anything about my past, Speaker, don't believe a single word of it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm set up with so many lines, I'm just going to pass.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to welcome the staff and students of Marshall McLuhan high school in my riding on Avenue Road, named after the great Canadian Marshall McLuhan, who is probably the father of modern media and modern communication. Marshall McLuhan high school—thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, two weeks ago I asked you this question; I'm going to give you another chance to answer it. Can you name for us one Dalton McGuinty program that you're going to reverse or postpone to balance the budget?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm assuming this is a question about fiscal responsibility. I have said very clearly in this House that we are on track to balance the budget. We have a plan to, by 2017-18, reduce the deficit, to eliminate the deficit. As I say, we are overachieving on those targets. We have put wage constraint in place, there have been reductions across government and we are constraining growth, which is exactly what the Drummond report asked us to do. Restraining growth is what needed to happen. Wage constraint is what we've put in place, and that is why we're on track to reduce the deficit by 2017-18.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, 600,000 unemployed and the biggest deficit in Canada is not my definition of over-achieving.

Premier, as you know, a monumental bill passed on Thursday evening—Bill 5, standing in the name of my colleague from Thornhill, to freeze wages. I want to ask you, Premier: Given that that bill has passed second reading—it's something we believe in in order to get the deficit under control, balance the books and to make pay just as the 85% of people who are not on the government payroll who had their wages frozen.

Premier, please assure me that you actually are going to continue a wage freeze policy for our public service, or at least support the outstanding bill by Mr. Shurman.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've been clear; our objectives are the same. We know that we need to continue to

constrain those costs. In fact, we have said—and I have said here today—that we are on track to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18. We are restricting overall spending increases.

We're looking, though, beyond those measures to support small business, to make sure that they have the capacity to continue to grow the economy and to increase jobs. We're going to continue to work to ensure that small businesses have access to capital. We've got a plan to continue to constrain those costs, to continue to constrain growth and spending, and to help the economy to grow and put those conditions in place.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I think, respectfully, Premier, we do not share the same objectives. We want to reduce spending; you want to increase it. We want to fire up our economy and create jobs; you want to stall it. We want to restore the balance between union bosses and the hard-working taxpayers who pay the bills; you want to give more and more power to Pat Dillon and the Working Families Coalition.

1040

Before the House was prorogued—September 26, 2012, to be exact—the previous finance minister, Dwight Duncan, announced a number of initiatives in the Protecting Public Services Act that included a wage freeze, a wage freeze for non-union workers, and an elimination of the booking of sick days in the province of Ontario to help balance the budget. Which of those—the wage freeze, the wage freeze for non-union personnel, and the elimination of booked sick days—do you support in an initiative to balance our budget in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Every effort is being taken to reduce our spending curve; right? We have to take every effort to try to make us more competitive. We recognize that in order for us to balance our budget by 2017, we've got to take these steps, and we've taken some very concerted steps. But it's interesting to note that what we want are results. We talk about the wage freeze. In effect, that's what we've been doing. Even arbitrated deals have been coming in at zero-zero, and we will continue to do just that.

What we do not want to do is put at risk the very issues that we're trying to achieve, which is maintaining stability in the system, reducing our wages so that we can be competitive and balance our books.

But it's interesting to note that the Leader of the Opposition himself also has some issues with deficits. He himself is running the highest deficit of any party, and his own party voted last week to limit his runaway spending. Speaker, how is it that we can trust that initiative? We're taking the steps necessary, and we will continue to do so.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is also to the Premier. On Thursday afternoon, when you and your cabinet

were away pretending to care about Ontario's north, you embarrassingly lost a vote on my wage freeze legislation. Either you have an incompetent whip or that caucus is sadly divided.

Anyway, this is legislation that you and your union friends have opposed for months, indeed, not to say years. We are sure that your friends at the Working Families Coalition were none too impressed. After a long, dark decade of putting union bosses ahead of the interests of Ontario taxpayers, can you tell us today just what Patrick Dillon was doing in your office on Wednesday, February 27?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just say, Mr. Speaker, that I am very proud of the fact that I talk to a range of people. My caucus talks to a range of people. And, to that point, our cabinet was in Sault Ste. Marie on Friday, meeting with hundreds of people from the community: members of the chamber of commerce, people who were talking to us about youth employment and the ways to support businesses in the north. I think that is a very important aspect of the work of government.

It is really disappointing that the member opposite doesn't think that government connecting with people on the ground, hearing their ideas and incorporating their ideas into policy, is the way that government should work. We believe it is, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Well, I'm sorry, Speaker; that's not good enough, Premier. With kids locked out of extracurricular activities, public sector wages 15% to 30% above equivalent jobs in the private sector and Ontario hurtling towards a \$30-billion deficit, Ontarians deserve to know just what Pat Dillon was asking of you and of Ontario taxpayers. Did Patrick Dillon meet with you? What did he demand? If not, who in your office, Premier, did meet with him and just what did you and your office promise him?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, as I said, there are hundreds of meetings that happen every day between members of this government and people in various communities. What's really important to me is that we understand that some of the allegations in that little rant that the member opposite just did are just not true.

So, in terms of our trajectory and the deficit reduction, we are overachieving on those targets. We are on track to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18. We've been very clear that constraining public sector wages is part of what we are doing and will continue to do. That's why we're on target. The Drummond report said that if we didn't take those measures, if we didn't work to constrain costs, then we would not be able to balance the budget. But we are, and we're on target to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18.

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yes, we are.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: Premier, you know full well that Pat Dillon controls a syndicate of unions with a front called the Working Families Coalition. That syndicate

secretly spends millions of dollars to make sure the Ontario Liberal Party just keeps getting elected so that you will keep paying more and more and more. Union bosses across Ontario like the power that the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals have given them, and we find it passing strange that one of the first meetings you hold in your office is with Patrick Dillon, no less.

Premier, just how much did you and/or your staff sell Ontario out for this time?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have two comments to make. The first one is the one I keep repeating, and that is, when somebody is asking a question and someone from the same side starts to interject while they're asking the question, it's very difficult to respond to somebody who's making noise on the other side. And when somebody is giving an answer and someone is interjecting, it's hard for me to respond to somebody making noise on the other side. I'm going to ask you to control that. At least let the question be put and at least let the answer be put.

The second thing: We're getting dangerously close to making an allegation, and I'm going to allow it, except to warn you: If it comes closer, I will call you to order.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Actually, one of the first meetings I took—I don't know where the member opposite got the idea that this was one of the first meetings one of my staff members took—was with the Leader of the Opposition. That's one of the very first meetings I took.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I meet with dozens of people in a week. We meet with hundreds of people over the period of a week. I'm quite sure a member of my staff met with Pat Dillon. As you know, he's a member of the College of Trades Appointments Council.

The point is that we, on this side of the House, really believe it's very important that we meet with people from all walks of life with experience from all backgrounds so that we can understand what is happening. That's why we travelled to Sault Ste. Marie, it's why we met with the chamber of commerce in Sault Ste. Marie, it's why my cabinet ministers met with their stakeholders in schools, colleges and universities: to make sure we understand the issues on the ground so that that can inform our policy development.

HOME CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier, and it's a pretty simple one. Will the Premier commit to a five-day home care guarantee for families who are stuck waiting in some communities for as long as 262 days on a wait-list, so they can get some care for loved ones they have who are needing it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the leader of the third party knows, this is an issue that is of great concern to us. It's something we acknowledged in the throne speech that needs to be addressed, Mr. Speaker. We have done an enormous amount—I know the Minister of Health will want to speak to this issue—to transform the health care

system to make sure that people are getting the health care they need in the right place and in a timely way.

But we also know there is more to do, and we know there are investments in home care and changes within the system that need to be made. I'm looking forward to working with both parties on this, because I think it's an issue that really transcends party lines. All of us know there are people in our constituencies who need care. We need to make sure they get it—at home if that's where it is best for them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, home care lets Ontarians live with comfort, live with independence, live with dignity. But there are more than 6,100 people currently waiting to get home care in this province. When it comes to health care dollars, this government prefers to invest in sky-high CEO salaries which, despite promises, have still not been capped.

Will the Premier agree that there's something unfair about asking seniors to wait for home care if we're not asking CEOs to wait for their salary increases?

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Improving access to home care is an area where we have such clear common ground with the third party. We are absolutely committed to providing more people with access to more care. We demonstrated that in our last budget. We committed to more money in the home care sector, and we are seeing the benefits of that now. People are waiting a little bit less for home care now. As we move forward, Speaker, as we continue with the transformation of our health care system, we will see more care in the home and more care in the community. In order to achieve that, we do have to make some difficult decisions in other parts of our health care system, but that is exactly the right choice to make.

1050

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government says we have to choose between home care and hospitals. But the people remember this very government's promise not to make health care cuts.

Will the Premier tell Ontarians why she thinks seniors should be waiting for home care and services should be cut in hospitals while salaries for those at the very top can continue to rise? New Democrats don't think that's the priority.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's really important that we acknowledge that there is, in fact, no wait time for home care for people who are being discharged from hospitals with an urgent need for that home care—there is no wait time for that.

Speaker, we are increasing funding in our health care sector. As a government, we've put a priority on health care. We are not cutting health care spending; I can't be any more clear than that. We are, however, shifting spending. That is part of the transformation of our health care system that needs to take place and that has the

support of a broad cross-section of people in the health care sector, including people who advocate for more home care.

Speaker, we're on the right path. We're moving forward. More people will need home care. More people will get home care. We want people to get the care they need in an acute care hospital if that's what they need, but if they're ready to go home, let's be there with the right supports for them.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier. Susan from Oshawa wrote to us out of frustration because of the lack of balance in the way the Liberal government has funded health care in this province: "These upper level costs"—meaning executive salaries—"need to be radically contained and service at the front line needs [to be] beefed [up]."

Will the Premier agree that we need a balanced approach that caps hospital CEO salaries and finds efficiencies in LHINs and CCACs so that we can strengthen home care and health care in this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think that the approach to all of these policy areas has to be balanced. We have to make sure that we have the best people in those positions of responsibility, but we also have to make sure that the money that we invest in the system provides the service that people need. That's exactly what we've been doing. We've been looking at the increasing costs in health care and, as the Minister of Health has said, health care costs are not going down; they're going up. But what we have to be clear about is that people get the service that they need, and whether they need it in a hospital or from a community service or at home, making sure that that delivery mechanism is exactly what it should be.

I agree that there has to be balance in terms of the administrative costs, and the sharing of best practices among CCACs, among local health integration networks, is a very important part of that transformation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Linda from Hamilton, my hometown, noted that the CEO of Hamilton Health Sciences sees his salary go up every year. It's now over \$700,000 a year, plus a car allowance, but as Linda notes, "They close beds in the interest of saving money."

Will the Premier tell Ontarians why her government is making cuts in hospitals while CEOs in the hospitals continue to have their salaries rise year over year?

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think the member opposite and others will be interested in a couple of quotes so they know that I'm not the only one supporting our action plan.

Here's a quote: "We're very pleased to see that the [health] minister's action plan that she announced in January has been carried into the budget. We think that this focused approach to investing in community care is

the right initiative to relieving the alternative level of care pressure in Ontario."

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Who said that?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Steve Harvey from the Alzheimer Society of Ontario.

Speaker, "A local physician"—in Belleville—"has come to the defence of a Quinte Health Care's proposed 'community care' strategy—a plan he deems the cheapest and best overall option for improved patient care.

"Care delivered in the community is more effective at prevention and treating chronic diseases," said Jonathan Kerr, primary care lead for South East Local Health Integration Network."

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier and the government have talked a lot about change. A five-day home care guarantee is a positive change that we can afford in this province. Ontarians are frustrated that the government would rather cut beds or let over 6,000 families wait for home care than take a balanced approach to delivering health care.

Does the Premier agree that it's time for real change and a balanced approach so that we can make sure that Ontarians have access to the health care that they need?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We could not agree more with the leader of the third party that we need to continue to invest more in home care. That is our highest priority right now and it is backed up by real dollars. We are talking about 90,000 more seniors getting access to the care that they need.

Let me just read another quote: "I'm very happy with the budget as a home care provider. This is an opportunity to serve more Ontarians. This is certainly what we've been looking for and I think it's really important; home care is where people want to be, people want to be at home." That's from Susan VanderBent, the executive director of the Ontario Home Care Association.

There is overwhelming support for the transformation of our health care system. As we care for more people in the home, we are going to be able to free up those hospital beds for people who need acute care in the hospital.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier.

We're seeing a frightening pattern emerge over this gas plant scandal: We hear the Premier say one thing but actually do the opposite. She promised a select committee to "get to the bottom" of the gas plant scandal, but after that media event she took the offer off the table. Last Thursday, she held another media event and pledged to reveal "party documents," but at that very same moment her MPPs were filing the actual motion at committee, which did not include the words "party documents." Again, we're hearing one thing, but the opposite happens.

Premier, when are you going to come clean about your role in the gas plant scandal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I really hope that the opposition members are going to support the expansion of the mandate of the justice committee so that that committee can ask for all the documentation that, apparently, the members opposite have wanted to have access to. It is a very straightforward initiative that we have put forward. We want the opposition—we want the committee—to be able to ask for the full range of documentation, including if they want to ask for documents from the Liberal Party or from the Conservative Party or from the NDP. They can ask for that documentation, but not unless they support the motion to expand the committee mandate.

So I would ask the member opposite, is his party going to support the motion to expand the mandate of the committee?

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, while you were in the media conference telling reporters one thing, your MPPs were in the justice committee saying something completely different. In fact, both your news conference and the committee motion were nothing more than charades. We don't need your party's fourth promise to provide documents; all that did was acknowledge that there indeed are more documents that you are holding. Your own House leader told the contempt committee it "can request whatever documents it wants from the Liberal Party or the government."

Premier, we don't need your permission; we need your compliance. Will you turn over the Liberal Party documents today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, it's time to review—*Interjections.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Lanark, come to order, please. The member for Leeds-Grenville, come to order.

House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Let's review the Conservatives' record on this. First they opposed the gas plants during the election. "Done, done, done," we're told by the Leader of the Opposition. Then they come out and say that a judicial inquiry is too expensive—except for the member from Nipissing, who holds a press conference to say he wants a judicial inquiry. They reject our offer of an all-party committee, instead to go after a private citizen—a former member of the Legislature. Then they announce they're going to vote against a budget that hasn't even been written yet. Finally, on Thursday, when the Premier makes an offer to broaden the justice committee so that it can look into all aspects of the gas plant situation, they say, "We'll get back to you. We need the weekend to think about it."

When are they going to give us an answer as to whether they're going to support the broadening of the—

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

1100

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre.

Ontario's Ombudsman has warned that without his oversight, Ornge will continue to have no credible accountability. The Premier likes to use the right words—she talks about accountability; she talks about transparency—yet she denies this small, cost-free measure. Her reassurances right now look more like empty promises.

Can the Premier give me a valid reason as to why she is blocking Ombudsman oversight? I'm a reasonable person. Explain to me why you are saying no to Ombudsman oversight of Ornge.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health reintroduced legislation that would put in place a much stricter regime of monitoring over the air ambulance organization. In fact, it incorporates items that the member brought forward, to make sure that there was the kind of constraint in place that needed to be there.

I'm hoping that the third party will support us in getting that legislation to committee so it can be discussed, because we want that oversight in place. We recognize that there needed to be a better regime of monitoring in place. That's why we introduced the legislation, and that's why we listened to the opposition when they brought forward their components, and we incorporated those into the legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I don't understand. How can you say you want oversight, but yet say you don't want the Ombudsman? Something is not adding up. The promise of a new era at Ornge has to be followed up by concrete action, yet today we seem to be playing games again. Ontarians deserve oversight. They deserve accountability. They deserve to know that Ornge is on the right path.

Why won't you do the right thing? Why won't you restore public confidence in the troubled air ambulance service and give the Ombudsman oversight of Ornge? It looks like you're afraid that he's going to find something else at Ornge if you let him in there.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very pleased that very early in this new Legislature, we reintroduced Bill 11, that enhances oversight at Ornge. I think all of us know that this is legislation that needs to be passed.

I am grateful that my critic, the member of the third party, is supporting the transformation at Ornge. I would very much like to hear more from her about this idea. We did listen last time when she advocated that we bring Ornge in under freedom of information, and we are committed to doing that, Speaker.

Let's get this bill passed. Let's get it into committee. Let's have that conversation where it belongs: in committee.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I'm pleased with our government's commitment to reduce poverty in Ontario and the progress we've made together, but we must continue to do more, especially during tough economic times. We must ensure that the most vulnerable, like low-income families and children, are protected and supported.

I understand that a report was released last week which looked at poverty in the province, with a specific focus on children and youth. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What is our government doing to ensure that we protect our most vulnerable in our community?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough–Rouge River for his question and for his concern with respect to poverty reduction and for the children of our province.

Yes, Campaign 2000 did release their report last week, and I'd like to thank Campaign 2000 for their report as well as acknowledging our Poverty Reduction Strategy and the steps that we have taken over the years. It's the first type of strategy of its kind in the province.

Mr. Speaker, our government has made significant progress in the fight against poverty through our government's Poverty Reduction Strategy. We have introduced the Ontario Child Benefit, as we know. Through many of our programs, we have been able to lift over 40,000 children out of poverty. That was in the midst of a global economic uncertainty and challenge in our province.

Speaker, we certainly acknowledge that there's more work to do, and we look forward to working with all our partners to continue our progress.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I would like to thank the minister for that response. I'm pleased that we remain committed to reducing poverty. I'm glad that our government is committed to the Poverty Reduction Strategy, and we have seen some important results from it. There's a lot to be done when it comes to poverty and giving children and youth the best opportunity to reach their full potential.

My question: What are some of the initiatives of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, and how do they assist Ontario children and youth?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Again, thank you for the follow-up question. Our most recent 2012 report, which was released in the fall, contains many encouraging signs of progress—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: —in services that we have provided.

Over 950,000 children in 510,000 families are being helped by the OCB, or the Ontario Child Benefit. Almost 122,000 kids are getting a stronger start in about 1,700 schools through full-day kindergarten. Nearly 33,000

children and young people, who may have otherwise gone untreated, are receiving free dental care through Healthy Smiles Ontario.

Speaker, as I indicated earlier, we know that there's more work to do in the fight against poverty, and together with our partners, we'll continue to find lasting solutions to break the cycle of poverty.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is to the Premier. Premier, last week you admitted that the decision to cancel the gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville was a political decision, but you've yet to say whose political decision it was.

An article from September 2011 highlights you, the finance minister, the Deputy Premier, the labour minister and the Minister of Natural Resources as senior players in the last Liberal election campaign. Most of your senior cabinet members could be under the spotlight in this Liberal scandal. Did one of them actually make the call to cancel the power plants or was it, as we've suspected all along, unelected Liberal Party officials who were desperate to save a couple of Liberal seats in the GTA?

Premier, will you stand in this House today and tell us whose idea it was to cancel those power plants?

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

Hon. John Milloy: The question of—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark will withdraw, and there's a reason for that. I think he understands why.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

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

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the question of the documents that were produced related to the gas plants is before a committee of this Legislature, and hopefully—and I look forward to the member answering in his supplementary—with the support of the Progressive Conservative Party, we're going to broaden that committee's mandate so they can look into all aspects of it. I know one of the things they will want to look at is the role of the Leader of the Opposition in terms of his call for the cancellation of it.

Mr. Speaker, last week I had a chance to talk about Twitter. I had a chance to talk about YouTube. In the supplementary, I look forward to telling everyone about an appearance the Leader of the Opposition had on that fine show, The Agenda.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Speaker, there have been strings attached all the way along. We wanted these documents back in May of last year. This Premier has had almost five months since this scandal ended up on the floor of the House to ask who is responsible for this campaign decision. Are you asking us to believe that you have not asked even one of your cabinet ministers or senior Liberal Party officials about it in that time? If you have

asked those questions and you still don't have the answers, then it's clear that the vote you lost last Thursday afternoon here in this House isn't the first sign of a lack of confidence your caucus has shown for you.

Premier, you've had five months to find out who is responsible for making that decision. If you still don't know who made the decision, what makes you think that you're responsible enough to sit in that chair?

Hon. John Milloy: I listened intently to the honourable member's question and nowhere in there did I find out if their party will be supporting the broadening of the committee's mandate. Mr. Speaker, no strings attached on this side. I will stand in this House at the end of question period, if he likes, and we can pass that unanimous consent motion.

But, Mr. Speaker, I promised: The Agenda, Leader of the Opposition—

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: Please—February 28, 2013, the host, Steve Paikin, about the Mississauga gas plant: "...but you would have cancelled it as well." The Leader of the Opposition: "Well, let's be clear.... I never would have built those plants. I objected to that from the beginning. With respect to Mississauga, I mean, you're right.... I said, given those circumstances, then we wouldn't build the plant." Or, as he put it to our friend from the Toronto Star, it would have been done, done, done.

1110

So the real question is, will the Progressive Conservative Party talk about its decision-making? Will they table—

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

TUITION

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Over the last seven years, the Liberal government has hit Ontario college and university students with up to a 70% increase in tuition. It is becoming more and more difficult for families to send their children to college and university.

Does the minister think another tuition hike at more than twice the rate of inflation is acceptable?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the member for what is a very good and important question. The member will know we're in the process now of working with students and post-secondary stakeholders towards a new tuition framework. I certainly will welcome the views of the party opposite and the member as we try to strike that balance between affordability and quality. It is an important balance, and I know the member opposite knows that.

Look, we're in tough fiscal times, but despite that, our 30% tuition grant is assisting more than 200,000 low- and middle-income students across this province. This was ambitious, Mr. Speaker, but we've done it, and we've done it within our fiscal targets.

I'm looking forward to working with the member opposite, I'm looking forward to working with students and I'm looking forward to working with our post-secondary partners to strike the right balance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Back to the minister: Ontario students were hit with a tuition increase of up to 70% by this government, and the minister knows that the government's failed tuition rebate is helping fewer than one in three students.

With an average undergrad tuition of over \$7,100—the highest and the fastest tuition growing in Canada—why is the minister allowing yet another tuition hike of up to 5%?

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's a decision that's yet to be made, and it's going to be a decision for which I certainly will welcome the views of the member opposite and her party, as I will the views of students and parents across the province.

It is a balance, and I think the member appreciates that. It's a balance between affordability and quality. We'll make sure and we'll try to work as best we can with the member opposite to strike the right balance.

But I will also ask the member opposite to be realistic. The NDP are quoted as saying they want to extend the 30% off tuition to all students. That would take dollars that are going to low- and middle-income students and transfer them to the richer students. I'm not sure we want to go there. They're also calling for an outright freeze in tuition, something that would be nice to do, but I ask where the money would come from. Thirdly, they're suggesting that we waive student debt. That's billions and billions and billions of dollars that I don't think we have right now to do that. We'd love to do it—

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

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Construction is currently under way on the UP Express that will connect Pearson International Airport to Union Station. This project is a critical project for the people in the riding of York South–Weston and for the communities that live along the line. This project will provide much-needed potential revitalization in this part of Toronto.

As you are aware, I have strongly advocated to the province, together with my community, the importance of a clean, efficient and electrified UP Express. Metro-linx has indicated that the earliest we could expect the line to be electrified would be 2017.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, can the minister discuss this date and provide an update on the status of the project?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This government is very, very committed to electrification and sees this as a priority. We have made a very strong commitment here to Canada's two busiest transportation hubs, Union Station and

Pearson International Airport. This will provide high-quality travel between the two.

The member is quite right: The earliest date that we can achieve electrification would be 2017. I'm very committed to working with her to realize that time frame. As we develop the infrastructure and the investment strategy with Metrolinx, we will be trying to fully realize these projects right on time.

In the meantime, we are moving ahead with tier 4 diesel trains to be up express ready in time. I want to explain one thing very quickly: These are 75% cleaner than the standard GO diesels we run today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you to the minister for clarifying the earliest date to electrify the line. As I mentioned earlier, this is of great importance to my constituents in York South–Weston and to all the communities that live along the corridor. It's also great news to learn more about the progress of the project.

The minister also touched upon the environmental assessment for electrification being well under way. Many of my constituents would like to learn more about that process. Mr. Speaker, through you, could the minister tell this House what the study includes and when we can expect the EA to be concluded?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The member is quite right: The environmental assessment is under way right now. We are moving forward with it as quickly as the rules allow. We are also working right now to build the capacity on the Georgetown line that will allow electrification; this isn't like you can turn a light switch on and off. This government is very committed to running higher quality, cleaner vehicles across our rail and GO system and to building the capacity needed for electrification. We've also got both convertible vehicles that will be changed—those engines will be changed to electrical—and the line is being built to the capacity and the standards and specs for electrification.

I live half a block from the CN/CP/GO main line and the Gardiner freeway. That goes through many of the constituencies here. We also have to look at the Lakeshore line and improve environmental standards. This government has closed coal plants. I remember when I came back to Ontario 10 years ago, we had over 50 smog days that summer in Toronto. Those days are behind us because of these kinds of measures.

SCHOOL EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. Last week, Premier, you declared victory on extracurricular activities. At the time, I warned you not to pop the champagne or pat yourself on the back. Your caucus went into an absolute frenzy on the floor of this chamber when you were excited to get your extracurriculars back. Yet I warned you that not all high school teachers agreed to resume coaching and leading our school activities. Then, on Thursday, the announcement came, just as I

told you, that ETFO was going to refuse to restore extracurricular activities.

Just like in 2009, when you personally, as education minister, removed extra extracurricular activities from the role of the teacher, you have again taken the side of a union. You are letting them run the education system; you refuse to support a reasonable or sensible or workable solution to get extracurricular activities back in our schools.

Premier, what is plan B? Since your Harvard-trained mediation skills have failed us, and you have refused to adopt the Ontario PC plan, how do you say you're going to restore extracurricular activities this—

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Yes, I'm actually pleased to report that, in fact, we do have extracurricular activities coming back in the public secondary schools. Of course, we also have extracurricular activities happening in the French schools of the province and the English Catholic schools in the province.

Now, obviously, we are disappointed that the elementary teachers' federation made a different decision. Certainly, we look forward to continuing to talk with them. What I do find encouraging is that, as you look around the province, we find that teachers really do want to re-engage with their students and come back to making schools a great place to learn.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, extracurricular activities are not fully restored in our high schools, and they are not anywhere to be seen in our elementary schools. Parents are taxpayers; they expect you to do your job. Unfortunately, you had a stunning role reversal since the time you were the public trustee for the province, until you became a minister, when you actually supported the Ontario PC plan.

1120

But I go back to your Premier. She is partly responsible for kids losing their extracurricular activities. First, she removed the extracurricular activities from the role of a teacher when she was education minister. Then she failed to have the unions restore those extracurricular activities. Finally, when given the opportunity this time last week to support an Ontario Progressive Conservative motion to get those back in our classrooms, she stood up and she voted against them. Stubborn, naive or in the pocket of the unions—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —one thing: She is not letting our kids do what they need to be doing in their schools. They're losing out.

Will the Premier do the right thing? She can leave here today and she can adopt the Ontario PC motion and get those extracurriculars back in our schools.

Interjections.

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

Minister of Education?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Actually, if I supported the Ontario PC plan, I wouldn't be a Liberal MPP today, if you really want to get your facts straight. That's in part because of the contrast in the way we feel about our teachers.

We recognize that our teachers are our front-line professionals and we want to work with them. We recognize that teachers are the people who actually want to get back to extracurriculars, who want to do those positive things that make our schools a great place to learn. We know we have relationships to repair and we know the teachers understand that, and that the teachers also want to do some repairing of the relationship with the parents and the students.

They may have a sort of in-your-face way of approaching things; we want to work collaboratively with everyone, including school boards, principals and—

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. On Friday I was called to London by a distraught Ontarian whose 93-year-old parents have been separated by the long-term-care system after 67 years of marriage. More than anything, Mrs. Simone Price wants to live out her golden years with her husband, Everett Price.

This family's cry for help to the government went unanswered. But since they went public with the story, the Minister of Health now seems to agree with New Democrats that "it's the right thing to do" to accommodate the Prices.

My question is a simple one: When will the government make this right and reunite Mr. and Mrs. Price?

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, of course we all want couples to be together if at all possible. That's why we've made significant changes in our long-term-care homes so that spouses who had been separated in the past are now together. Spousal reunification has been a real godsend to many of those couples who had been separated in long-term-care homes.

This issue is one that I am looking very closely at. We've come a long way when both partners are in a long-term-care home. The question now is, what can we do to bring couples together where one is in long-term care and one is in the community? My heart goes out to this family and to all the others who are really wanting to be together with their spouse.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: According to the government, as the minister has just mentioned, spousal reunification is one of the highest priorities of the Long-Term Care Act. The health minister appears to agree with New Democrats, but nice words aren't enough.

Mr. and Mrs. Price actually lived in the same location until Mrs. Price ended up in hospital. Now, as she's coming out of hospital and needs to have long-term care, all of a sudden, a 70-year relationship is going to be torn apart, because the system simply will not allow the rules to enable these two people to go back to the same place they used to live before. It doesn't make sense.

I want to know from the government when their nice words will turn into real actions for Mr. and Mrs. Price in London.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, this is an issue that has been raised when I have visited places where there is both a long-term-care home and a retirement home on the same site. This is an issue that's been brought forward, for example, when I was in Kitchener-Waterloo, visiting a Schlegel home there. It was an issue that people raised in that venue and others.

What I can say is I want people who have been together for so many decades to be together as long as possible. We've got some work to do to make that happen, but we're doing that work.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Ontarians recognize the importance of northern Ontario and that the people there should be heard from and have their concerns addressed. We all know that this Premier and this government is ready to work for everyone and is listening to all Ontarians, including how we can realize the potential of the resources that northern Ontario has to offer. Can the Minister of Natural Resources tell all of us what this government has done and will do to hear from northerners, and how they can be part of our strong and growing economy?

Hon. David Orazietti: I want to thank the member for the question. For many northerners, the MNR is a ministry with which they have a high level of contact. Whether individuals are obtaining an Outdoors Card to hunt and fish or enjoy one of our 334 provincial parks, we are working to modernize the way we deliver these services. We're also working with our partners in industry, including the Ontario Forest Industries Association, to promote economic development in the north, while responsibly managing our province's natural resources.

Just last week, we held a cabinet meeting in northern Ontario, in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie, to allow cabinet ministers the opportunity to hear first-hand from northerners and individuals and organizations with whom they interact. I certainly want to express my appreciation and support to my colleagues for taking the time to do that. It demonstrated very clearly our government's commitment to listening to northern residents about their distinct and unique challenges and the opportunities in northern Ontario.

I also want to say, Speaker, it certainly fulfills the commitment that the Premier has made, holding a cabinet meeting in northern Ontario. We're very grateful for that. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Speaker, and back to the Minister of Natural Resources. I know that expanding economic development in Ontario's north has been identified as a key priority for our government, and the Ministry of Natural Resources plays a significant role in that. Northern Ontario is a place of unimaginable potential in many ways. It holds the key to continuing our economic growth.

In order to create more good jobs in the region, we must focus on development of more paths to employment, including those for young people in aboriginal communities in the north. Can the member please tell the members of this House about the creation of the new cabinet committee and share what our government is doing to promote economic development across northern Ontario?

Hon. David Oraziotti: To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Of course, being from Thunder Bay, in northwestern Ontario—a part of the world that I love so much and fought so hard for—I could not be more excited or proud of the direction our government is taking under Premier Wynne. Certainly, we are continuing to invest in the construction of better transportation routes and better infrastructure, and in terms of our blueprint vision for the northern Ontario growth plan, we are fully committed to implementing that landmark document.

As the Premier did announce on Friday, there will be a new northern cabinet committee chaired by our colleague Bill Mauro, from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. This will really bring a true northern lens to all government policy. May I say to the opposition members that this committee is going to be reaching out to opposition members, with other stakeholders—municipal stakeholders—as we work to improve transportation, create jobs and ensure a bright future for every person in northern Ontario.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question today is for the Minister of Finance. The month of January marked the 73rd straight month that Ontario's unemployment rate has been higher than the national average.

Last week, we learned that Diamond Aircraft in London is laying off another 200 workers at its plant; this is on top of the hundreds of people who were laid off in 2011. Minister, as you know, Diamond Aircraft is owned by Medrar Financial Group, which operates out of Dubai. Was your decision to invest \$10 million into this Dubai-owned company because Diamond Aircraft has been a significant contributor to the Liberal Party of Ontario going back to 2005?

Hon. Charles Sousa: To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I thank the member opposite for the question. Of course, I already spoke to this last week. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to it again. Ob-

viously, we're very concerned for the future of the employees and their families.

We did make an investment to Diamond of \$5 million; in fact, the federal government also made a similar investment. Our investment in 2006, over the five-year term of that agreement, they met all of the benchmarks for job creation and for sustaining employment in London. In fact, with the recent announcement, I'm also encouraged to hear that the president and the CEO have said they want to hire back as many employees as possible as quickly as possible, but the exact number and timing has yet to be determined.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the minister: Diamond Aircraft has been used by your government as a showpiece example of corporate welfare strategy. Unfortunately for those workers at Diamond Aircraft, much like those at WindTronics, Knorr Brake and Digital Extremes, your method of picking winners and losers is failing badly. Diamond Aircraft is laying off 200 people in London after you have given it millions of dollars through your failed corporate welfare program. Coincidentally, this Dubai-owned company has donated thousands upon thousands of dollars to the Liberal Party of Ontario. Coincidence? We think not.

Tell us, Minister, just how many other corporate welfare recipients have been donors to the Ontario Liberal Party? Will you also promise to wash your party's dirty hands and return your party's donations back to the Middle East?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Frankly, it's very disappointing that the member opposite continues to disparage our private sector and not be interested in job creation at all.

A year ago, last February, the PC Party continued to talk about their opposition to what they refer to as corporate welfare. In fact, the member opposite would be interested in this quote where, even in his own riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, a local politician there representing the constituents said, "Local business owners do perfectly well without handouts from Queen's Park." That local politician was you, actually. It might come as a surprise to Lambton Conveyor, which is the first recipient of funds from the southwestern Ontario development fund, which is creating 110 new jobs in your riding.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Premier. Several weeks ago, Premier, MPAC ruled that the town of Espanola must pay pulp and paper giant Domtar \$4 million following a property reassessment of its Espanola mill. Domtar is one of the world's largest pulp and paper companies, with revenues of \$5.6 billion in 2011 alone.

When a small community such as Espanola is forced to retroactively cough up a good part of its tax base to repay a global giant such as Domtar, what is the Premier prepared to do to fix the flawed MPAC reassessment process?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Finance will want to speak to this issue, but I want to make a general comment about the economic viability of small communities, particularly small communities in the north.

Having been Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and having been Minister of Transportation, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of initiatives that we have put in place to work with communities to make sure that they have the capacity to deliver the services that they need in their communities and to make sure that they can keep their infrastructure in place. We have worked with municipalities to make sure they can develop asset management plans, Mr. Speaker. We are very, very committed to continuing to invest in roads and bridges and that kind of infrastructure that's needed because it's about economic development; it's about making sure that small communities have the capacity to have the economy that they need to sustain their constituents.

I know the Minister of Finance will want to speak to the specifics of the assessment, but economic development and the capacity to be viable is at the root of this—

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Once again my question is to the Premier. Although the Premier was just in Sault Ste. Marie for her cabinet photo op, it's clear she doesn't understand the challenges facing northerners. Communities such as Dryden, Elk Lake, Fort Frances, just to name a few, are watching these decisions very carefully, and they are concerned with the impact that MPAC is going to have on their communities. Residents of Espanola simply cannot afford a 50% tax increase or to pay Domtar.

Will the Premier commit to reviewing the reassessment process and, in particular, this devastating decision for Espanola and other communities in northern Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The province does understand some of the implications that you speak of. It's critical that we do review these things going forward. We understand the impact it has, and we understand also the necessity for those municipalities to be well served.

There's only one taxpayer in this system. We know that the assessment has been put forward, and we have made a commitment to have it reviewed. We have sat down with some of the stakeholders on some of the initiatives already, and we'll continue to do so. I do appreciate you bringing it forward, even last week, and we'll make every effort to move forward on that issue.

CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I was privileged to serve as a trustee for several years in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt. Something that I have always been concerned about and advocate for is healthy living for our kids. It is important for kids to have the ability to learn at school and grow up to be healthy.

We know that we have a challenge in Ontario. Obesity rates have risen significantly, and we know obesity leads to heart disease and diabetes. Researchers say this generation of children could actually live shorter lives than their parents. This is why I'm very proud to have run as a Liberal in 2011, with an ambitious goal to reduce childhood obesity.

Through you, Speaker, to the minister: How are we, as a government, going to fulfill this commitment?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for her energy and thoughtfulness as a member of the Healthy Kids panel.

We all love our kids. We want our kids to be healthy, not just when they are young, but as they grow up, too. But we know that too many of our kids are not as healthy as they could be, and that has serious consequences for our health care system.

As a first step in helping our kids be healthier, I went to the experts. I'm very proud that today the Healthy Kids panel has released an excellent report based on the best available evidence and with thoughtful recommendations. As a starting point, we're going to form an inter-ministerial working group that will direct the government's actions on implementing many of the report's key recommendations. It will be co-chaired by me and Minister Piruzza, the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Speaker, we will be working with all our colleagues, but I have to underline that this report is an excellent resource, not just for government, but for families, for parents and for anybody who cares about the health of our kids.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: This is a good start. However, the challenges we face together are significant. Some 25% of health care costs are due to preventable illnesses. Nearly half of cancer deaths are related to tobacco use, diet and lack of physical activity. Obesity has a direct effect on the rates of type 2 diabetes, and diabetes costs Ontario \$4.9 billion. Currently, over 50% of adults in Ontario and about 20% of our youth are overweight.

Through you, Speaker, to the minister: What action is being taken right now to address these significant challenges?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, there is no one single recommendation that will solve all of the problems. We need action on all fronts if we're going to make progress. We currently spend more than \$500 million a year on initiatives and programs that directly and indirectly support Ontarians to lead healthier and active lives.

We've already taken steps to help Ontarians live healthy lives, such as the Student Nutrition Program. It has provided over 630,000 students with nutritious breakfasts, snacks and lunches within Ontario. We also encourage healthy eating through the Foodland Ontario program and our farmer's market support to get fresh fruit grown by our farmers to consumers. The children's activity tax credit allows parents to claim up to \$526 of expenses related to enrolling their kids in activities.

Speaker, there is much more to do. The Healthy Kids panel report gives us very good advice on how to move forward.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker. I would like to correct the record—with average undergrad tuition over \$7,100, the highest and the fastest-growing in Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As members all know, anyone at any time can correct their own record, and I thank the member for doing so.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to make one quick comment before we dismiss, and that is that I've noticed an unfortunate trend in the House, and I'm going to ask you to stop. That trend is to call members by their names, even when you're heckling, and even using unfortunate nicknames. That does not race to the top. That is what has caused what I've been telling you about, and that is the personal comments that are being made. Refer to members either by their role or their riding. The second thing is, on the personal side, by not doing so, it races to the top.

So I would ask all members to abide by this by not calling members by their name, particularly when they're heckling, and particularly using nicknames.

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

The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I rise today to welcome a number of my constituents from the great riding of Oxford who are here this week to meet with members of the Legislature regarding their concerns about water quality and their concerns about a proposed landfill site. I want to commend them for their efforts, and I hope that many members will take the time to meet with them this week.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I will make a comment on that because I didn't even hear a name. When we introduce people, the sole purpose is to introduce people and not to make a statement. So I'm going to remind all not to do that.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DRIVE CLEAN

Mr. Michael Harris: Today, I rise to express the frustration of Ontarians with the Liberal government's new and technically flawed Drive Clean test.

Up until the Liberals introduced this computerized testing method on January 1, 95% of vehicles met the program's requirements as a result of improved technology and standards. But that didn't stop the Liberals from rushing to introduce a new computerized testing method that they knew would create an artificial spike in the failure rate for emissions tests.

Now, every day, countless vehicles fail this new test—not because of emissions-related problems but because of a computer error. Rather than address these technical issues, the Liberals have told Ontarians to spend their valuable time and money driving on highways and around town in the hopes that their vehicle's onboard computer will correct itself for the next test.

What's truly unfortunate is that the Liberals gave no thought to the unwarranted financial hardship and stress these false fails would have on drivers and car dealers. Clearly, it's time to phase the program out. In less than one month of launching scrapdriveclean.ca, over 1,500 people have completed our online petition calling for the program to be eliminated.

I would like to encourage all Ontarians who want this technically flawed test put to an end to sign our online petition today or to fill out the downloaded petition form—scrapdriveclean.ca.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We've listened to this government now, in three budgets—probably three or four—and at least two throne speeches, talk about the wonderful opportunity that presents itself in the Ring of Fire in northern Ontario. We have some of the best mineralogical ability in that particular part of the province when it comes to chromite, when it comes to nickel, when it comes to other metals.

We're looking at this government and saying, "Where have you been for the last three or four years?" There is an opportunity here to position Ontario as a stainless steel producer. You need chromite, you need nickel and you need iron ore, all things that belong here in Ontario, and if all we're trying to do is to create a mine up in the Ring of Fire, I think we're selling Ontario short. We should be trying to position this as a stainless steel play for the province of Ontario.

Imagine if we can mine the minerals that exist in the Ring of Fire, that we can ship them to facilities here in Ontario that not only transform them to chromite, but bring them from chromite all the way to stainless steel, we have an opportunity to create, in this province, an economic powerhouse that will be able to help this province for years to come. This is not an industry that will be there for five or 10 years; it's an industry that will be there for 100 years.

I look at this government and I say to myself, "Where have you been?" It seems to me they're trying to downplay the potential of the Ring of Fire. So I say to this government, we should really be looking at positioning this as the Ring of Fire is moving into production. We should be looking at how we position

this so that we can be in the stainless steel business here in Ontario.

FLORENCE AND WILLEM SCHURMAN

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Richmond Hill residents Florence and Willem Schurman on their 71st wedding anniversary. Mr. and Mrs. Schurman were recently honoured by World-wide Marriage Encounter as the longest-married couple in Ontario.

I first met Flo and Bill while canvassing as the provincial Liberal candidate in the former riding of Oak Ridges. I was really fortunate to have the support of these experienced volunteers during the 2003 general election. Passionate about politics, the couple has been volunteering on political campaigns since the 1960s.

Flo, now 89, and Bill, 94, say that the secret to their long-lasting relationship is simple: Never part on an angry word.

Since first meeting as neighbours in Richmond Hill, they've built a full life together. Through the turbulent years of the Second World War, they raised a large family of six children, and they now have 12 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. As active members of the community contributing to horticultural and historical societies, Flo was honoured as Richmond Hill's Senior of the Year in 2005.

Today, the couple continues to live in their own seniors' apartment. I, along with my colleague MPP Reza Moridi, want to thank them for helping make Richmond Hill a great community in which to live. Congratulations, Flo and Bill.

LEGISLATIVE INTERNS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise to give recognition to the Ontario Legislative Internship Programme, and particularly the intern I had the pleasure of hosting in my office, Beth Elder.

What is unique about the OLIP program is that the interns choose the MPP, not the other way around. I feel honoured to have been selected by Beth as her first-term host MPP.

Beth is originally from Calgary, but moved to Toronto to attend the University of Toronto. She used her experience as an intern to discover the great opportunities in rural Ontario, particularly Huron-Bruce.

I can't say enough good things about Beth's work in our office. She's a very quick study who was planning large events, writing press releases and doing fantastic research. Beth visited the great riding of Huron-Bruce on numerous occasions, learning about the opportunities and the challenges rural Ontario is facing.

I recommend the internship program, not only to other graduates interested in pursuing a career in the political world, but to my colleagues here in the Legislature as well.

Beth departed our office last month, and her presence is already greatly missed. She has a really bright future

ahead of her and I wanted to take a moment to thank her for all she did. I wish her the best of luck as she pursues her current placement, and in her future endeavours as well.

PEEL MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I had the opportunity to recently attend a town hall meeting regarding the Peel Memorial Hospital in my riding in the region of Brampton. The region of Peel is expected to pay \$120 million out of the \$420-million cost to redevelop this hospital. Now, it's simply unacceptable to expect a municipality to fund this high of a cost for a project which the province of Ontario has the mandate to fund—institutions such as hospitals and schools.

The Liberal government has been campaigning on the issue of revitalizing this hospital since 2007. Now, promise after promise has been broken. To date, a comprehensive plan with funding has not been announced by this provincial government; we do not have a concrete start date or completion date. This is yet another example of the Liberal government's track record of broken promises.

The people of Brampton need two hospitals. They deserve two hospitals. It's a municipality of over 500,000 people. Now we need to see some actual funding, some concrete funding, to ensure that this promise is not yet another empty promise and there's actually something concrete to it.

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Each year, more than 2,000 people in Ontario have their lives saved or enhanced through organ donations. You may have recently heard about Keith Childerhose from the town of Oakville. Keith was diagnosed with diffuse panbronchiolitis 15 years ago and is currently on the road to recovery now after receiving a brand new set of lungs. His wife, Sarah, has been a great promoter of organ donation awareness, turning to social media to encourage Ontarians to sign up for the Be a Donor campaign. The Be a Donor campaign seeks to raise awareness about the impact of organ donation, as well as the need for recipients to register and discuss their wishes concerning organ donation with their own families.

In 2012, there was a record number of organ transplants performed in Ontario. However, less than 25% of Ontarians are currently registered as organ donors.

Community leaders in my riding, led by Jennifer Malabar, an organ recipient, have been running a successful local campaign to raise the number of registered donors in Oakville. They've also challenged other communities to do exactly the same.

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Today, Speaker, I encourage all members to take on that challenge and encourage their constituents to sign up for the Be a Donor campaign at beadonor.ca so we can

hear more successful stories similar to Keith and Jennifer's.

DON McVITTIE

Mr. Norm Miller: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to congratulate a very deserving constituent from my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka. On Friday, February 22 here at Queen's Park, Don McVittie was awarded the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for lifetime achievement.

I couldn't think of a more fitting honour for a person who has done so much over the past 25 years for the preservation, protection and restoration of Parry Sound–Muskoka's proud heritage. As a volunteer, Don has been extremely generous with his time. He has contributed immensely to the Muskoka Heritage Foundation and Trust, the Parry Sound–Muskoka Stewardship Council and the Muskoka Watershed Council. A champion of the great outdoors, Don is personally responsible for the planting of over 150,000 trees and has been a strong supporter of local Scout troops and their own tree-planting initiatives.

Don is also a lifetime member of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters and donated a number of wildlife displays to the OFAH Mario Cortellucci Hunting and Fishing Heritage Centre to support its opening in 2010.

Future generations will benefit from Don's contributions, and I would like to personally congratulate him on this prestigious award. Congratulations, Don.

QUEEN ELIZABETH II DIAMOND JUBILEE MEDAL

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: It was my privilege as a member of provincial Parliament to present the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal to 13 worthy individuals. This commemorative medal was created to mark the 60th anniversary of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's ascension to the throne.

The individuals who received the medal were from varied backgrounds. They had made significant contributions to our community, our province and our country. They are Lynn Petrushchak, Asha Luthra, Shelley White, Joginder Grewal, Ronald Cunningham, Sunita Malik, Didi Kaneff, Peter St. Denis, Mir Sultan, Brigadier General Gregory Young, Joga Chahal, Sabita Maraj and Alok Goel.

I express my heartiest congratulations to each one of them and their families for making our province a better place to live, work, play, invest and raise a family.

NUTRITION MONTH

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It's my pleasure to rise today on behalf of Tim Hudak and the entire PC caucus to recognize March as Nutrition Month in Canada. This year's theme focuses on helping consumers make healthy

choices at the grocery store, advising us to plan, shop, cook and enjoy healthy foods.

Nutrition Month is also an opportunity for us to recognize the phenomenal work of registered dietitians. These committed health professionals not only use their expertise to translate the science of nutrition into practical advice for Ontarians but also treat nutrition-related conditions and support clients to self-manage their care. The unique training and skill sets of registered dietitians makes them valuable partners in containing health care costs by preventing and managing chronic conditions.

With increasing rates of diabetes and other chronic conditions, the need for access to dietitians' expertise continues to grow. Although Nutrition Month is formally recognized in March, it's important that we keep in mind the importance of nutrition to health throughout the entire year.

I want to thank the Registered Dietitians of Ontario for bringing attention to this important cause, and I wish you all the best as you pursue a healthier future for all Ontarians.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TERRA PAVING INC. ACT, 2013

Mr. Shurman moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr5, An Act to revive Terra Paving Inc.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

UNIVERSAL HEALTH CONSULTING INC. ACT, 2013

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr12, An Act to revive Universal Health Consulting Inc.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

ASPEN DRYWALL INC. ACT, 2013

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr14, An Act to revive Aspen Drywall Inc.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SOCIAL WORKERS

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I rise today to mark the beginning of Social Work Week. It's a week recognized across Canada to pay tribute to the ongoing contribution social workers make every day to the front lines, assisting and supporting people, often in times of crisis.

The occasion was established by the Canadian Association of Social Workers more than two decades ago. In Ontario, Social Work Week is marked during the first week of March. This year's theme, "Restoring Hope: The Power of Social Work," was chosen to highlight the role that social workers play in helping to restore hope for their clients and their communities. Ontario's social workers do this by providing a wide range of services to people in need, from offering counselling to providing referrals to other resources in the community.

The Ontario government funds a range of social services to assist people in need, but it is often social workers who actually transform our policies and programs into services for people every day in communities all across Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I know that social work is a proud and noble profession, as I myself have a master's degree in this field. In fact, in my final graduate school year, my study field placement was actually here at Queen's Park. So I worked alongside many social workers before I became an MPP, and have done much social work since I became an MPP—I can assure you, we all have. I know first-hand how challenging this work can be, and how it can also be so incredibly rewarding in helping to offer hope to people and to rebuild their lives.

I'm proud that our government has supported social workers in offering that hope. In 2009, the government made changes to allow those who have earned their doctorate degree in social work to use the title "Doctor" when providing health care to individuals. Social workers authorized to provide psychotherapy services will also be able to use the title "psychotherapist."

The Ontario Labour Mobility Act is another example of how our government supports the profession of social work. We brought in this change as part of a national agreement ensuring that qualified workers can have their credentials recognized anywhere in Canada. It means that when a social worker who is already registered or licensed in another Canadian province applies for registration as a social worker in Ontario, they will no longer need to have additional training, experience, examinations or assessments. This agreement gives social work-

ers more flexibility when making important career choices.

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Our government is proud to support social workers. As we join the Ontario Association of Social Workers in recognizing this special week, I want to thank all of Ontario's social workers for all that they do to enhance the quality of life for countless individuals and their families all across Ontario. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, hope does spring eternal, and as we heard, the theme for Social Work Week is "Restoring Hope: The Power of Social Work."

The Ontario Association of Social Workers have indicated that this year's theme was adopted because of the role that social workers play in helping not only clients but also communities and society restore and build on a sense of hope. So hope does spring eternal, even under this present government.

Social workers do offer hope for people, and it's rooted in a very practical problem-solving approach. We do recognize the power of social work to help people reignite that sense of hope and to better enable them to deal with challenges in their lives.

At its most basic, counselling is an approach to help people help themselves to solve their own problems. I say that with some authority. I also have an indirect connection. My wife is a psychiatric social worker, an MSW from Chicago, at Aurora.

Compassion is really part of this province's defining characteristic, and it does mean helping people to reach their full potential, not condemning them to a life of dependency. Allocating a week to social work generates discussion about how we can better serve our most vulnerable citizens in the most cost-effective manner. We must refocus. We must set priorities, concentrate on our social welfare services, but most importantly, focus on the elderly, the sick, the disabled—those who are truly disadvantaged.

For over 200 years in this jurisdiction, individuals, families and churches have helped one another with minimal government assistance. Beyond the social work profession, we all have a duty to help the truly disadvantaged, those who have been reduced to the lowest depths of poverty and distress, particularly those with a disability, who are perhaps on a program through no fault of their own.

It's time to wake up Ontario's social welfare system. To do this, we need approaches and programs laden with fresh, cost-effective ideas, ever bearing in mind the complexity of the issues we're dealing with.

Some issues: For six straight years, Ontario's unemployment rate has been higher than the national average. We have 300,000 people living in poverty. For over a decade, spending on social services has increased by 67%. There's a lot we can do with the \$10 billion a year that is allocated to this particular ministry—\$10 billion; very significant. It pales in comparison only to the health

budget, the education budget and the interest we pay on the debt.

So many issues: addictions—that was my background for 20 years—mental health issues, unemployment, poverty. They all contribute to these health care costs, to burdens on our police forces and to diminished educational outcomes. This, in turn, inhibits productivity, labour force flexibility, lifespans, economic expansion and social progress. All of this takes place at a huge cost to taxpayers.

Therefore, we have to tap into a profession like social workers and other individuals who can offer creative, innovative thinking. Those who work in the field better understand how we can redesign Ontario's services, obviously, to be better, more effective and more focused. We have published a white paper on this subject. I encourage people to give us a call. Those on the front lines should continue to be invited to contribute.

Speaker, the vision remains an effective, affordable and accountable service system that supports and invests in families and communities, where adults are as independent as they can be, where children are safe and where support is provided to those most in need.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour and a privilege to rise in recognition of those who work on the front lines with some of our society's most entrenched problems and how they work their way out into the lives of human beings. Those are our social workers.

It's really quite fitting that the theme is "Restoring Hope."

Certainly, we in the New Democratic Party and our leader, Andrea Horwath, want to acknowledge the incredible service and the incredible dedication of our social workers across the province.

It's not all good news, though. We have a slightly different tack from the government in how we can help our social workers, and that is to say that the best way of helping our social workers is to help their clients. The best way of helping their clients is to help those who really have lost in terms of the social determinants of health—and I'm talking about poverty.

I'll give you two very pungent examples. Two of the social work organizations that I've worked with closely and that I have a great deal of respect and honour for are, for example, Victim Services—just around the corner and down the street, housed by the police because they can't afford their own lodging. Victim Services is the only agency in Toronto and the GTA that goes out with the police when there's a domestic violence incident, when there are crimes mainly and mostly against women. This is their sorry state of affairs, Mr. Speaker: They haven't had a funding increase for 20 years. In fact, the funding per victim for Victim Services has gone from \$286 per victim in 1990 to \$31 in 2010.

Another organization I have a great deal of respect for: Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre in my own riding. They deal with thousands of folks with mental health and addiction issues over the course of a year. They feed hundreds every week. Their cost increases—they provide supportive housing—have gone up 2% to 5% a year, yet

their supportive housing per diem has not increased since April 2009.

I suggest that the best way to help our social workers on the front lines is to help them by, first of all, funding them so that they can provide the help their clients need.

Also, it's about promise-keeping. For example, this government made some key commitments in 2008, and I'm just going to run through a couple of them. They promised to raise the Ontario Child Benefit—this helps children who live in poverty—to \$1,310 by 2013. It's 2013, and yet they're still funded at the 2009 level of \$1,100 per child. They promised to review social assistance to reduce barriers and increase opportunities, and yet from all the over 100 recommendations in the social assistance review, not one has been implemented to date. They promised to raise the minimum wage, yet no announcement has been made since it was increased to \$10.25 an hour. In fact, it has been frozen since March 2010. They promised \$45 million a year for three years for dental care for low-income Ontarians, yet in fact, eligible adults aren't eligible under the new program, and it was cut from \$10.3 million to \$3.3 million in 2011-12. They promised to initiate the process for the next five-year phase of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, and we have heard no concrete plans whatsoever this year.

Mr. Speaker, this is against the backdrop of six people dying on the streets of Toronto from homelessness since the beginning of January—over 700 since the 1980s, when it was considered a national disaster. We now step over the bodies, Mr. Speaker. These are the bodies that our social workers look after.

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Instead of stepping over the bodies, why don't we do something about it? Why don't we help our social workers? Why don't we fund them appropriately? Why don't we help people who are sleeping on grates? Why don't we help the one in seven children who are living in poverty?

It was sad to see the Minister of Children and Youth Services stand up to applause on what they're doing on the child poverty file. There's nothing to be proud about, Mr. Speaker, when one in seven children lives in poverty in this province.

So with all of that, I leave it to the capable hands of the new Minister of Community and Social Services to do something, because that's what our social workers need. They need this government to not just give them a week but to give them some time and, more importantly, Mr. Speaker, give them some money so they can do their work.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL PARKING FEES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to rise and present a petition on behalf of my constituents from Durham. It reads as follows:

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

“Whereas thousands of Ontario seniors find it difficult to live on their fixed income and cannot afford these extra hospital parking fees added to their daily living costs; and

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

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

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

I’m pleased to sign and support this—my constituents Florence Russell and George Clarke have signed the petition—and give it to page Jaden.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Michael Harris: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s Drive Clean program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

“Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

“Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

“Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

“Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

“Whereas the new Drive Clean test no longer assess tailpipe emissions, but instead scans the on-board diagnostics systems of vehicles, which already perform a series of continuous and periodic emissions checks; and

“Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

“Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false ‘Fail’ results, which have resulted in the overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress;

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

“That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program.”

Speaker, I approve and endorse this petition and will affix my name to it and send it down to you with Joshua.

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

I have to provide a reminder for people presenting petitions that they should be stamped ahead of time, and that that’s understood. The reason for that is to ensure that they are properly recorded in the record for the constituents who sign them. If they’re not stamped, they don’t get submitted. So as a reminder, please submit your petitions to the table beforehand to be verified.

As a reminder, there’s a generic form that shows you how to write it, because it has to be done on one page. It can’t be two or more pages. I’m just offering that as a reminder to all of our members.

We’ll continue with petitions.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Miss Monique Taylor: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it, along with the other thousands that have been submitted so far, and give it to page Olivia to bring to the table.

FAMILY SAFETY

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and it reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I am pleased to sign and support this petition and to send it with page Angela.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

“Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

“Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

“Whereas the latest policies from the” Wynne-McGuinty “government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

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

“To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers.”

I support this and will send it with page Stacey to the Clerks’ desk.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from all over Ontario.

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

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

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

“Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric

of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout.”

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

LYME DISEASE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn’s, Alzheimer’s, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe;

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“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of its professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario;

“Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process for establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians.”

I totally agree with this petition, Speaker. I affix my signature, and I’ll send this to the table with Alexander.

GREENWATER PARK

Mr. John Vanthof: I have this petition on behalf of hundreds of people who have signed it.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

“That the government of Ontario reverse the closure of Greenwater provincial park, to allow the park to remain fully operational and open enabling people from all over to enjoy camping and visiting on its grounds as of the spring of 2013.”

I wholeheartedly agree, add my signature, and hand it to page Justin.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Laurie Scott: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Sprott Power, also known as Zero Emission People, Energy Farming Ontario Inc., and Wind Works, are proposing to construct 10 wind turbines, known as Settler’s Landing and/or Snowy Ridge Wind Parks within the city of Kawartha Lakes in order to produce up to 20 megawatts of power; and

“Whereas the proposed wind parks are to be located, in whole or in part, on the Oak Ridges moraine; and

“Whereas the location of the proposed wind parks will adversely affect wildlife populations, wildlife migration patterns, human health, and the natural environment; and

“Whereas the proposed wind parks will also reduce property values and the quality of life in the surrounding communities;

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

“The government of Ontario live up to its throne speech commitment, and deny these applications in recognition of this not being a willing community for industrial wind turbines; and

“That the government announce an immediate moratorium on the further development of industrial wind turbines until complete studies have been completed into all direct and indirect health impacts associated with these projects.”

I have hundreds of signatures of the 1,000 I received on Saturday at the Rolling Hills Public School in Bethany.

WIND TURBINES

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

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

“Whereas poor decisions by the McGuinty government”—Wynne government—“such as the Green Energy Act, where Ontario pays up to 80 cents per kilowatt hour for electricity it doesn’t need and then must pay our neighbours to take it for free, and the billion-dollar cost of the seat-saving cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas power plants, have contributed to making the cost of Ontario power the highest in North America; and

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

“Whereas Ontario’s largest farm organizations, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed; and

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

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

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

I agree with this and will be signing it.

ELECTRICITY GENERATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the member for Nickel Belt for overlooking her last time, and I recognize her with her petition.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won’t hold it against you. So, here we go.

“Whereas ... the Ontario government completed a review of the feed-in tariff (FIT) renewable energy procurement program;

“Whereas the government stated ‘Active participation of communities is important to the continued success of the FIT program’ and the government acknowledged ‘most local community and aboriginal projects require more time to mobilize’;

“Whereas active participation can be achieved by mobilizing ‘community enterprises’ to assess local energy generation opportunities and this development model provides a very high ROI for Ontarians by making certain that surplus revenues are reinvested for the betterment of communities;

“Whereas a community energy act is necessary to overcome the hurdles to mobilization of community enterprises for electricity generation;

We petition the Legislative Assembly to “consider the need for a community energy act to help facilitate the mobilization of communities and financial resources for the purpose of developing community enterprises for electricity generation.”

This petition comes from the people of Nickel Belt, and I would be happy to submit it to the Clerk with Olivia.

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here signed by thousands of my constituents from the great riding of Oxford.

“Whereas many of the resources of this planet are finite and are necessary to sustain both life and quality of life for all future generations;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to present this petition. I’ll affix my signature to it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

NON-PROFIT HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES COOPÉRATIVES DE LOGEMENT SANS BUT LUCRATIF

Mrs. Jeffrey moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 14, An Act to amend the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of non-profit housing co-operatives and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 14, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sociétés coopératives et la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d’habitation en ce qui concerne les coopératives de logement sans but lucratif et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d’autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I’m pleased to recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: This afternoon, I’m pleased to speak on the second reading of Bill 14, an amendment to the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, and the Co-operative Co-operations Act. I’ll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Our government understands the important role that co-operative housing providers play in providing affordable housing options for the people of Ontario. I want to begin this afternoon by making it clear why we believe that this legislation is needed.

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Under the Co-operative Corporations Act, co-ops currently have what can be characterized as a complex, costly and time-consuming process for terminating or ending occupancy agreements. This process is called the co-op tenure dispute resolution process. When it comes to co-op tenure disputes—for example, if a tenant doesn’t pay their rent or they participate in illegal behaviour or they wilfully damage the property—the hard-working people who represent the interests of co-ops tell me the same thing: They all say that the current process for ending or terminating occupancy agreements in co-ops is too complicated. They say that the current process is inefficient for these non-profit housing providers and their members. They say that the current process is an approach that is too costly to a non-profit housing provider. And they say that they want our government to listen.

So we’ve been listening, and we’ve heard what they’ve had to say. In fact, this is an issue that’s been important to our government for some time. Our government recognizes—and we appreciate—the dedicated and ongoing hard work of our co-operative housing federation. The federation is the main advocate in this province for not-for-profit co-op housing members and their boards. We share the federation’s commitment to maintaining and promoting a strong co-operative housing sector, and the federation has gone on record to call our proposed legislation good public policy.

This bill, if passed, would make some long-needed changes to the Residential Tenancies Act and the Co-operative Corporations Act. The focus of our proposed legislation is to move most co-op tenure disputes from the courts to the Landlord and Tenant Board.

How would our proposed legislation improve the current process? Before I get to the details of how, I’d like to explain what the Landlord and Tenant Board currently does and why we believe this is the most appropriate place for disputes to be settled.

The Landlord and Tenant Board is the body established under the Residential Tenancies Act, or RTA, to resolve rental housing disputes. The board provides both tenants and landlords with timely access to specialized, expert, balanced and effective dispute resolution, and it is governed by principles we can all respect—ones of fairness, accessibility, customer focus and timeliness.

The Landlord and Tenant Board's offices are located in various locations around the province, and they provide convenient service when and where people need it. Under our proposed legislation, co-ops would, in the future, be able to apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board to resolve tenure disputes.

This is the first way that our bill proposes to change the Residential Tenancies Act and the Co-operative Corporations Act. However, this could only happen when the nature or type of the dispute is already covered under the Residential Tenancies Act. That's because the Co-operative Corporations Act provides a framework for housing co-ops to customize and create their own bylaws. The co-op's board of directors passes bylaws that are then confirmed by the members of that co-op at a general members' meeting.

While there are many common bylaws shared among housing co-ops, there are also some that are unique. The bylaws can include rules about communal duties, such as shoveling snow, or restrictions on pet ownership. These rules would not be affected by this bill. However, this bill would cover violations that are found in the Residential Tenancies Act, such as rent arrears, illegal behaviour or wilful damage to rental property. In these cases, co-op providers would have the option of applying for a hearing at the Landlord and Tenant Board.

The second way we propose the legislation would amend the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act is to clarify that, when a dispute proceeds through either the courts or the Landlord and Tenant Board, it would be judged based on the merits of the case, not solely on whether the proper process was followed by the co-op board. Previously, the courts would look at whether or not a co-op's internal dispute-resolution process was respected in making their determination. This amendment would clarify that an eviction could not be overturned due to a minor procedural irregularity made by the co-op board. It would also clarify that an eviction could be overturned if it was found to be unjust, even if all the proper procedures of the co-op had been followed.

Another key amendment to the Co-operative Corporations Act would see the streamlining of the internal decision-making process of co-ops. It would clarify that decisions made by a co-op's board could be appealed to the co-op membership, although only if the co-op's bylaws expressly permit appeals.

These amendments would promote the transparency of all decisions.

These changes would ultimately save co-op providers and members considerable time, not to mention the cost of the service. To give you some context, today the average cost for co-ops to have a case heard in the courts is between \$3,000 and \$5,000. The time spent in court can also be lengthy due to adjournments and appeals. By comparison, an average eviction case heard by the Landlord and Tenant Board takes less than six months.

If passed, this legislation would result in lower legal fees for all parties due to shorter time frames and reduced complexity of the Landlord and Tenant Board.

Mr. Speaker, if passed, this legislation would also give co-op members and providers some of the same protections, benefits and responsibilities that are granted to landlords and tenants facing tenure disputes under the Residential Tenancies Act.

Using the Landlord and Tenant Board would give co-ops and their members access to mediation services to help them work out their differences. It would also give co-op members access to the Tenant Duty Counsel Program. This is a program that's funded by Legal Aid Ontario and delivered by the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario. This program provides low- and modest-income members with better and more affordable access to justice.

Our proposed legislation would offer co-op members involved in tenure disputes a process that is independent, transparent and affordable.

Finally, I would highlight that our proposed legislation would also permit the Landlord and Tenant Board to waive or defer fees for low-income individuals. The proposed power to waive fees would not be limited to applications related to co-op tenure disputes, but would also apply to all fees the Landlord and Tenant Board charges for landlord and tenant matters. This amendment would bring consistency to how these types of cases are treated at other tribunals and in the courts. For instance, a fee waiver program was implemented in Ontario courts in 2005, and similar provisions exist in the legislation of two other Ontario tribunals: the Ontario Municipal Board and the Assessment Review Board.

Advocates have argued that individuals and co-op members with limited means should not be denied access to the Landlord and Tenant Board if they can't afford to file an application, similar to other tribunals in Ontario. We agree. For instance, this could be a tenant whose only source of income is a disability benefit, whose landlord has not taken steps to restore heat to her apartment and who can't afford the \$45 fee.

The fee waivers can help individuals with very low income. It's for our vulnerable citizens who can't stretch their budgets any further.

The Landlord and Tenant Board intends to mirror other fee waiver programs in the province, where eligibility is based on monthly household income, or other sources of income such as social assistance or a disability pension.

The Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, or ACTO, is well positioned to understand the need for fee waivers. As I just mentioned, it is a group that works to better the housing situation of Ontario residents who have low incomes by delivering the Tenant Duty Counsel Program.

This past Thursday, the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario came out in support of our proposed legislation. Tracy Heffernan, an ACTO staff lawyer, said, "Tenants living on low incomes have the same rights as other tenants, but the fees required by the Landlord and Tenant Board make it difficult for them to access justice." She went on to say that if this bill were passed, "Tenants with limited financial means will finally be sure their issues will be heard."

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Mr. Speaker, I hope that all members recognize the benefits of the proposed legislation. I hope that, in the spirit of partnership and our mutual goal to improve co-op housing in this province, they will support this important bill. I say this because the bill we're talking about today is about helping the people of Ontario, from all corners of the province.

Let me just give you some examples of the incredible co-ops found throughout Ontario. In Thunder Bay, Castlegreen Co-operative is home to about 400 residents. It is the first co-op in Thunder Bay and is really one of the first to operate in Canada. Castlegreen has a storied history. In the winter of 1975-76, when construction began, temperatures plunged to -40 centigrade and the snowfalls broke past records. Did that stop the dedicated group behind this project? Absolutely not. Despite the setbacks, the first members moved in during June of 1976.

Today, Castlegreen offers its members a whole host of services, including a community centre, a family garden plot, ice rinks, computer lab, bicycle and walking paths, and the Good Food Box program. Like so many other co-ops, it's committed to a community atmosphere of participation, fairness, integrity, diversity and environmental sustainability. It is member-owned and self-governed.

To the east, the Seaway Valley Co-op Organization operates a group of six housing co-operatives. Located in the Belleville, Kingston and Brockville area, these co-ops offer a wide range of housing options, including houses, apartments and townhomes of various sizes. This network of co-operatives has helped create housing solutions for people with different needs across the St. Lawrence-Lake Ontario corridor. This is an area where economic confidence remains fragile.

In the west, Mary Campbell Housing Co-operative in London proudly calls itself "a caring community." It's found in the downtown, in the heart, of London. The co-op is comprised of three buildings that are within walking distance of shops, a farmers' market, schools, theatre, restaurants, art galleries, parks, concert venues and libraries. Within its walls, it also features a children's playground, a community room with kitchen, storage, bicycle rooms and much more.

In my own community of Brampton, we have a number of housing co-ops, including Chegoggin. This is a 120-unit co-op building and is located in downtown Brampton, right next to our GO station and just around the corner from our new Rose Theatre. This building features a mix of units, including some that are subsidized and some that are wheelchair-accessible units, and others that are for tenants with intellectual disabilities. Built in 1992 with provincial assistance, approximately 25% of the residents living there today are original members, and most of those who have left have gone on to buy their own home.

These co-ops all have some traits in common. They create communal spaces and experiences for their members, they foster collaboration and community, and they focus on health and sustainability.

The list of amazing co-ops around this province goes on and on, but it's the residents of these co-ops that make such amazing places. The fact is that co-op housing helps us build communities we can all be proud of. That's because members who live in a co-op are the ones responsible for running the co-op. Co-op residents don't just live in a co-op. They help build the co-op community, a community where people live, work and play.

Mr. Speaker, co-op housing provides families across our province with secure and affordable housing. In fact, non-profit co-op housing has played a vital role in our affordable housing system for over 40 years. In Ontario, there are about 550 non-profit housing co-ops, and these co-ops provide affordable housing for 44,000 households, which represent about 125,000 Ontarians, including some of our most vulnerable citizens. The sector provides a home to families and individuals with a diverse range of backgrounds and incomes. It provides homes for medium- to low-income families, new immigrants, seniors, people with disabilities and members of the aboriginal community. The diversity and community focus of co-op housing is what makes it unique and strengthens this province.

Mr. Speaker, we know that co-ops come in very different shapes and sizes, ranging from collections of townhouses and small buildings with a handful of units to large, apartment-style buildings with hundreds of units like mine in Brampton. What sets co-ops apart from private rental housing is that they are democratic communities where the residents make the decisions on how the co-op operates. Members, the board and staff each have responsibilities to the co-op.

There are four main characteristics to co-op housing. The first is affordability. Housing co-ops are member-owned and -controlled organizations. For example, the monthly housing charges are set by the members to cover the costs of running the co-op.

The second characteristic is governance. Setting the overall direction of the co-op is the job of the directors and the members of the co-op. Co-ops are democratically run, and each member has a vote. Members elect the board of directors, and they approve the annual budget and set policy.

The third characteristic of a co-op is security of tenure. A member's right to live in the co-op is protected. Members can continue to live in a co-op as long as they follow the rules or bylaws of the co-op and pay their housing charge or rent on time.

The fourth characteristic of a co-op is community. Housing co-ops can also be strong communities where members actively participate in the business of the co-op. In addition to the standard tasks, such as approving the annual budget, members often volunteer with maintenance tasks—for example, lawn care—and are involved in other community-based projects such as producing a co-op newsletter.

Co-op housing and the people who live in these communities and work for those homes are very important to me, not just because I'm the Minister of Municipal

Affairs and Housing, but because I know that having a decent place to live is vital to good health, personal success, raising children and caring for parents, as well as leading a well-balanced life.

Decent housing is more than just shelter. It provides stability, security and dignity. It plays a central role in reducing poverty. It creates a strong base from which to find a job and contribute to strengthening the Ontario economy. Our proposed legislation would help support co-op providers and the individuals, families and children who call co-ops their home.

Mr. Speaker, our government plans to help the co-op housing sector remain strong. We want to see it continue to provide a viable choice for Ontario families. A housing sector that offers diversity for Ontario is not complete without a healthy co-op sector. Our government has made significant progress on our housing agenda. We're looking to make a real difference in the lives of working families and in the circumstances of Ontario's most vulnerable households.

Our government recognizes the role housing plays in supporting the growth and health of communities across Ontario. This is why we developed the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy. It is the first of its kind in Ontario. A Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy sets a strong foundation for a more efficient, accessible system for those who need safe, affordable housing.

During our consultations, we heard that the existing housing system was too complicated and created obstacles for those in need. Those who deliver the housing programs told us that because of the system, they were unable to provide and develop the best possible services to those in need. Our strategy transformed the affordable housing system, and our strategy focused on four key pillars: first, putting people first; second, creating strong partnerships; third, supporting affordable options; and last, accountability.

The Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy provides municipalities and housing providers with greater flexibility to deliver housing services, recognizing that communities have different housing needs. The increased flexibility helps ensure that resources are allocated to meet local needs and improve outcomes for people. It helps make sure that services are accountable and on the right track.

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But I want to emphasize that affordable housing also fits into the new fiscal reality. As the former municipal budget chair in Brampton, I remember burning the midnight oil in an attempt to keep our costs down while at the same time delivering a service level that met my constituents' expectations. The one major need that I saw time and time again in my growing community and across Ontario was for safe and affordable housing. When people are in safe and affordable homes, communities thrive. People are healthier, physically and mentally, and our children do better in school.

Yes, affordable housing provides many benefits to our families, but it also benefits our economy. People with

secure housing are better prepared to enter the workforce. And those affordable housing projects help create jobs, mostly in the local community. So that's why, in the midst of fiscal constraints, we continue to invest in affordable housing.

Since 2003, the Ontario government has committed almost \$3 billion for affordable housing. Ontario is supporting the creation of over 17,000 affordable rental housing units, and making more than 263,000 repairs and improvements to existing units. We've made great strides recently. We've seen housing providers across this province successfully complete close to \$700 million in upgrading work under the Social Housing Renovation and Retrofit Program. Most of this work is now complete and ensures that the valuable social housing we have now endures for future generations.

In 2012, we achieved major milestones under the Investment in Affordable Housing program, or IAH, which is a four-year federal-provincial program of almost half a billion dollars. We've now committed more than \$200 million for this program, and we're seeing those results on the ground. During 2012, more than 600 households were no longer in need of affordable housing, such as in Aylmer, where two working-poor families are now housed in decent housing, or the Deseronto seniors now living in dignity and respect in a new building that is barrier-free and energy-efficient; and the more than 130 other households across this province receiving rent supplements to help them stay in their homes. And the work continues as I speak.

In the next few months, persons with disabilities from eight households will move into fully accessible homes in Woodstock under the IAH program. In Stratford, the performing arts lodge will open its doors to low-income seniors from the arts community next month. In the north, construction is under way for new seniors' housing in Thessalon in Algoma district, and a second one in the greater Sudbury area.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is another step we're taking to support affordable housing across Ontario. We all know that having a place to call home is the first step out of poverty for low-income families and their children. Having a home is the first step in addressing many of the challenges that face Ontario families. Having a home is the first step to accessing greater opportunities in life. A home is the foundation from which people can build their lives so as to move from negative situations to better lives that contribute to a better tomorrow for all of us.

We all know that helping people have safe, affordable and healthy homes is a complex issue. There's no single quick fix. However, today's proposed legislation is one more step this government is taking to support the co-op housing sector.

Mr. Speaker, a healthy co-op housing sector helps to provide a variety of housing options for those most vulnerable in our society. This government plans to help the co-op housing sector remain strong so that it can continue to provide a viable choice for Ontario families. That's why we're taking action and we're proposing this legislation today.

I urge all members to support this bill once again. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. I'll recognize the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to be here to support the second reading of Bill 14, an amendment to the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, and the Co-operative Corporations Act.

As the minister has explained, these important amendments have been designed to improve the way that the non-profit co-operative housing boards and their members resolve tenure disputes in Ontario. This legislation would, if passed, bring greater efficiency, accessibility and transparency to the co-op tenure dispute resolution process.

We know that the current process for terminating occupancy agreements for co-ops is complex, we know it's costly and we know it's time-consuming. The Co-operative Housing Federation has been a long-time advocate of legislation that would help decisions related to tenure disputes be fair both to co-ops and to their members.

As you have heard, the Co-operative Housing Federation represents housing co-ops throughout the province of Ontario. I want to repeat the minister's message that we share the federation's commitment to maintaining a strong co-operative housing sector. In our province, the federation's Ontario region promotes the successful operation of housing co-operatives by offering services, including education, to meet their clients' unique needs. The organization defends the interests of its members and works with regional federations to help co-ops build links with their municipal governments. It also promotes the growth of co-operative housing in Ontario. All of these are laudable goals.

Co-op housing has a long history in Canada. It goes back as far as the 1930s, when, among other co-operative initiatives, the Nova Scotia Antigonish Movement promoted co-ops that built homes for their members. When the construction of these homes was finished, the homes were sold to the members and the housing co-operatives were dissolved. There were building co-operatives similar to this formed in Quebec between the 1920s and the 1940s. The earliest student co-op in Canada was the Guelph Campus Co-op, which started up in 1913 as a retail co-operative and later went on to develop student housing and other services.

Organized lobbying began in the 1960s to gain government support for co-op housing. In 1968, the Co-operative Housing Foundation of Canada came into being. These were the early days of their advocacy for co-op housing. Today, we see that their work has results. From 1973 to 1992, the government helped finance thousands of co-operative housing units through three successive co-op housing programs. From the mid-1980s on, the three most populous provinces in Canada—Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia—also set up their own development programs to finance housing co-operatives.

It was at this time that the co-operative housing movement started to really develop. These new organizations worked with the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada to provide education, development and management services to an expanding number of Canadian housing co-ops. It is this long history that shapes the co-op housing movement today. Co-op housing has helped us build strong communities. Co-op housing helps support people from diverse backgrounds and provides an affordable option for many low-income Ontarians.

How is this done? It is done through the lower operating costs that housing co-ops frequently enjoy. This is partly because of the non-profit model, but it's also because of many benefits from the members' shared responsibilities and participation.

Who calls co-ops home? They're families, they're women, they're single parents, seniors, visible minorities, new immigrants, people of aboriginal ancestry and disabled persons. However, it is the values that underpin the entire co-op sector that truly help it stand apart. Co-ops are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. Co-op members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others. These are values our government shares.

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Co-ops are also guided by universal principles which put their values into practice. First, co-ops are voluntary organizations, and they are open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without any form of discrimination.

Second, co-ops are democratically governed. Their members actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions on the principle of "one member, one vote." Elected representatives are accountable to the membership, much like we are to the voting public.

Third, co-op members contribute to and democratically control the capital of their co-operative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the co-operative. The co-operative surplus is either distributed to its members in proportion to their transactions with the co-op, or it's directed to other activities approved by the membership.

Fourth, co-ops are autonomous organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.

Fifth, co-ops provide education and training for their members, for elected representatives, for managers and for employees. They also strive to inform the general public, particularly young people and opinion leaders, about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

Sixth, the co-operative movement works in solidarity with other co-ops, creating a strong bond of unity among members around the world.

Finally, co-ops work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

These principles, which co-op boards and their members live by every day, make them a unique and valuable part of our province's housing continuum.

Just as with other co-ops, co-op housing is member-governed. Many of those that help run co-operatives are volunteers. The people they serve are their neighbours and their friends. They are responsible for the decisions that affect these people's everyday lives.

The role of volunteers in today's modern society cannot be overestimated. They play a huge part in the running of our communities. These volunteers come from all walks of life, are of all ages, and they help run these co-ops. In fact, our government will soon be recognizing some of the incredible volunteers that enhance the lives of people living in Ontario. I'm sure volunteers from our co-op sector will be counted among them.

One of the most important features of co-ops is that they are also places that respect diversity. Here are some statistics from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. from 2003 about Canadian co-ops; these are 2003 stats. Some 58% of members are women, 11% are members of visible minorities, 20% are immigrants, 4% are of aboriginal ancestry, and 12% of households include a person with a long-term physical disability requiring special features such as wheelchair access.

Important players like the Co-operative Housing Federation are finding more ways to encourage diversity in co-ops. For example, the Co-operative Housing Federation funds innovative diversity initiatives regionally, to help keep diversity issues a high priority for housing co-ops and federations.

Many co-ops are also participating in the federation's 2020 Vision program. This process is designed to help co-ops look clearly at their own community values, at their own quality of management, governance and their own environmental sustainability and, in the lens of this, to plan for their future.

Co-ops place special emphasis on engaging and empowering youth, while also finding ways to meaningfully involve seniors in their communities as well. It's this forward-thinking attitude and this inclusive and accepting environment that make co-ops exceptional.

As the minister has stated, the proposed legislation would amend the Residential Tenancies Act and the Co-operative Corporations Act to move most co-op tenure disputes from the courts to the Landlord and Tenant Board. This board is the body established under the Residential Tenancies Act, or the RTA, to resolve rental housing disputes.

I would like to build on some of what the minister already told you about the Landlord and Tenant Board. Under the RTA, the board has a dual mandate. First, the Landlord and Tenant Board exercises a quasi-judicial function by hearing and determining all questions of law and fact under the RTA. Second, the board is required to give information to landlords and tenants about their rights and about their obligations.

The board handles a large volume of cases due to the significant number of renters in Ontario, which represent

approximately 29% of Ontario's households. Annually, the board hears about 80,000 cases. Compare that to the estimated 350 co-op tenure disputes that are brought before the courts each year. The board strives to be efficient and deliver high-quality service to tenants and landlords, a point of pride and a point of distinction.

If passed, this legislation would mean that co-op providers and members would have most of the same protections, most of the same benefits and the same responsibilities afforded to landlords and tenants facing tenure disputes under the RTA. For example, co-op members facing eviction would now have the right to a hearing and have better access to affordable legal representation, such as paralegals and on-site duty counsel.

Both co-op providers and members would be able to seek mediated settlements. This means the provider and member could ask a mediator from the board, or outside of the board, to try to help them reach their own agreement. Mediators assist the parties in focusing on their interests so they can find potential solutions to satisfy those interests. This process can be more collaborative, more informal and can often feel more fair to the parties involved.

In all cases, tenure dispute resolution applications would be based on merit, giving co-op providers and members equal opportunity to present all the facts they believe are relevant to the board. Specifically, under the proposed legislation, co-ops would be able to seek resolutions to disputes through the Landlord and Tenant Board for such things as arrears, persistent late payment of rent or housing charges, illegal behaviour, interfering with reasonable enjoyment, and wilful damage.

These types of disputes are all currently grounds for eviction under the RTA. Tenure disputes based on grounds outside the RTA, however, would continue to be handled through the internal democratic co-op eviction process and the courts. For example, tenure disputes based on the following types of bylaws would continue to be resolved by the courts: violation of a no-pets provision; failure to fulfill a co-op member's duties, such as shovelling snow or cutting the lawn; and any other ground not provided for under the RTA.

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This process needs to be retained, because co-ops are governed democratically. Co-op members vote to establish their own bylaws that set out grounds for eviction that are not provided for under the RTA. The proposed legislation would also amend the Co-operative Corporations Act to streamline and improve the current internal eviction processes of non-profit co-op housing.

As the minister noted, there are many benefits to this proposed legislation. Streamlining the dispute resolution process mandated by the Co-operative Corporations Act would simplify the internal process and shorten the time required to resolve these disputes. Our proposed legislation, if passed, would use the expertise of the Landlord and Tenant Board and, in most cases, allow access to established infrastructure and procedures designed to deal with tenure disputes.

Current co-op law and policies regarding housing charges and other requirements of membership would remain the same, and the unique system of co-op housing would be recognized. Although co-op members would not have the right to make applications to the Landlord and Tenant Board, the rights of co-op members to use internal co-op processes and apply to the courts regarding co-op issues would be maintained. I would also mention that our proposed legislation would allow the Landlord and Tenant Board to waive or defer fees for low-income individuals.

This is a widely supported amendment that would bring consistency to how these types of cases are treated at other tribunals and in the courts.

When it comes to the safety of co-op members, bringing cases before the Landlord and Tenant Board may bring additional benefits to providers and to members. The RTA provides a fast-track eviction process under special circumstances, such as illegal drug activity or seriously impairing the safety of others. The fast-track provisions cut the eviction process time approximately in half, and include the following:

—Hearings at the Landlord and Tenant Board are scheduled more quickly;

—The eviction order must include a request that the sheriff speed up the enforcement of the eviction; and

—The board may order the tenant to be evicted immediately.

However, under the RTA, every tenant facing eviction has the right to a hearing at the board.

These rights have been put in place to protect both tenants and landlords and, if the legislation is passed, would be passed on to co-op providers and members as well.

The new approach would make the co-op tenure dispute process more responsive but also cost-effective. This last point really matters in today's fiscal climate, where every dollar counts, which is why we must work together to be innovative in our approaches and find ways to stretch the funds we have.

Co-ops have a history of stretching funds. They make very efficient use of their members' resources. By design, they are adapted to support low-income individuals and low-income families, many of which straddle the line of poverty.

Poverty, of course, is an issue of great importance to our government. December 2012 marked the fourth anniversary of our government's Poverty Reduction Strategy. Much has happened since December 4, 2008, the date our government announced its first five-year poverty reduction commitment. But especially in light of ongoing economic turmoil, much more needs to be done in order to meet the target. This government has focused its efforts primarily on children and families, but we have also taken steps to create opportunity for those most adversely affected by the economic downturn, and to build the economic and social foundations to achieve our poverty reduction goals.

From 2008 to 2009, the first year of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, 20,000 children moved out of poverty.

This means that over 4% fewer children were living in poverty. This December, we announced that this number has climbed to over 40,000. That's great news for Ontario families, Speaker.

We also have made other significant achievements. Over one million children in 530,000 families are being helped by the Ontario Child Benefit. Almost 122,000 kids are getting a stronger start in about 1,700 schools through full-day kindergarten. Nearly 33,000 children and young people, who may have otherwise gone untreated, are receiving free dental care through Healthy Smiles Ontario. An additional 13,000 young people are getting help finding jobs and opportunities through the Youth Action Plan. An estimated 20,000 more children and young people are getting faster and easier access to the right mental health supports, with 600 new mental health workers in schools, in our communities and in our courts.

We will continue to build on our momentum in the final year of the strategy while we consider future steps that we can take to break the cycle of poverty in our province.

Speaker, our government also recognizes the need for affordable housing and its role in supporting the growth and health of communities across Ontario. To support our Poverty Reduction Strategy, we developed the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy. It sets a strong foundation for a more efficient, accessible system for those who need safe, affordable housing.

During our consultations on the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, we heard that the existing housing system was too complicated and created obstacles for those in need. Those who deliver the housing programs told us that because of the system, they were unable to develop the best possible services for those in need. The Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy provides municipalities and housing providers with greater flexibility to deliver housing services, recognizing that communities have different housing needs.

As the minister stated, affordable housing provides many benefits to families and to our economy. People with stable homes are better prepared to enter the workforce, and affordable housing projects create thousands of jobs, many of which are local.

Speaker, if history teaches us one thing, it is that we must work together to achieve better results. Our government has heard that there are frustrations with the current system. I want to assure the co-op housing sector that we are listening. We must be deliberate in our actions so that we can plan and invest in tomorrow. We have to work together. By strengthening the co-op housing sector, we are supporting affordable and secure housing for our families throughout Ontario.

This proposed legislation is just one more step to help strengthen the co-op housing sector so that it can continue to provide a viable choice for Ontario families. Together, we are making a real difference in the lives of working families and for Ontario's most vulnerable households. This new process would be a win-win-win

for co-op housing providers, for their members and for the justice system.

I urge all members to support this important piece of legislation to help support co-ops and their members.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's with interest that we listen to the bill that has been re-submitted. We supported the bill in the last session and are interested to see some of the changes they've brought forth.

I had a chance to meet with some residents of my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry who operate a co-operative and needed or are requesting some changes, so it's good to see some of these amendments coming through. It will be interesting to get it to committee. It will give us an opportunity to make some changes. They provide an important spot in Ontario. I'm sure my own riding and many ridings like my own have hundreds of people waiting for affordable housing, and this is really part of the solution.

1440

My first occasion to be associated with co-operative housing was at Queen's University. Science '44 started a co-operative in 1944, which I believe is still operating today, that provided an alternative for students that allowed them to find a place to live at a reduced rate and looked after their needs. A friend of mine stayed there, and they had to provide cooking or cleanup services as part of their rent. It worked very well, and just goes to show that there are many places or many opportunities for this type of service throughout the province, and it's something we should be promoting.

Again, my residents on Brookdale Avenue in Cornwall were looking for tweaks to the system that would make a very affordable solution even more affordable. So we look forward to seeing this bill in committee, and we're looking forward to improving it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I stand to comment on the comments by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and her parliamentary assistant, the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

I listened intently to what they had to say, because co-operative housing has a very dear spot in my heart. The very best apartment buildings in all of Beaches–East York are co-ops. One only has to go to Dawes Road, one only has to go to Rexleigh or Glenburn or to where they exist and look at the nicest apartments. You know, before you even walk in the door, that they are co-ops. Would that other people who are in rental units had the good fortune to live in a co-op.

I'm here today to ask the government to please move on this, because not only is this coming back from the last Parliament; it's coming back twice. The first time, it came forward as a private member's bill from the member for Etobicoke Centre. She put it in as a private member's bill and, of course, the government prorogued the Legislature. The next time it came back, it was a gov-

ernment bill, and the government prorogued the Legislature. Now we have it for a third time. Please, please act on this before you prorogue the Legislature for the next election, because these poor people have been waiting a long, long time.

We're back today, and I'm suggesting that what we need to do is make this very quickly. We need to give it unanimous approval. We need to fast-track it. We need to make sure it happens quickly. We don't need to listen to a whole bunch of long, bureaucratic speeches, where everybody reads the paper and does it by rote, because that's what I've heard so far. What we need to do is send it to committee. We need the co-op bill to pass. We need the legislation to go, and we need to make it happen before the government, in its wisdom, prorogues again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: It's good to hear that type of comment from the third party and from the opposition.

I haven't that much experience with co-op housing in Ottawa–Orléans, but the experiences we've had have all been good, except for the one issue of someone who's breaking the rules in many ways. How do you get them out?

The bill amends the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006. Most of the amendments are for the purpose of creating a procedure in the Residential Tenancies Act for non-profit housing co-operatives to regain possession of a member's unit occupied by a person after his or her membership and occupancy rights in the co-operative terminate or expire—this is the only case I saw in Ottawa–Orléans.

Otherwise, this is an excellent mechanism for providing affordable housing. This will allow for the settlement of tenure disputes—resolution for co-op residents in a much more efficient, cost-effective and transparent manner—and keeps the people out of the courts. It does the right thing.

I think there's been support by all parties for co-operative housing. With our housing needs, we know this is one way you can get costs down. So this bill should be—I would agree with the member from the third party. We don't have to talk about it; we can move it forward quickly. Certainly, if that's what the Legislature wished to do, I'm sure everyone would be happy to see it go through to committee quickly.

Thank you very much. It's a good bill. We should all support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: Again, we're pleased to see this bill come back yet again. I'm told that this was announced in 2007. I'm certainly hopeful that the Liberals, who have committed to balancing the budget by 2017-18, are going to be able to deliver on that pledge better than they have on this one.

Similar to my colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, we have issues with co-ops in our riding. I want to just suggest again that the Ontario PCs

supported this bill when it was introduced last year by the then Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Minister Kathleen Wynne. However, it fell victim to Dalton McGuinty's prorogation. It should already be law. It has cost co-op members potentially hundreds of thousands of dollars in delays and unnecessary court costs.

We generally support it. We want to see these types of things get out of the courts so that other, more pressing issues can be there and there is an alternative. But it has to always be done with balance. It needs to be a fair and balanced process for both sides, the landlords and the tenants, and it needs to ensure that there's no frivolous or nuisance stuff being able to be actually backlogged—even backlogged more, because one of the challenges right now is that half of these things never get heard. There's never an opportunity for it to move forward. So we need to ensure that that is the case.

From our PC side, we'll generally be supporting, but we will be pushing for province-wide hearings on the amendments to this Landlord and Tenant Board so each side can be heard, so the bill is balanced and effective, as all legislation should be.

We can't have more legislation for the sake of legislation, which this government of the last eight years continues to do. They bring things to the House that actually slow the system down rather than moving forward.

I'm pleased to hear the member from Orléans say that they want to just get on with it; they want to not have so much talk and debate all the time. That would be good for a change, because in many cases, I think we spend way too much time debating frivolous and meaningless stuff when we could be getting action to the floor that's actually going to help the people who are most in need.

These co-ops need this support. We are generally supportive, but there are some challenges that we want to have hammered out in the amendments portion to this before it's legislated. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Response? The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for his positive comments and his encouragement; the member for Beaches–East York for his passion and his enthusiasm, as usual; the member from Ottawa–Orléans for his comments; and the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for his genuine support for a fair and balanced process. I do appreciate the common thread of comments that are coming forward today.

I also want to thank the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, the co-op housing federation—Harvey, thank you so much—and the federation of rental housing of Ontario for their ongoing input. This has been a long process, and I think we've had lots of conversations.

Many of us have experience with co-ops in our neighbourhoods, and they usually run so well that most of the time nobody would even notice that they were a different kind of housing provider. But if you have one in your neighbourhood and you have the good fortune to go in and see how well they're run, I think you can see—I

know in my own riding of Brampton, there are two co-ops, that I've known for decades, that run so well. They're great communities. They support a lot of the vulnerable populations that tend to gravitate to a co-op housing form of tenure, and I think they're a great support. They're an asset to Ontario, and we want to make sure that they're strong.

We've heard that this type of amendment, this proposed legislation, would assist them in managing some of those issues that are timely, are expensive and don't provide accountability. We think that we've found the right balance.

I certainly have heard from members of both parties that they're interested in working with us, and I appreciate their thoughtful consideration of this piece of legislation. Certainly, we want to work with them. We think that there's a lot to be gained by bringing this legislation forward. I appreciate their advice, and I'm encouraged by all their support. Thank you so much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure for me, as the official opposition municipal affairs and housing critic, to rise on behalf of our caucus to speak to Bill 14, An Act to amend the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of non-profit housing co-operatives and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. I just wanted to make sure I read the bill in its entirety, because I know we tend to shorten it, just to talk about the co-operatives statute law amendment act.

1450

I have to say that I am generally supportive of the bill, as I was on its previous incarnation in the Legislature, but I do have to express—and I know that I've quietly expressed it to the minister—that there is one new aspect of this legislation that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has added into this bill. I'm not particularly sure why the minister has chosen this bill or this issue, especially because of the protracted history that this particular issue has had in a number of incarnations of legislation. I'm very hopeful that the minister is going to acknowledge this and fix her mistake so that we can move forward with the substantive issues and aspects of Bill 14, which I've said before has had the general support of all three parties when it has previously been brought forward.

I recall standing here at second reading of the previous bill—for the debate of Bill 65—and I can remember getting a discussion about why the legislation was so important: the fact that we wanted to change and resolve co-op disputes that I think are very long and exasperating aspects, the way they're presently set up to go through the courts.

Before I start and get too far into it, I do want to take a moment to acknowledge the guests that are here today from the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. I think every one of the members of provincial Parliament can certainly say that these folks are no strangers to the Legislative Assembly. I know that we all look forward to

their visits and to raise the important issues of their housing. Ladies and gentlemen that are here today, I think we all should welcome this afternoon Dale Reagan, the managing director; Harvey Cooper, the manager of government relations; Diane Miles, manager of co-op services; and Judy Shaw, program manager of co-op services for the federation. They're in the west members' gallery.

Applause.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank them not just for being here today and for accepting our thunderous applause, but also for the work that they've done, not just with this piece of legislation, but the other two pieces of legislation that were before us. I think we can all agree in this House that they've suffered too many setbacks along the way in those three different versions of this bill, so I want to commend them for their advocacy in demonstrating to members of provincial Parliament like myself why the bill, in its most base form, is the right thing to do, and also for their perseverance in the face of so many disappointments that they've had before. I know the last bill especially was a particular disappointment because, as I said before, legislation to change this process is long overdue and it's something that the government opposite promised back—since 2007. As I stated, this is your third kick at the can, and I know that you're very interested that it would be the last kick that you would have for this bill.

I'm going to take an opportunity to talk about the whole issue of co-ops, especially since I took on the role as municipal affairs and housing critic for the official opposition to meet with co-operative housing advocates. At that reception that we had just after the House prorogued back in October—I stayed after the House prorogued; I wanted to make sure I was at that reception—I met a number of people from all over the province that were involved in co-ops. I remember a constituent of Ms. McKenna, the member for Burlington, who approached me and asked if I would be interested in coming to Burlington to visit one of their co-ops.

I wanted to say that I had a great trip back on November 6 with the member for Nipissing. Mr. Fedeli and I, along with my intern at the time from the OLIP program, the Ontario Legislature Internship Programme—she was with me for the fall term, Gillian Hanson; she's now with the member for Oak Ridges–Markham. Gillian, along with Mr. Fedeli and I, visited Ms. McKenna's riding in Burlington and we had a great tour of Stoa Co-operative Homes, which is located on Brock Street in Burlington: a great facility. Of the two co-ops in my riding, neither one of them is a high-rise co-op, so it was a great opportunity for me to tour a facility that I wasn't familiar with. We met with the co-op manager. It was actually not a bad day, so we did go outside and tour the outdoors, we toured a couple of the units, and then we had a great round table with some of the residents at Stoa. This is a long-standing co-op in the city of Burlington, and I want to thank Ms. McKenna, the member for Burlington, for being my tour guide that day

and hosting Mr. Fedeli and I at Stoa. I have to say—and I know that the folks from the federation are here—it was just a great tour, a great opportunity to exchange ideas, to see different unit styles, to see the way that the co-op is managed. It was really one of the highlights that I had over that month after we prorogued. So I want to thank them for opening up Stoa and being our hosts that day.

So both in that tour and also in my own riding—with my municipal background, I am certainly familiar with co-op housing. I understand clearly that what Bill 14 proposes is to finally bring the changes that so many co-ops, whether it be ones like Stoa or newer ones, have looked for. And frankly, it's been a long journey. I'm somewhat puzzled as to why that was the case, that we were unable to agree and move forward at an early point within the Legislature, especially when I knew—and based on the debate that we had on the bill the way it was structured—that there was so much common ground that we had between the three parties. It's failure on matters like this issue that I think frustrates members of this Legislature, and also frustrates our constituents—that we can't, even on the simplest of legislative changes, have co-operation that would move something forward. I know that my constituents have expressed quite a lot of frustration in the way that this government has been dealing with their business and this whole issue around the fact that we prorogued three days before even that reception, when we were right down to the short strokes in terms of being able to get that bill passed.

The other issue that I think is important is that we have a problem that costs co-op members a million dollars in unnecessary legal costs every year. So it costs them a million dollars, but we also clog up the court system, which costs all Ontarians time and money. Yet on and on this goes; the millions add up and the court dockets just get more backlogged. In this case, the government agrees that there's a problem, agrees to the solution, but then drags its feet the last two times in getting that decision made.

You know, unchecked again, this is just another opportunity that the government has lost to get its fiscal house in order and to get that dollar figure put back into co-ops, as opposed to being tied up in court cases. If this was the private sector and a company had millions of dollars bleeding from it every year, year after year, when they knew what the solution was—somebody would be fired and terminated in the private sector if an issue like this was still in effect. You know what, Speaker? Perhaps Ontarians will get their wish and perhaps there will be some pink slips being given to those across the floor if their inability to manage this province continues.

The failure of this government is pretty plain—that every man, woman and child in this province is saddled with nearly \$18,000 worth of debt. That's our share of the provincial debt that is on track, as many speakers on this side of the House have said, to reach \$411 billion. So it's of concern, and I think that when we have a solution to a problem, we need to be able to deal with it. Certainly, the spirit of this bill is something that the government has promised for five years.

1500

The member for Beaches–East York mentioned earlier the private member’s bill that the member for Etobicoke Centre brought forward, Bill 198, which was introduced and died on the order paper. Of course, we also have had a number of speakers this afternoon mention Bill 65, which died just last year.

Again, I think that anyone who’s following this issue can look back to last fall, just before the House broke. I want to bring members’ attention, particularly the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Minister Jeffrey, to the fall 2012 newsletter, which I just happen to have here, of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. I’m sure that the minister and perhaps her parliamentary assistant have read it, so she should know that there was a lot of talk last year about Bill 65 and the spirit of co-operation that existed, and the fact that right after it was introduced, all three parties rallied around until, we all know, former Premier McGuinty prorogued the Legislature. Apparently, he had more pressing issues that he felt he should be dealing with rather than Bill 65, something about a couple of gas plants being cancelled at a cost of \$1.3 billion and a contempt motion, if my memory serves me correctly.

Now we know that individual as the member for Ottawa South, who pulled the plug on the Legislature back in the fall. As we all know, Bill 65—and another 100 bills, I might add—died on the order paper. So it’s important that we look back to what this Legislature was talking about in terms of Bill 65, and I think it’s important as well that we look to the newsletter that is circulating. I’m going to quote from the newsletter. It’s under the title, “Eviction Bill Dies on Order Paper”:

“After very promising progress and building excitement, Bill 65 died on the order paper, along with all other legislation, when the Premier resigned and prorogued the Legislature. The bill would have brought in the long-awaited changes to the eviction system for Ontario housing co-ops.

“When the Premier made his announcement on October 15, the bill was in the middle of second reading debate, which was expected to wrap up later that week. This would have marked an important milestone and brought the legislation close to final approval.

“This is incredibly disappointing news for us, especially when the government had given our legislation priority and it was moving forward,” says Harvey Cooper, manager of government relations for CHF Canada’s Ontario region.

“The only good news in this is that the minister and opposition housing critics still support the legislation as good public policy and have vowed to do their best to bring it back whenever the Legislature reconvenes,” said Cooper.

“The Ontario region’s work to win all-party support for the bill has won praise from political observers. Graham Murray, writing in *Inside Queen’s Park*, a respected publication that covers the Ontario political scene, wrote that, ‘Whatever the elixir used to win tri-

partisan backing for legislation the Co-op Housing Federation has been pushing, they ought to put a flask of it in the loot-bags that will be given to MPPs as they leave the sector’s Queen’s Park [Co-op] Housing Day on October 17.’

“Cooper noted the region will continue to promote the legislation to all three parties while the Legislature is prorogued and will push them to reintroduce the legislation as soon as possible when the Legislature is recalled.

“‘Never underestimate the resiliency of the co-operative housing movement,’ says Cooper.”

I wanted to read that into the record, because I think that was very important, especially what Mr. Murray said about the fact that there had been this bill that created this elixir of co-operation. I suggest that perhaps the recipe may not have been duplicated perfectly in this particular bill.

The other thing is, you can see the co-operation—I’m sorry, Speaker; I’m going to ask for your indulgence. You could see, if you had this in your hand, the wonderful picture of everyone smiling. I’ll let everyone know who is in this picture; obviously, we’re all smiles. You’ve got some of the folks who are up in the gallery, but you’ve also got myself; the member for Welland, who is the third party’s housing critic; and you also have the former Minister of Municipal Affairs, who is now the Premier.

So we’re all smiles. I guess she would have been a candidate—well, no; she was still the minister then.

Interjection: The musical minister.

Mr. Steve Clark: Yes, exactly.

So you’ve got this beautiful picture of everyone very pleased with a straightforward piece of legislation. But now you’ve got a surprise. You’ve got this new bill; the Minister of Municipal Affairs has added something to this mix of co-operation. Somehow, none of the housing advocates who I’ve spoken with in the past—certainly not the folks from CHF—have ever mentioned this issue that is in the bill. You see, Speaker, in addition to doing all the right things to streamline the resolution process for co-ops, Bill 14 proposes to give the Landlord and Tenant Board the power to waive the \$45 filing fee for low-income tenants.

To me, there’s no rhyme nor reason for it other than, I believe, to play politics. The minister can claim that she simply wanted to take advantage of this opportunity to add something by opening up the Residential Tenancies Act to make not just substantive changes to co-ops, but this other opportunity; I don’t buy that for a second. I’ll get to my reasons for being somewhat surprised with this change in a few moments.

By including this unnecessary and, I suggest, completely unrelated amendment to Bill 14, the minister has taken a magical, non-partisan elixir that Graham Murray talked about and put it into a poison chalice. That’s what’s happened. We’ve had all of this co-operation for Bill 65, and now something has changed, and I can’t for the life of me understand why she’s done that. I would love to have someone across the way in the government

explain to me why it's been done. I would feel if I was part of the federation that, somehow, this bill was a bit hijacked from the one that we all stood here last fall and talked about as a co-operative bill.

Clearly to me, it really hits the nail on the head with the Premier's empty rhetoric on co-operating. I remember quite well, as I think we all do, the very glowing headlines when the new Premier was minted at her convention, and also in the throne speech. In case members of the Legislature or perhaps people viewing at home have forgotten, given what they've seen from this government in the last few weeks, I'm going to remind them of some of the headlines that we saw when the Premier took office and pledged co-operation with the opposition parties.

Globe and Mail, February 18: "Wynne Aims at Tripartisan Peace with Nods to Tories and NDP"; Bloomberg.com, February 19: "Ontario Premier Wynne Pledges Budget Balance and Co-operation"; Ottawa Citizen, February 19: "Wynne Offers Olive Branch, Says Focus Should Be on Jobs and Economy"; Toronto Star, February 19: "Wynne Appeals for 'Common Ground' in Conciliatory Throne Speech"; Hamilton Spectator, February 19: "Premier Kathleen Wynne is heralding a new era of co-operation at Queen's Park"; Windsor Star, February 19: "Wynne Pledges Co-operation in Ontario Government."

Speaker, the list goes on and on, and on it goes. I think the ink was barely dry on those headlines when the Premier's action betrayed her nice words. This is supposed to be the new era of co-operation and working across party lines. How does she allow this particular amendment that I spoke of earlier to make its way into this bill, at the very essence of the co-operation that she's talked about? The answer, of course, Speaker, is that the Premier can talk the talk, but in terms of this bill she's not walking the walk.

1510

There's been no new approach to governing, and it's been obvious by what's happened since the throne speech in the last two weeks—it's clear to me that we continue to battle the government on issues around the gas plants. We can't seem to have the co-operation. The tactics and the approach that we've seen with this bill, to have an addition that comes out of the blue, is the same that was done by this government back in October when the former Premier pulled the plug on this House.

Then we have a bill like this one. That the minister would add this unnecessary amendment to legislation that we all have agreed on shows that—it's an attitude of co-operation. We've had this attitude of co-operation with this particular bill, and now we get an amendment right out of the blue.

If you look at what happened last year, after the 2011 election, with Premier McGuinty using the words "major minority"—this bill would be more like—a party that would be governing with a majority would stick in an amendment like this that's totally unrelated to an all-party-supported concept. It's not something that you

would see from a government that's in a minority position, especially when you have a Premier who keeps talking about co-operation.

The mismanagement we've seen in this House over the last almost 10 years—again, it's a failed opportunity that the government has put forward with the opposition parties, and now we have Bill 14 with this amendment to make a significant and, I've stressed, totally unrelated change to the Landlord and Tenant Board. I can't understand why we would have such change brought forward at this time.

So let's look at the amendment that's going to authorize the Landlord and Tenant Board to waive the \$45 filing fee for low-income tenants. We all know the board can be quite a frustrating experience for both tenants and landlords alike because it takes so long for them to render a decision.

In its February 2011 report *Justice Denied: Ontario's Broken Rent Dispute Process*, the Federation of Rental Housing Providers of Ontario had some interesting things to say about the Landlord and Tenant Board. Here are a few of the highlights:

"Ontario's rent dispute process is broken.... The rent dispute process in Ontario is excessively long, and is unjust to landlords"—this is from that organization. "It typically takes 90 days in Ontario for a dispute to be finally resolved, and costs the landlord about \$5,200, not including administrative costs, lost time and productivity."

That report continues, Speaker: "That's only the typical process. If a 'professional tenant' is involved, he or she uses requests for internal board reviews and appeals to the Superior Court to add even more delays; these tenants easily use Ontario's system to bilk landlords of up to one year's rent, suffer no consequences, and cause severe financial and emotional distress for landlords."

I have to ask the minister what she thinks will happen by introducing a new process proposed in Bill 14 into the system. I think we're going to see complaints increased at the Landlord and Tenant Board. I think, again, it's horrendously backlogged to begin with and we're going to suffer from some even further delays because of that. Not only is the process going to be bogged down by the sheer volume of complaints, but I think we need to take the time to review all of those applicants for a fee waiver. Again, no one, whether you're a landlord or a tenant, wants to wait longer for a decision. I can understand that \$45 to some tenants is going to be a big deal; it's going to be groceries, a contribution to a utility bill. It's a big deal. and I am very sympathetic. But I worry about whether the fee and this whole process will see, perhaps, nuisance applications from both sides being put forward. I just want to make sure, Speaker, that no matter whether you're a tenant or a landlord, the system would work for you.

My understanding is that typically the fee would be returned to the tenant if they were successful at the board.

If we're going to take these disputes and increase them, someone has to pay in the end. Certainly I'm very

concerned that at the board right now there is not a reasonable period of time for disputes to be put forward. That has been my concern right from the start. I've had tenants in my riding complain; I've had landlords in my riding complain. It's technically a uniform complaint that they've had: Sometimes it's just unmanageable in terms of the delays. So I don't want it to take longer; I don't want it to be a barrier.

I do think there are a number of changes that constituents have said to me should be considered as part of a review of the landlord-tenant process. I think that simply waiving the fee doesn't make the cost to operate that board go away, and I think we need to get to the root of a responsible way to deal with the board. Listening to some of my landlords—and I'm going to get into some of the landlords and some of the other issues that people have brought forward to our members in a few moments.

I'm very concerned that—again, the fact that we sat here on two other occasions, had general consent that we were going to move forward in a co-operative way and then an amendment comes out of the blue, is very distressing. I think that's something we need to deal with in the future. Even in my briefing with ministry staff last week, at no time did they give me any groups they have consulted. They have given me no background on where this particular change was put forward.

I think we've seen them doing this before. Premier Wynne, when she was Minister of Municipal Affairs, brought forward another bill that she heralded would be a godsend to the housing market, which was dealing with rent increase guidelines. The government at the time heralded that piece of legislation—it was Bill 19—as a cornerstone of its plan for affordable housing and affordable increases for tenants in the province.

I said from the start of that debate that I was worried the government was playing politics too much, and I think I was right. Because when you look at what has happened since that bill was passed, you see that nothing really significant was dealt with. When the numbers were crunched on that particular bill, the savings amounted to 0.1%. It worked out to about a loonie a month for the average rental household. I don't think that's substantive reform in our housing policy in the province of Ontario.

A buck a month, to me, isn't something that groups were looking for; they were looking for more reform, more discussion, more co-operation between the three parties. It's nonsense to suggest that to have an amendment that would just deal with waiving a fee would make anyone in this Legislature be called anti-tenant. I think it's bad news for tenants. Any way to delay a valid complaint by a tenant or by a landlord—they shouldn't be delayed in any way, shape or form.

I've got to point out that my briefing with ministry staff last week was very interesting. I have to say—and I don't know whether it's because the government hasn't got their legislative agenda. I know the House leader is here. He may want to provide a comment to me about the way they handle bills being introduced. This bill, with its appendices, is probably about 40 pages. The briefing you

get—it was just before the Ontario Good Roads Association conference—was pretty sparse. There are seven pages; there wasn't much detail given.

When I look at the whole approach, it reminds me of one of my former jobs. I worked in the newspaper business for a number of years. The ministry's approach to briefing reminded me of a term that editors use with reporters, and the term is "burying the lead." I know none of the reporters at Queen's Park would do any of that in their articles; they're far too experienced for doing that. But when it happens, sometimes you almost have to read right to the very end of the report or story to really come up with the real news. I think that was the case with this briefing: In a very small section at the very end, they decided to pop in a totally unrelated aspect to this particular bill.

1520

I think the legislation that we had on the books just prior to proroguing the House was something that all three parties liked. There was not a particular issue. So right in the middle of the ROMA/OGRA conference—I've got to laugh at the way these briefings work. I'm the municipal affairs critic, and you've got the biggest municipal conference in the province here. I'm basically there, as is the critic for the third party and most of the ministers here—you're at the conference day and night, meeting with delegates, in the government's case, sort of every 15 minutes. We meet with them about every 25 minutes; I'm sure the third party's about the same. So I've got to squeeze a briefing in at 8 o'clock in the morning—

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm not asking for anybody's sympathy, but what I'm trying to get to is that you've got this arsenal of folks across the table from you, you've got quite a bit of salary across the table looking at you, and you've got a pretty sparse-looking brief that, all in maybe one page, really tells the whole story. So you've got 41 pages; you've got seven pages—it's not much of a briefing, I have to tell you. For them to read through seven pages of a slide deck is not much of a briefing, not much of a communication, not much co-operation. I'm not going to read the headlines that the Premier had in all the papers when she took office, but it's not that spirit of co-operation that we had with Bill 65. It just wasn't there.

I wanted to mention it because I think it's important when we have a critic portfolio that we do reach out to stakeholders. I know many of them that I spoke to after this bill was introduced and after the briefing were surprised at the way that this was put forward. I do hear from landlords and tenants in my riding and from my caucus colleagues all the time about the particular process. When you do make a change to the Landlord and Tenant Board, it puts up a flag in my mind that if you're going to make some changes, you should review some of the other changes.

I think it's very interesting that the parliamentary assistant is from Thunder Bay, because I've got a letter, an email that I received just after New Year's, from a

gentleman named Derek, a landlord in Thunder Bay. I want to read it because it's very heartfelt. It's basically a call to action that he's giving us. I could really sense his frustration in the e-mail.

The subject line said, "Will my email to you change anything? Does government work?"

It says,

"Dear MPP,

"Every day I am being robbed. The police can't do anything.

"I know you are busy. I know there is currently a leadership race on. So, I will keep this short and hope it reaches you!

"I am a landlord in Thunder Bay. I know I do not live in your constituency. Believe me though when I say, many, many landlords do! You know this as you know many tenants live in your area too. Please consider taking up this issue and get the appreciation and respect from your own constituents for doing so!

"This is an important issue that has serious ramifications for all tenants and landlords in Ontario. It is changing the Landlord and Tenant Board process for evictions.

"Right now, every day I am having money robbed from me. I have three non-paying tenants that have all decided not to pay rent. They live in different units in the same building. I can only hope they have not teamed up to not pay rent. I look after and upgrade my buildings—this is not the issue.

"How do you think it feels to watch my savings being stolen from me?

"I worked during the summer in university to save money for being in the army reserve. I then went to Afghanistan to support my country. I didn't drink and smoke my money away. I saved it. Now I watch my tenants doing what I didn't do as they smoke and drink and throw their bottles on the lawn. I then also pay for the bottles to be picked up or I'll get fined by the city.

"The problem is they are refusing to pay rent, and every day I am paying for them to have a roof, water and heat. I will likely never see a dime from them. Some of them are on ODSP and OW; where will they get money to pay for the lost months?

"I can't believe with all the petitioning and lobbying that this issue has not been addressed. Other provinces evict tenants in 15 to 25 days; Ontario: three to four months. If they don't pay in a month, why would they pay in the long term (especially when they can get away with not paying at all)?

"If a department store clerk saw someone stealing, they would get security and the police would be called. I can't do anything but watch as more and more is stolen from me. There is little or no recourse to get any money after they were finally evicted.

"How is this fair?

"What will you do?

"Read the article by the FRPO to see a win-win solution for tenants and landlords. Other articles are attached,

for example, of one of dozens and dozens of tenants (just ask any property manager) that manipulate the system.

"I wonder what will change based on this email? This issue has left me disillusioned by my government. If for years nothing has changed will it now? Will the unfairness stop? If the government does nothing, what do I need to do to change this; what can I do? I will not be helpless as I watch my savings disappear and I go into debt to support non-paying tenants for months on end.

"I agree to be governed by a government that is fair and looks after the needs of the people creating laws that are balanced and fair.

"The current landlord and tenant laws and acts are not fair. I realize you are not government that made these laws. You are the government that can make them fair, though."

I know that some may disagree with some of the contents of that letter, but I'm sure we can all pull letters from both landlords and tenants that talk about their frustration with the system.

The member for Cambridge, when I toured his riding, had a number of landlords that wanted to speak to me on an unrelated issue about waterways. The lady's name was Kayla Andrade, who's got a crusade going on on the Ontario Municipal Act where there are 80 landlords, some representing associations in Hamilton, Kitchener-Waterloo, Brant county and the London area. They had a meeting at the Galt branch of the Royal Canadian Legion in support of her bid to axe legislation which makes landlords responsible for the unpaid utility bills of their delinquent tenants. There were people there from West Elgin near St. Thomas, Scarborough and Peterborough. They were coming that far, going to a meeting in Galt.

This is something that I became aware of when I was a chief administrative officer, the fact that water rates are dealt with only by the owners of the building and not by the individual tenants, and that the municipality, if they were going to collect that unpaid water charge, would have to go after the landlord because of the way the Municipal Act is written.

I appreciate the fact that the member for Cambridge has got a petition from Kayla Andrade. I know she's got a website and a bit of a campaign at landlordrescue.ca. So I encourage people to look at what she's proposing.

Again, it's another issue that landlords and tenants are bringing forward to our caucus. They're doing so on the basis that they won't have, or they didn't think they had, an opportunity to open up the Residential Tenancies Act, and I'm suggesting that if the government is serious about this little amendment on the \$45 fee, we should be fair. We should commit to finding out what landlords like Derek in Thunder Bay and tenants across the province have to say about it.

Now, when this bill gets into committee, perhaps we should commit, because of this amendment, to travel across the province to talk about the Landlord and Tenant Board and the Residential Tenancies Act. Maybe we should go on the road and find out tenant issues and landlord issues, to find out whether the only change

should be for the government to waive the filing fee for some tenants or to look at perhaps streamlining the system for every tenant and every landlord in the province.

1530

There's even a model of consultation we can follow, because the government itself used it in the past. Back in 2006, before the RTA was brought in, the McGuinty government undertook what it described as an "unprecedented" amount of engagement with stakeholders. They boasted about travelling to 10 different communities to hear from landlords and tenants. They were in Toronto, Kitchener, London, Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Kingston and Hamilton. They had 5,000 questionnaires completed, 1,200 telephone inquiries, 250 written submissions and meetings attended by over 1,500 people.

Why don't we just do that again? After all, we've got the RTA opened up for Bill 14, and the government is eager to make an amendment to the Landlord and Tenant Board, so why don't we try to take the pulse of the rental-housing sector in the province right now? I bet that if we did, the feedback we'd get in 2013 would far surpass what the government heard seven years ago. I know that there are many tenants and landlords back home in Leeds-Grenville who would be prepared to come to one of those sessions and tell me what's on their minds, because I've met with them.

Landlords, for example—I'll give you two examples: Ted Carr and Mike Gordon, both of whom I've mentioned in this House during debate of other legislation. I've had more like them come forward and talk about their frustrating experiences at the board and how difficult it is to collect back rent and to evict bad tenants. I hear the sense of frustration in their voices and I know that some of them are just considering getting out of the rental business altogether. I'm afraid we're chasing good people out of the system.

Using Ted Carr as an example: He's been a great landlord in the Brockville area for a number of years. He's always tried to accommodate people. I've met with him extensively about what he's been able to do to help those less fortunate. I think he knows that, as a landlord, it's a lot easier to resolve your dispute with your tenant before you get to the Landlord and Tenant Board—that only makes good policy—because he doesn't want to have an empty unit at the end of the day, and he'd rather have some co-operation.

During the debate last year, I mentioned that Ted wrote to me about his perspective as a small landlord, and I think it's worth reading into the record again today. Ted writes, "I have, and continue to have, money outstanding from a tenant, this after many requests for payment, different hearings and appearing at different levels of the system, the bureaucracy, getting several judgments, yet I still have money outstanding.

"Not many have the time, the patience or the resources to litigate these matters. It is the opinion of this landlord that the system, which has seen benefits over the years, has to be simplified, the process more friendly.... One has

no idea until they experience this bureaucracy from a person with no idea of where to start, the frustration of where to turn or what to do now. To go to the tribunal to be turned away because of an incorrect process, incorrect form served, to hear that the tenant has access to duty counsel, while the landlord has no support."

He's among a number of landlords asking me why the government doesn't take an obvious look at this problem and try to get the process streamlined for both sides, for both landlords and tenants. Instead, the current system is bogged down with procedural matters and bureaucratic delays that will only perpetuate the original complaint that's lodged. Rather than sorting out the conflicts and having an atmosphere at the board, the board makes the situation worse.

Ted gave me a solution. He said, "If the minister really wants an understanding of the struggle that it can be for a landlord to recover back rent from a tenant or to be compensated for property damage, she should go through the process herself." If she did, I would suspect that she'd be a little more motivated as the minister to press for some long-overdue reform to the system.

On behalf of those people that have complained, both on the landlord and tenant sides: I think we have to add to their voices and I think we have to look farther than just this Landlord and Tenant Board filing fee for low-income Ontarians and look at the real root of the problem. Let's try to get some real reform in the system.

I want to go back to Bill 14 and the substantive change that I think we all support, and that's the main intention of the bill, which amends the Residential Tenancies Act and the Co-operative Corporations Act. As many people know from the previous bill, the Energy Consumer Protection Act and the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit Act are also being amended. The primary purpose of the bill, as we all know, is to move co-op tenure disputes out of the courts and put them into the Landlord and Tenant Board.

Proponents of the legislation—I introduced them to you earlier—have said it will streamline the dispute process, make it faster, more efficient and most importantly, most cost-effective and transparent for co-ops and their members. Those are some of the many reasons why this is long overdue in the system. We already have a clogged court system that doesn't need any additional burden when it comes to its dockets for dealing with this matter that could easily be dealt with in a very economical way at the Landlord and Tenant Board. Any reasonable measures we can implement to reduce the number of cases before the courts should be pursued. Reducing the clutter on court dockets is a good thing, especially when we consider that courts really are not the appropriate venue to deal with these disputes between landlords and tenants over tenure, not when any other landlord in the province dealing with the same eviction and other dispute processes deals with the well-established Landlord and Tenant Board process. It only makes sense for us to move the co-op process in that as well.

But we can't do this under the existing legislation because co-op accommodations are governed by the Co-

operative Corporations Act rather than the Residential Tenancies Act. In welcoming this move to the Landlord and Tenant Board, I want to remind everyone tuning in of my earlier comments about the problems that are plaguing the board. We've got both landlords and tenants not happy with the way the board deals with it—and I think especially if the fee waiver, as part of Bill 14, goes forward, it's going to inevitably create more complaints and it's going to delay the process even more. So, regardless of those concerns, I think everyone can agree that on the co-op side, the courts aren't the right venue, and these changes specifically that have been requested in the other two bills—I want to reiterate that Bill 65 and Bill 198 only dealt with those co-op bills. It's not like Bill 14 that's got this extra change in it.

I think, as well, there are about 300 of these disputes that end up in our court system every year. I mentioned earlier, in starting my speech, that it costs about \$1 million a year—something that we would much rather have reinvested into our co-ops. The average case typically costs between \$3,000 and \$5,000, and the extreme case can cost the co-op up to \$50,000. That's just unacceptable when we look at a far more economical way to handle it. Those figures don't also take the tremendous time that is taken away from the co-op family in dealing with this system. So it's very unfortunate that we've taken so long to get to this situation.

The fact that we didn't get Bill 65 passed last year means that the courts are going to be dealing with complaints that we all could have stopped. That's the criminal part of it, the fact that we had an opportunity last fall to stop this, and I think we can all look with some apology towards our friends in the gallery, that we were unable to manage ourselves accordingly to get this bill passed. I think the whole proroguing the Legislature was a shame when it dealt with a bill that was on the cusp of getting all-party support.

Anyway, the provisions under part 5 of the RTA are the same that any landlord in the province would have to evict a tenant. The co-operative has basically two avenues to terminate a member's occupancy. As with other landlords, the co-op can issue a member a notice when it is pursuing an eviction under one or more of the 11 instances set out under the Residential Tenancies Act. They include nonpayment of rent, committing illegal acts or causing wilful damage to the property.

1540

The new process would allow the co-operative to pursue an eviction from the LTB without notice, in some limited circumstances. These include where a former co-op member has terminated his or her membership and therefore their occupancy rights; where the member's occupancy rights have expired by virtue of a predetermined date; and where the former member is a post-secondary student in a student housing co-operative and has given notice of termination. They're very straightforward circumstances which, under the existing system, would have required them to head to court and complete really what amounts to some routine paperwork. Under

the bill, they'll be able to get these situations resolved. Their application will be directly to the Landlord and Tenant Board.

We should note that the legislation does not entirely remove the role of the courts in the dispute resolution process. There are still going to remain some tenure disputes that will continue to have to go to the courts because they're not spelled out in the Residential Tenancies Act. These deal with specific bylaws to individual co-ops that will include provisions such as the no-pets rule violations, or failure to undertake member duties such as snow removal and lawn care. These disputes that can't be resolved by the co-op board will still ultimately have to be adjudicated in the province's courts. So we've got that issue that's still there, but from my recollection of Bill 65, that's a very small portion—extremely small—and I think normally it's resolved right at the board level, because of its nature.

Again, the new section is going to add the fact that we're going to ensure that cases will be judged on the merits of their case. In other words, procedural irregularities will no longer be able to trump the basis upon which a co-op decided to revoke a person's membership. I think that's very important. It's something that I've heard ever since I was elected—three years ago today, Speaker. It's my anniversary today. Three years ago, I was elected MPP.

Applause.

Mr. Steve Clark: You're not going to clap, John?

Applause.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you, John. Thank you. I appreciate that. I owe you one.

I think it's very important for us to look at Bill 14. It also changes the co-op act in a number of ways, to streamline the internal dispute resolution process used by individual co-operatives. Co-ops have functioned very well under these very democratic rules for years, and it's essential that they retain the ability to do so, regardless of amendments outlined in Bill 14.

When I visited Stoa and visited my own co-ops in the past, there has been that level of co-operation. They've been able to use the democratic rules that they've all set down, to be able to deal with those disputes in a timely basis.

Again, these are all changes that the Co-operative Housing Federation and many other proponents have been asking the Legislature to deal with for a few years.

That's just the Coles Notes version—I know we'll all probably do a Coles Notes version of the background—but I think it's very important that, unlike the fee waiver amendment tacked onto this bill, nothing else other than that section was really new or surprising.

Any MPP who has ever had a meeting with the co-op industry, anyone who has ever sat down with co-ops in your riding, pretty well knows the basic parts of this bill. Like the minister, I want to let everyone know how important we in the official opposition believe the role is that Ontario's co-ops have in our housing mix.

It didn't take me very long, when I was elected at the municipal level some 30 years ago, to know the importance of a co-op in your community and the fact that their structure is somewhat different from some of the other housing groups. Maybe some communities, some members, have housing boards that they've set up over the years. I just think the co-op provides a really unique opportunity. I know that the ones that I've visited really show how diverse a population lives in our residence.

But it also shows the pride that they have. That's the thing I can't get over, the pride they have, not just in their co-op but in the whole process, that whole democracy that makes up a co-op.

On the tour we had in Burlington, you had some people who were genuinely proud of their homes, proud of their neighbours and proud of what they had been able to accomplish in a democratic co-op over the years; a wide mix of people's backgrounds, young and old—really a unique gem that we have. I think, if we were to look at what we should be talking about, it's how we can enable more success stories like co-ops.

That's what we miss in this debate. That's what we missed last fall when we were debating Bill 19 and Bill 65. We were really missing the opportunity. How can we put in place in legislation an opportunity to grow co-ops, to expand co-ops, to make sure that this unique gem that we have in the province can be increased and that more people can be associated with it? I think too many times we spin our wheels with some procedure where, in fact, if we all sat down and looked at the success that co-ops provide, I think it would be a great opportunity for us.

I have to say that I want to thank the federation for being here today and for all the education that they have done, both last fall and since this bill has been tabled. They're one of those very unique groups that I think we can all celebrate when it comes to people who talk to us about necessary changes to legislation. I'm very sorry that the process that brought Bill 198 to the floor, that brought Bill 65 to the floor, isn't the same process that we are seeing with Bill 14.

Currently, as most people know, there are 550 non-profit co-operatives in Ontario. That adds up to a little over 44,000 households; 125,000 people live in co-ops in the province. I think any member of the Legislature who is speaking—we've got a pretty good record: Out of 107 ridings, co-ops appear in 95 ridings. So I expect when members are giving their questions and comments, or they're having their speeches, they'd better do a shout-out to the co-op in their riding. I'm looking at you, Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Always. I have great co-ops in my riding.

Mr. Steve Clark: Okay; that's good.

So I have to do a shout-out for my co-ops before the two minutes that are left in my speech are over. I'm proud to represent two co-ops in the city of Brockville: the Brock-Seaway Housing Co-operative on Dana Street and the Shepherd's Green Co-operative Homes on Liston Avenue. These 30-unit co-ops are just like others across

the province. They are home to a mix of families. I have to say, Speaker, they're bustling with activity.

But we know that even in the best of circumstances and in the best accommodations, there are always going to be issues that arise in landlord and tenant relationships, and sometimes these issues can't be resolved in that democracy that we know is our co-op system. That's why I welcome so much of what Bill 14 is intended to do, because it means we won't see those tenure disputes dragged into the courts. We won't see that \$1 million wasted, where it could be put into developing more of this wonderful co-op home situation.

So just in closing, I could speak—I've only got 56 seconds. Maybe they'll give me unanimous consent for doing another half-hour.

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: I didn't ask for it.

So I want to make sure we look at the minister and we say to the minister that there is an opportunity, I think, to look back at Bill 65, to look at the co-operation that existed. If you're going to look at changes to the Landlord and Tenant Board, I've got just in my own speech here and in these other pages that I'm not going to read, that I could read, a laundry list of other changes that people are proposing. So either give people the chance to discuss it or remove the section, and let's get back to the original intent of Bill 65, which died on the order paper when Dalton McGuinty prorogued the Legislature.

With that, I'll let some questions and comments, and I welcome comments from the government on amending the bill.

1550

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I just wanted to make some comments on the member's opening remarks, the speech on G14, the Non-profit Housing Co-operatives Statute Law Amendment Act, that is being reintroduced. It was here in the House last session as Bill 65, and now it has been reintroduced. I'm glad it is being reintroduced, and it sounds like each party is in favour of passing this bill.

One provision that is in it now that wasn't there before is a change to the Residential Tenancies Act that authorizes the Landlord and Tenant Board to waive or defer fees or charges for low-income Ontarians. That way, if you're going to dispute the filing with the Landlord and Tenant Board, at least if you're a low-income person and you live in that housing in the co-op, you won't have to pay that \$45 to file your application with the Landlord and Tenant Board. That gives you an incentive or a reason, economically, to defend yourself.

Not everybody who is a low-income person can afford that \$45. It is a lot of money to someone who doesn't have a lot of income. When we look at the amount of applications that go through annually at the Landlord and Tenant Board, you're looking at about 300 per year on average—

Interjection: In the courts.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: —in the courts, excuse me—so, 300 applications per year in the courts at a \$45 charge for an application. That's not a lot of money for the courts to lose. It's a drop in the bucket compared to someone with a low income and how they have to struggle to pay for that application fee.

I think it's a very good amendment that that fee is taken out so it can go through the Landlord and Tenant Board, so that tenants have a voice and can defend themselves in the right venue, as opposed to the courts that are going to have a long, drawn-out process and can get quite expensive for both co-ops and tenants. So it's a fair amendment in this bill today, and I'm glad to see it in there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I just wanted to add my comments. I want to agree with the member from London–Fanshawe about this amendment, and I just want to ensure that the member from Leeds–Grenville—first of all, I appreciate his generally supportive comments and I appreciate that it was a challenging time to be briefed with regard to the legislation. I appreciate his accommodating the timing. It was a little struggle for all of us because of the conference.

He did suggest in his comments that we made a mistake. I want to let him know it was not a mistake; it was a deliberate choice. At the end of the day, we heard from people like the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario. This was designed to help low- and modest-income tenants. This is about making sure that people with limited income have access to justice and are listened to, and we thought waiving these fees would bring consistency, as well, to how the disputes are treated, just like every other tribunal.

The fee waiver program exists in other tribunals. We know it's in the Ontario Municipal Board; we know the Assessment Review Board also has this fee waiver program. This was an interesting conversation, but I wanted to assure him it was not a mistake; it was a deliberate choice to ensure that we support those low- and modest-income families who, through no fault of their own, don't have the means to question or challenge decisions that are made by their landlord.

I think this is an important amendment, and I value his input and look forward to further conversations. But again, this was about providing consistency and fairness, and we think it's reasonable to suggest that we have that conversation going forward so that it matches other tribunals.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm proud to add my two cents to the comments made by our municipal affairs critic from Leeds–Grenville, who has taken a strong hand and great strength in showing a good balance of how parties should work together in trying to get Bill 65 passed in the last session.

I met with the co-ops in my riding in the last few weeks, and it was a great opportunity to meet and learn

about co-ops in Elgin–Middlesex–London. The main message I received from that meeting was, Bill 65 is what they wanted. Bill 65 is something we should have supported in the last session, and they were really disappointed that prorogation—when the government ran away from their responsibilities—led to the end of Bill 65.

It was at that meeting that I said, “Well, it will be great. The bill will come back.” There was support from all three parties. There was no reason at all why I would suspect that there would be any changes, considering all three parties supported the bill, and it was something the co-ops themselves were in full support of. Lo and behold, they decided to change it. You would think, since it's hard enough for this Legislature to get three parties on board on anything, that once you've attained success, you wouldn't go forward and make changes. You wouldn't put the poison pill in.

I like the comment on the elixir of collaboration, I guess you were saying. I'm a pharmacist by trade. I used to make quite a few elixirs for my clients, and I know how precious they are when you make them and that if you start messing around with a little bit of the recipe, you screw it up.

I'm hoping that we can work through this change in Bill 14 so that we can work together and do what's right for the residents of condos throughout this riding. We should sit down and listen to the member from Leeds–Grenville. He has a strong handle on this situation, and we look forward to more comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure, actually, to weigh in on this conversation. I'd like to thank the member from Leeds–Grenville for speaking for an entire hour on the issue. That's quite an accomplishment. Also, my colleague from London–Fanshawe made some very good points that I'd like to touch on as well.

First, I think you're quite right: You have to give credit to the co-ops that are in your communities. Certainly, in Kitchener–Waterloo we have a number of them that have been very progressive, and quite honestly, they have filled the gap in our community around affordable housing. Local leadership has actually superseded anything that we could do in this House, but I think that this is an opportunity for us to stand up and be supportive of the co-operative housing movement.

When I met with the co-op leaders in my community, certainly the students raised some very good points around a very supportive model that they recognize is helping them transition from high school into a co-op model of housing when they go to post-secondary education. Certainly, this is an aspect that's quite honestly missing and an area that we can improve upon.

I think it's important also to recognize that the NDP has proposed a range of other ways to make it easier for tenants to have their concerns heard at the Landlord and Tenant Board. Some advocates, even Chief Justice LeSage in his inquiry into the death of Al Gosling, pro-

pose that the Landlord and Tenant Board should have the power to determine subsidy questions in order to resolve disputes about arrears, and currently they are prohibited from doing so.

So I think that what we have here is an opportunity. It should have happened in the fall. Prorogation interrupted this conversation, this discussion and this opportunity for us to actually truly shine as a province on the co-operative housing movement. I look forward to supporting it and working in my community and in the province to strengthen and grow the co-operative housing movement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. We return to the member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, thank you for returning to me so quickly. I'd like to thank the member from London–Fanshawe, the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo and last, but certainly not least, the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

I want to thank the minister for her clarification. I'm not sure if she said it was a deliberate mistake that the ministry made, but she and I will have to have more conversations about this bill as it moves forward in second reading. I appreciate that the member for Kitchener–Waterloo mentioned some other gaps in the Landlord and Tenant Board system, and I appreciate the suggestion that she put forward.

I really think that there are two separate things here. We've got a bill that was here in the fall. The only reason it wasn't passed was because Dalton McGuinty shuttered this Legislature for 128 days. We had many bills—not just on this—on the order paper.

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: You could have given your two minutes of questions and comments. You could have trumped the minister.

1600

I think what we're talking about is that we had a bill that we all co-operated on, and now we've got some changes. I think, whether it's this bill in its previous Bill 65 form—and a hundred other bills, there were a number of bills that I think we had some general agreement on, and there's been no effort by this government to bring back the bill we supported. There's been no effort by this government to bring back some of the other bills, some of the bills that we had on the order paper, that the New Democrats had and even some of the government bills that had general support. We're not, again, having this level of co-operation that the Premier talked about in all of those newspaper headlines, and I really believe that the minister has an opportunity to fast-track this bill by separating the portions of the bill that we all agreed on and moving those forward as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I understand that the government House leader has a point of order that he'd like to raise.

Hon. John Milloy: I think you'll find that we have unanimous consent to revert to motions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to revert to motions. Agreed? Agreed.

Government House leader.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: I have two motions; I'll give you notice here.

The first is that I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is there unanimous consent to move forward with a motion with respect to private members' public business? Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(b), the following changes be made to the ballot list, dated March 07, 2013, for private members' public business:

Mr. Wilson and Mr. Yakabuski exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Wilson assumes ballot item number 9 and Mr. Yakabuski assumes ballot item number 4.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice concerning the meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and that the Speaker shall put the question without debate or amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Does the House concur? Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet on March 11, 12, 13 and 22, 2013 and April 3 and 4, 2013, for the purpose of conducting pre-budget consultations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

NON-PROFIT HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES COOPÉRATIVES DE LOGEMENT SANS BUT LUCRATIF

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I'm pleased to recognize the member for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I just want to first tell you that I won't be speaking for the entire hour. I will be sharing my time with my colleagues from London–Fanshawe and from Kitchener–Waterloo. We may or may not use the whole hour.

I'm pleased to actually be here again today talking about Bill 14, formerly Bill 65 with some amendments. I want to take the opportunity to once again recognize our friends in the gallery from the co-op federation: Harvey Cooper, Dale Reagan and other staff, as well. They are tenacious in being here to represent the issues that are important to them.

This bill amends the Residential Tenancies Act and the Co-operative Corporations Act to move certain co-op disputes out of the courts and into the Landlord and Tenant Board. Disputes not provided for under the RTA will be things such as no pets, failure to fulfill your co-op duties as those may be, and members' disputes over provider overcharges or maintenance. Those things would continue to go through the courts. Hopefully, those will be considerably fewer numbers, though, than the 300 per year.

There would be no appeal to decisions made by co-op boards unless expressly committed in co-ops by law. Now, I understand that some co-ops actually have an appeal process and some don't. In my discussions with the co-op federation, they tell me that there are plenty of checks and balances within the co-op processes, and we look forward to having some of those discussions when this bill gets to committee.

The reason I'm not taking my whole hour today is because I'd like to see this bill actually move along through the system before this session ends; then the federation wouldn't have to wait for another session. It was actually in 2004 when they originally brought this issue forward to the parties and the government to review, and it has been promised since about 2007. So it's about time that in fact we deal with this issue.

The new amendment, of course, is to waive the fee of \$45, the application fee that was waived in the court system, and now to apply that to the Landlord and Tenant Board process—a small amount of money which may assist a lot of people. I heard from previous presenters that they weren't necessarily in favour of this. I can tell you that many low-income people who live in my riding are hard-pressed to pay for the bus to get to the hearing. So I think it's very important that people have the right to represent themselves, and at a cost of \$45, I don't think that it's going to be a huge impact to the tribunal's ability to process these claims. So, back in 2007, the government promised to take action on this issue. As I said, we welcome the new amendment to provide tenants with more affordable access.

In addition, this bill is very limited in scope and it will do little to address the fundamental problems of the lack of housing that so many people who live in this province face. The most recent numbers that I've looked at: 170,000 households—I wouldn't even hazard a guess at how many people that amounts to—and 80,000 plus, just

in the city of Toronto. Households that are on the wait-list equate to 150,000 people here in the city of Toronto who are waiting for affordable housing.

This government, though, needs to address the housing struggles here in the province of Ontario. They need to move ahead with a housing benefit, and they need to put stronger protections in place for their tenants.

It was interesting today, actually, as I was doing a little prep work, that there was this article in the Toronto Star, "Making Room for Rent in Toronto's Boom: Part of the Province's Planning Act Makes It Possible—Just Not Popular." I quote: "An innovative approach to section 37 provisions could see more residential towers include some form of subsidized housing to aid tenants squeezed out of the highly competitive rental market."

Speaker, there are, I think, 157 condo projects going on here in the city of Toronto—157 agreements, actually, between the city of Toronto under section 37, which yielded a cash component to the city of Toronto of \$136 million. Imagine the number of subsidized units that could have been built in condominiums here in the city if they had done the density bonusing as opposed to taking the cash.

Now, I'm not saying that the cash wasn't used for good purposes. It was used sometimes for open spaces; it was used for perhaps playground equipment. But whatever it was, the need is far greater for subsidized housing.

I think that there are a couple of projects. One of them, I think, is with the Co-op Housing Federation, for 12 units in a building that's going to be opening in 2015 or 2016. That's a good start, but I think we should be finding ways to make sure that there are subsidized housing units in every project here in the city of Toronto and across the province.

1610

My quote was actually from Simon Kent's article today in the Toronto Sun.

I want to talk a little about co-op housing in my riding. There are 550 units in my riding, and they are very vibrant communities. I live right next door to a co-op. There are co-op apartments, co-op townhouses, and there is a retirement village in that same complex. I can tell you that there are many events that take place in that community. People who live in the three sectors of it all get along well. They have many celebrations there throughout the year, on Canada Day, for Labour Day; they have Christmas functions. The little kids, new immigrants, right up to the seniors in the retirement facility, cohabitate and get along very well.

One of the more important co-ops in my riding, though, is the Mel Swart Co-op. Mel Swart was a long-time, well-respected New Democrat MPP here. Many of you here today may remember Mel. I said that things are often named after people when they pass, but Mel was so respected in our riding that they actually named the co-op for him while he was still alive and while he was a member of this government.

There are many other things that I think need to be done.

One of the benefits of the bill is that the tribunal system would be fairer and less costly for co-ops and the co-op staff would be able to handle those evictions for arrears without a lawyer. The lawyers may not be happy, because in fact they're going to lose some business, but the co-ops would make better use of the dollars that they have. The fee at the Landlord and Tenant Board is quite modest, and the evictions would no longer fail for technical reasons, such as not having the right person sign the various notices. Hopefully, it will be a faster process to resolve disputes. That would mean a reduced loss of income to the co-op due to a reduced period when members are not paying their rent—because I'm told that sometimes it took months to get through the court process.

For the co-op members, the court system is also a very expensive process if you're not entitled to legal aid, and in many instances people don't qualify these days for legal aid and they wouldn't have the financial resources to actually contest an eviction.

The tribunal system would be much fairer to members facing an eviction. Cases would be decided faster. The member would only be evicted if the Landlord and Tenant Board found that the facts justified an eviction, and members who do not qualify for legal aid would be able to defend themselves without going into debt to pay a lawyer or going through a complex court system.

For the wider public, there are also advantages, and those advantages are that the public costs of administering those evictions through the courts are much higher than they would be in the tribunal system, so we're actually saving taxpayer dollars, or hopefully we're moving other more important cases through the process. Hearing the co-op evictions in the courts adds to the backlogs. Increasingly, lawmakers are trying to keep civil cases out of the courts. Mediation and arbitration are amongst the tools that are being used to settle disputes in ways that are both fairer and more affordable.

This bill would improve access to the Landlord and Tenant Board. Courts and tribunals in Ontario are currently allowed to waive or defer fees charged to low-income Ontarians. Bill 14 will ensure that low-income tenants get the same treatment at the Landlord and Tenant Board. Currently, the fees make it difficult for low-income tenants to have access.

There are some limitations of the bill, still, and I'm hoping, as we get this to committee, that we'll be able to have some discussions about those issues and resolve them. So I guess while the bill is a step in improving the resolution of conflicts in the co-ops, some concerns merit better discussion on the issues. Moreover, it should be recognized that the bill is a very small step and that other actions are needed to protect the interests of tenants and co-op members and to ensure access to safe, affordable housing here in Ontario. We need to strike the right balance to ensure that co-op members have the individual rights of other tenants while respecting the unique nature of co-ops.

Some tenant advocates I've met with over the last few months while we were prorogued and last year during the

session say that the bill does not go far enough in protecting tenants' rights. Meanwhile, co-op leaders argue that the situation of co-op members is different from tenants and that they have additional rights due to the democratic nature in making decisions that involve them and others in the co-op.

Some of the tenant advocates are concerned that the bill, as it stands, does not permit co-operatives to make applications to the Landlord and Tenant Board to address issues of interference with occupancy, harassment by the co-op or non-repair issues in their units. Some advocates also believe that all eviction applications by the Landlord and Tenant Board—and that continuing some evictions in court makes no sense, that we should have it either one way or the other. As I said, hopefully, we can have some of these discussions when we get to committee. If we need to make some amendments, that will be the place to do it.

Finally, there's a concern that co-op members will no longer have the right to appeal to the co-op membership. The bill leaves it up to individual co-ops to decide. Both sides of these issues and concerns will be explored at the committee hearings.

Bill 14's amendment allows the Landlord and Tenant Board to waive or defer the fees, as I've already discussed. Housing advocates have been advocating for that for 10 years, so I think that that is a good thing. A range of other protections for low-income tenants should be considered, but not as part of this bill. But in the very near future, I'm hoping that the government will bring forward bills, and certainly our party will be bringing forward bills as well.

The NDP, over the last number of years, has proposed a number of other ways to make it easier for tenants to have their concerns addressed at the Landlord and Tenant Board; for example, providing tenants with the right to request a review at the Landlord and Tenant Board, without charge, regarding the not-reasonably-able-to-participate test for tenants unable to attend hearings for good reason and increasing the time limit for tenants' complaints to the Landlord and Tenant Board to two years.

Second, some advocates, even Chief Justice LeSage in his inquiry into the death of Al Gosling, proposed that the LTB should have the power to determine subsidy questions.

Third, there needs to be a discussion about ways to better protect tenants through strengthening rent control, so closing the loophole that currently allows landlords to impose uncontrolled rent increases on tenants renting vacant units by ensuring that rent regulation is applied to all rental units, whether vacant or occupied. This issue is really about—back in the mid-1990s, there was a hope that there would be a push by business to build a bunch of rental units, particularly here in Toronto where there was a great need for some affordable housing units. So this loophole was allowed and so anything after 1998 actually is exempted. It is kind of very problematic because, as tenants leave their units, as people perhaps

get a better job and move on, there is no longer rent control applied to those units.

This past summer, I actually came across a couple in my riding by the name of Ross and Joanne Battle. Ross has a long history of medical issues. He goes to dialysis three or four times a week. He is in a motorized wheelchair and lived on the third or fourth floor of an apartment that is covered—it was a pre-1998 building—and the elevator broke. The elevator was out for three or four days. He had to be carried down, and he went into a hotel for a few days to make sure that he would be able to get back and forth to his dialysis appointments.

When he was able to return, when the elevator was fixed, he made application to his landlord for a first-floor unit because of his medical issues; in the event that the elevator broke again, he could still get to his dialysis. He was told by the superintendent of the building that yes, when a first-floor unit became available, he could move into it, but it would be vacant, so he would have to pay \$100 more rent for that unit. Not only was there vacancy decontrol on his unit that he was vacating, but it was on the unit that he was going to be going into. Even though he has lived in this building for 10 years, they were going to impose this \$100-a-month increase on this man who wanted to move for medical reasons. It was like a two for one. I encouraged the man to file a complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Commission. I don't know whether that has happened to date, but I hope it has, and I hope that they are addressing it on his medical grounds.

1620

Just moving on to broader action to improve access to affordable quality housing, we need to make sure we have broad, timely action to secure affordable and safe housing for all Ontarians. Housing is becoming less and less affordable. We're told that more than 50% of people pay more than 50% of their income on rent for low- and-modest-income Ontarians. As I said earlier, the waiting lists for social housing have swelled.

In 2009, the Ontario government spent only \$64 per capita on affordable housing, which is half of what all the other provinces across Canada actually spend on affordable housing. According to the government numbers posted on the website last fall, 16,000 new and occupied units have been created under the federal housing program, but that is far short of the promise of 2003, where the Liberal government actually promised 20,000 units.

So the government needs to take action now in dealing with the crisis in housing, and there's a number of actions that it needs to take. They need to stop the erosion of federal and provincial funding for affordable housing. There has been an ongoing erosion of that federal funding support both for existing affordable houses and for new houses. Ontario has tended to follow the federal funding, and despite short-term bursts in new funding, the overall picture over the last two decades has been a steady erosion of that funding and the programs.

I can tell you of an example even in my riding. There's a building where my constituency office is located; it's called Canal View Homes. It's about a 72-

unit apartment building, and it was built on the model of a supportive housing program. For 20 years—I think about 45 of the 72 units are available for people with mental health and disability issues. Just last year the government pulled back on that funding, most of it at a federal level but some at a provincial level. Now the people who live in that housing do not have any supports in place. I'm told that they are starting to have multiple admissions again to the mental health units in our hospitals. During the 20-year period when they had supports, many of them didn't have one admission to the hospital. There's a great need, not just to build housing, but to make sure that there are supports for people with mental health and disability issues to keep them in that housing, and to keep them from recycling into hospitals and perhaps into correctional facilities.

In 2009, the Auditor General reported on the lack of access to social housing, the lack of ministry staff resources for housing programs, the lack of proper asset management and the general lack of provincial strategy to ensure sustainable long-term housing in sufficient numbers as well as well-maintained social housing units. I can tell you from my research when Bill 65 came forward, I met with numerous people in my riding and I met with ACORN here in Toronto. The message I got about some of the bad housing units that exist in many of our ridings was not very comforting: elevators that aren't operating for periods of a year or longer; people promised that they have a parking spot when they rent a unit, only to find out that they're getting ticketed on a city street; no insulation in the building, leading to \$500-a-month heating bills in the winter. So, not only do we have to have more housing, but we have to ensure that the housing we have is maintained in a respectful and appropriate manner.

I've heard from people who said, "Well, you know, that's a bylaw issue in the municipalities." We all know that municipalities are struggling as the government continues to make cuts to some of their budgets. In my own riding, we might have two bylaw officers, one of which would be responsible for something like this. So, to have one bylaw officer responsible for—I don't know—perhaps 1,000 rental units is not going to go a long way to making sure that people have good, maintained housing.

Even Don Drummond, in his 2012 report last year, raised this issue and said that the province needs to both accept its responsibility to work with municipal housing service managers and affordable housing providers to stabilize funding, and aggressively negotiate with the federal government to get them back to the table and make some investments in this important area.

I think the government should take up Mr. Drummond's recommendation and take leadership with other provinces at a federal level in negotiating a long-term national affordable housing plan with adequate funding. We as a government here in Ontario shouldn't just sit back and accept the federal Conservatives withdrawing from the need for housing across Canada. Ontario—

we're the largest province—should be a leader among the provinces in negotiating a new framework that clearly assigns the roles and responsibilities for federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments, aboriginal groups, and community and private sector interests. That was the goal of Bill C-400, an NDP private member's bill that was recently and unfortunately defeated at second reading in the House of Commons.

At the provincial level, the Minister of Health announced that ongoing funding will be provided for the Mental Health Commission's very successful Housing First project in Toronto. That's good, but the government needs to work with the federal government and communities to roll out innovative housing in all parts of Ontario and not just a small pilot in Toronto.

As I said a few minutes ago, the supportive housing piece has to be there. There's no point in rolling out a project and putting some supportive housing in place, only to say a few years later, "Oh, we can't afford that anymore, so we're going to withdraw that," and then we see those same people recycle through hospitals and through our correctional facilities at much larger cost than it would be to provide them with supports in the first place.

In the throne speech, the government—the new Premier, Premier Wynne—talked about the need to ensure that all Ontarians have access to safe and affordable housing. Unfortunately, though, it was really just some talk. There was no policy; there's no program or funding attached to her words. We need action, not words. We need to actually get results for Ontarians.

Ontario's housing policy statement, part of the so-called Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, requires all municipal service managers to have a comprehensive housing and homelessness plan in place by January 2014. Well that's good, but the government hasn't given the municipalities any useful tools to turn local plans from dreams to solid plans. I can tell you, Speaker, that I sat on the Niagara Regional Housing Board as vice-chair for five years, from 2004 to 2009, and we went through this exercise where they had to come up with a very similar plan. We jumped through all kinds of hoops to try and get it done, but it didn't result in any significant new housing development projects in Niagara or anywhere else across this province.

1630

Hon. James J. Bradley: What about that one in Welland you and I were at?

Ms. Cindy Forster: To the minister: Yes, there was one in Welland, a project—

Hon. James J. Bradley: A very good one.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes; that is a very good project.

Interjection: One.

Ms. Cindy Forster: One, though. It's a project in conjunction with Goodwill Industries. Goodwill actually has a store, and I think there are 24 seniors' apartments in that building. But we need many more of them in the Niagara region. We have more than 10,000 households on wait-lists for affordable housing.

In fact, I was at the Ukrainian-Greek Catholic church pre-Easter dinner yesterday with our good friend, the former MPP, Mr. Kormos. I was approached by several seniors there who are actually waiting to get into seniors' housing in Welland, and one of them has been waiting as long as three years. She's 90 years old. She's been waiting three years, and she said, "I may die before I ever actually get into the seniors' housing." Her choices are somewhat limited because she speaks mostly Hungarian, as do many who live in my fine city, but it's a shame that seniors are having to struggle and stay in their houses because there aren't enough units for them to actually move into, but they're not ready yet to move into a retirement facility, and they're not ill enough—

Interjection.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes, and on top of that, there's the whole home care issue as well that I hear my colleagues talking about behind me.

So there needs to be a lot more action. I think the housing plan that the government has put to the municipalities to develop by 2014—I think the government needs to actually set up some targets and they need to actually set up some funding to go along with those targets the Liberal government promised three years ago when it launched its housing plan consultations. So far, we haven't seen very much come out of that.

We need to make the capital available for that funding as well. Initially capitalized at \$500 million, the fund could be expanded and the funding criteria changed to more closely meet the housing needs in each of the areas, including new construction, repairs, renovation and green building initiatives.

Another area where we could actually make some strides in housing is, my colleague from Parkdale—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: High Park.

Ms. Cindy Forster: —High Park put forward an inclusionary zoning motion—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: And it's coming back again.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Twice?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Twice.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Twice—and it's coming back for a third time. Our party has long advocated for that, requiring developers to ensure a small percentage of affordable housing units in new developments.

The government has failed to put in place those inclusionary zoning policies, which would allow municipalities to require developers to include a minimum number. I talked about that with this article that was in the newspaper today from Simon Kent, and there is a project going forward with the co-op federation that will see 12 units in a 62-storey tower—694 condo units, 12 of which will be managed by the co-ops. So it is a very small step, and as I said before, if every one of those 157 condo projects in the province added 12 or maybe even 24 units, it would go a long way to addressing the needs of people here in the city of Toronto.

A growing number of municipalities see the inclusionary zoning as something that would generate a lot more affordable housing, and many of them actually

support it. A simple amendment to the Planning Act, as proposed by the NDP, would allow the municipalities to actually move ahead.

Now, during our election platform in 2011, we proposed a housing benefit. Affordability remains the biggest housing challenge in almost every part of the province.

This week, I was over at the YWCA to talk about their “housing first for women” project, and they were telling me about their building there. Even in a subsidized way in Toronto, a two-bedroom apartment is \$1,200 a month; a three-bedroom apartment is \$1,300. I don’t know how people, even in a subsidized setting, actually can afford to pay those rents. Speaker, I’m in the process of looking for a space in Toronto myself, and I can tell you that you cannot find anything in this downtown core that is under \$1,500, \$1,600, \$1,700. I don’t know how people who are living on low and middle incomes can actually afford to live in downtown Toronto.

A housing benefit, properly designed, would help stabilize precariously housed renter households. We heard about precarious work recently. The United Way and McMaster put out a report—I think it was in the Star last Saturday or a week ago Saturday—and it talked about how we used to think precarious employment only belonged to the low-income group. In fact, it belongs to people making between \$50,000 and \$100,000. So many of them between the ages of 25 and 65 are in precarious employment. They’re in a temporary contract; they don’t know if that contract is going to extend beyond the six months or the year that they are in it. I think that making sure there is enough affordable housing stock across this province is a way to assist people who find themselves in this precarious employment, along with moving forward with making sure that people have work that isn’t precarious.

I just want to end by talking about the importance of the co-ops to housing and to our communities. Across Canada, 2,100 co-ops are available and are home—and I say “home,” not “house”—to a quarter of a million people in over 90,000 households. There are 550 co-ops across the province, with 47,000 units and 125,000 residents. They cost less to operate—14% less than municipal or private non-profit housing, according to a CMHC study, and successive program evaluations by CMHC found that co-ops provide a platform for residents to develop many new skills and acquire organizational experience and gainful employment.

I can tell you that in my own riding in Niagara, Niagara Regional Housing, which manages a number of co-ops in my area, has several really good programs where they’ve been able to lift women out of poverty with skills training and with assisting them in opening small businesses. They do a great job in that area, and there really is an improved sense of community and better relations with neighbours. There are social supports available that I talk about the great need for when we’re looking at some of these programs. As direct stakeholders, members are motivated to act responsibly.

They are able to kind of discuss their issues at co-op board meetings and to work collectively to actually run their co-ops. In that way, they keep the costs down for themselves, as well as for the co-op. They have a proven track record of providing a supply of permanently affordable housing, creating mixed stable-income communities in cities and towns throughout Ontario.

Unfortunately, the existing affordable housing program is oriented toward private sector developers and municipal governments that can contribute equity and have the capacity to develop proposals in a way no community-based sponsor can compete with. This has resulted, to a great extent, in small-scale community-based housing proponents being totally shut out of the project, and the co-ops have been particularly disadvantaged. Municipalities and perhaps provincial governments need to make vacant land available to co-ops to actually level out the playing field for them.

1640

I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to this issue today, thank the minister for bringing the issue forward—although I wish we had been able to deal with it in the last session—and thank our friends from the co-op for being tenacious and bringing it forward again. Hopefully, we can move debate along really quickly and get this going.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener-Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It’s a pleasure to get up and have an opportunity to speak to this important piece of legislation. Like many of my colleagues in this House, I wish that it had happened in the fall, but there’s some urgency, so let’s get this done. It’s good to see that there actually may be some consensus, because I think that the province is looking for that.

Bill 14, though: We’ve already highlighted some of the weaknesses. I want to commend the member from Welland for touching on almost every piece of the bill that needs attention, everything from violence against women to the need for senior care to youth care.

But I just wanted to touch on the fact that co-ops truly are communities. What we’ve seen from the research and what we’ve seen from anecdotal stories from all of our ridings across the province is that people definitely feel supported in those settings. They feel supported because they know they’re not alone, and in today’s society, isolation is a growing issue. We have aging demographics; we have an aging population. I think that the vision for co-ops and this model of housing is the vision that we should be embracing for youth, for seniors and for families.

I want to do a special shout-out to the executive director of the YWCA in Kitchener-Waterloo. She rightly pointed out last week that the only way that we are going to lift women out of poverty and stabilize the lives of children in our communities is by building affordable, stable housing, and co-ops are definitely a part of that model. Certainly, we’ve seen over the years that shelters have seen more and more children. Shelters just aren’t

built or equipped to deal with children entering their doors, so let's stay focused on a true model that will bring equity and stability to our communities, and that is the co-op model.

I recently mentioned that I met with a local co-op group; there were some students at the table, and it was really refreshing. Students have that new voice, that new energy. I'd like to commend the Central Ontario Co-op Housing Federation, because every year they provide a co-op opportunity to go to camp—a student goes to camp; they learn leadership skills. They're focused on this very progressive model of housing, and they also provide a diversity scholarship for co-op youth attending a post-secondary institution. Co-ops are very much a part of the fabric of this province. While it's great that we're going to move this legislation forward, I think that we can be honest about the place that we are in in the province and that we can do better. We have some catching up to do when you look at the country as a whole.

One of the points that a student made that was so clear for me is that when you have a student co-op model, the students within that setting truly feel connected to the community. As they transition out of their public education experience into university, the research has been very clear: It's a time of stress, and it's a time of insecurity. We're seeing a lack of resiliency, if you will, from a mental health perspective. The student co-op housing movement needs to be a part of the vision. Wherever we go from this point forward, student co-op housing needs to be part of that equation.

Seniors, when you look at the demographics of this province—just last Friday, I was knocking on doors, meeting constituents and talking about our five-day home care guarantee. I was knocking on doors where these seniors should have been in a supportive housing model—a co-op model—where they wouldn't feel isolated, where they wouldn't feel disconnected, where health professionals could come into their housing and provide support, much like the model that we proposed around our five-day home care guarantee. Seniors deserve it. There has to be some dignity. There has to be some integrity at the end of their lives, when they've built the communities that they're living in. We have a responsibility to create that supportive-housing model around them.

Actually, it makes a lot of sense. It makes financial sense. You can argue the right and the wrong of this issue, the morality of the issue, but it actually makes economic sense. To my colleagues to the right, I make a financial statement: Early intervention, prevention, in a co-op housing model for seniors is the right way to go—for seniors, for students.

There are some ongoing issues, though, that we see in our current housing units. In KW we have nine co-ops. We have 1,129 units. Many of those units need maintenance; they need upkeep. The funding just hasn't been there, despite the best efforts of the members of those co-ops.

I was knocking on doors just recently. It adds to the sense of despair that people have when they're living in housing that is not reflective of the kind of lives that they want to live. Certainly, this is already a public investment. There's an investment in the capital of co-op housing, so let's take care of it and let's accelerate that funding so that we can actually maintain the housing that we've already built. Clearly, there's a need to improve and to grow the number of co-op units that we have, but there's also a responsibility to take care of the units that we have currently.

In Kitchener–Waterloo, in the absence of federal leadership, which is not supporting C-400—it makes no sense whatsoever. It doesn't make common sense; it doesn't make financial sense. It's disappointing that at the federal level, a progressive country like Canada does not have a national housing strategy. It makes it difficult for the province to actually work with that level of government when there's no vision, there's no integrity and there's no idea how a smart investment in housing will stabilize the economy, stabilize our communities, contribute to the safety of our communities.

It's disappointing, for sure, that C-400 did not get the support that it needed, but I have faith that one day it will happen, because we're not going to give up on housing. Housing is a major plank for our party and for the direction that we are going in.

I want to make a point around Kitchener–Waterloo: We have local champions. In the absence of federal leadership, the absence of provincial leadership, we have, in all of our communities—I'm sure you can point to activists and advocates for housing. In Kitchener–Waterloo, we have the Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group. This is a group of people who are advocates, who have a lived experience of being homeless and who have a true understanding of how important the co-op model is to the integrity of their community and the safety of their community.

Finally, I just want to point one thing out: Because we haven't had leadership on the co-op housing issue, we actually have seniors living in three-bedroom co-op apartments. So we have seniors who are being over-housed, when families need that housing, because we have not developed co-op models for seniors—one-bedroom, single-person dwellings. We can do a lot more in this regard. So while I was disappointed that this order, this piece of legislation, died through prorogation—I hope that never happens again. Look at the conversations that we're going through; it's like Groundhog Day here, although I wasn't here for that, so now it sounds a little better.

I look forward to working on this portfolio. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your time and attention.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to contribute to the conversation on Bill 14. I want to commend the member from Welland. I always enjoy listening to her, and she did a great job in touching every point about co-op

housing and giving a good background and explanation on how those things can benefit our communities if we look at the option of having more co-op housing.

I wanted to touch base on the fact that since 1997 all forms of rental housing evictions have been moved out of the court system and put in the rental housing tribunal because that type of dispute goes through the Landlord and Tenant Board under the Residential Tenancies Act, and that's really where this belongs. Co-op is a little different than a private landlord-tenant relationship, but yet it's similar. Having a dispute between someone who owns the property and someone who lives in the property shouldn't be as cumbersome as going through courts. It shouldn't be that lengthy of a process. I mean, some of this can take up to three months. It's very stressful for the tenant, it's very stressful for the co-op and it's very costly for both parties. Oftentimes, tenants don't have those resources to have that dispute in the courts, and then it's unbalanced.

1650

Moving this bill, having this bill introduced and shifting to the Landlord and Tenant Board to deal with these disputes is a logical, balanced way of doing it, especially with the new amendment that we saw where tenants' fees for applications to file to the Landlord and Tenant Board are waived. As we said several times today, there are many low-income families and single parents in co-op housing, where that type of difference—paying for an application versus not paying for an application—makes it more feasible.

I know co-op groups have been fighting for this type of amendment since 2004. They want this type of dispute resolution process to go to the Landlord and Tenant Board so that budgets in a co-op complex can be forecasted.

I also met with a co-op group in London over the summer, or actually in September of last year when the House was prorogued, and that co-op board really articulated the concerns of budgeting and how they forecast budgeting when they can't control the costs of a tenant dispute in a co-op complex. One case was mentioned at one time that it cost almost \$50,000 for a particular case in a co-op complex to be resolved. So how can you plan your budget if that could even be an example that could come your way?

I know a lot of the co-ops wanted to use the money for repairs in their co-op. They wanted to make it better for the people who lived in the co-op. They didn't want to spend their time and their money in the courts fighting out tenant and landlord issues that could be sent to the proper venue of the Landlord and Tenant Board, where it can get easily resolved and where the expertise is. That's the other thing. Where we're fighting these types of things now in the courts, there is not the expertise. This is, I believe, one of the last areas that are still going to the courts rather than the Landlord and Tenant Board, where it should be.

So you have judges perhaps—we know they're very intelligent people—who maybe don't see this on a

regular basis and their expertise, perhaps, is a little rusty. So having that come out of the courts for economic reasons, for timelines for people and also expertise—landlord and tenant boards do this every day, and that's where these disputes belong.

We've talked about how healthy co-op complexes are in our communities. People who live in a group—you're going to have that friendship, you're going to know your neighbour because you are in close quarters. It is a much healthier, much more positive environment, and I think it's also great for families, because if I lived in a co-op and my son or my daughter was across the street playing with the neighbour, that's a much safer environment rather than maybe me driving, or them taking the bus to where their friends are and coming back. So they can just walk across the street—they've got a curfew—and they just trek back home. Those are healthy environments that we create when we have the co-op group effort, when people work together to make this a healthy environment for everyone.

The other thing that I wanted to mention is affordable housing, as the member from Welland mentioned. There isn't enough affordable housing, I think, in Ontario and probably in all of Canada. Affordable housing is really an essential survival piece of everyone's sense of well-being. If you don't have a home, Speaker, a lot of the other things start to unravel.

I know a few of my constituents who have been in dire straits, in shelters, and they did get a placement in affordable housing. What a world of difference that makes to their self-esteem, to their confidence, to their sense of peace, because they have a permanent home where they live. They're actually working in a precarious job. They don't have benefits; it's a part-time job. Affordable housing takes 30% of their income, which is huge because right now in London in a Cherryhill complex, in a seniors' complex—it's very well known in London, and there are many seniors who live there—there are seniors who are going to be protesting a 10% increase in their rent. One senior in the article has said he spends 75% of his income on housing, on rent.

Interjection: It's not sustainable.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: That is not sustainable. How can we expect people who are struggling on fixed incomes to stretch their dollars that far just to have a home?

Affordable housing is truly a key piece in our society so people can actually move on to bigger and better things. When you have that solid base, you have a roof over your head, you've got that stability, you can actually think about going back to school, upgrading your job and not having that worry of where your children are going to sleep and if you are going to have a roof over your heads for yourself and your family.

Speaker, I think this is a good bill and I'm glad it has been brought back to the House. I'm hoping that our time here is coming to an end shortly, that we do move this bill forward for the sake of the tenants living in co-op housing and for the sake of the co-op complexes, and making life easier for people who live there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm very pleased to be able to speak on Bill 14 today. As you know, I represent Ottawa–Vanier. Ottawa–Vanier is downtown Ottawa, and I have many, many co-ops. I think that's the best model, because for people who live in co-op housing, it's like living in their own home—and I welcome the people from the co-op association here. I have many. I can tell you about Coop Voisins, which is close to the university campus; co-op Beausoleil; co-op Brebeuf, which is located in Lowertown; co-op Desloges; co-op de LaSalle—and I can go on and on and on. I think most of the co-ops in Ottawa are in my riding. That's the most beautiful model of affordable housing.

When I was a municipal councillor and we were planning a development and there was a co-op going into that area, there was no objection from anyone, because people knew that people were going to live in the co-op. They are proud of their housing, and they take part in the maintenance of the housing. They are also concerned about their neighbours. So it's a wonderful model, and I was always very supportive of this.

I'm glad about this bill and what it will do for those people who are on the boards of directors of the co-ops and those who are the tenants in the co-ops.

I'll be speaking later a bit more about my support for co-op housing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to add a few comments to the conversation today on Bill 14, the non-profit housing co-operatives bill. I would also like to welcome the representatives here today from the Co-operative Housing Federation, who have been here this afternoon to listen to this debate.

I have several co-op housing organizations in my riding of Whitby–Oshawa, and I have had the pleasure of meeting with representatives from the co-ops and with Mr. Harvey Cooper on a couple of occasions to talk about several of the issues that are of concern to them, primarily being the one that results in evictions being very difficult when you have to go through the courts. I certainly support the concept that there should be a more expedited way of doing that, to not have to go through the court process. Notwithstanding the fact that I'm a lawyer, I think it makes a lot of sense to have it moved into the landlord and tenant tribunal so that things can be dealt with, first of all, in a more expeditious manner. We all know that when matters go through the courts, it often takes years before issues are resolved, and when you're dealing with evictions or dealing with other issues that co-operative housing organizations have to deal with, they need to be dealt with in a more timely fashion.

Of course, there's also the issue of cost. It costs a lot to go to court these days, which is probably a subject we could address at another time. Justice is becoming increasingly unaffordable for people. At least in this

instance it provides a venue where these things can be dealt with in a cost-effective manner.

1700

I listened to the member from Welland, who was speaking about the need to have something in front of people who actually know this issue inside and out, so they can make good decisions around it.

So while there are things that we could probably talk about, some amendments that we would like to see in committee, I think it is something that we all can generally agree on. It is an issue that—it was prorogued before, but we need to deal with it now. It's timely and I think I would like to see it into committee as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to touch on two points. I'd like to touch on access to justice, which has been raised a number of times, and also on the idea of co-operative housing.

On the access-to-justice piece, I think it's very important to recognize that access to justice is becoming more and more difficult for those who are less fortunate. Accessing court systems is quite complicated and quite expensive, and because of that, we need to find alternate methods which are more accessible and which are more cost-effective. I think a number of members in this House have raised this issue in solidarity or in agreement, and I think that's important to address. If we can find methods or means to provide people with access to a way of dealing with their disputes that does not require accessing courts—which are quite expensive and costly and take a lot of time—I think that's a very important initiative and I support that. I think we all agree on that, and this legislation looks like it will support that type of initiative.

In addition, and I think many people agree on this point, I want to add my voice in agreement that the co-operative housing model is an amazing way to address some of the affordable housing issues. It's not the only way. I think we need to have a multi-tier approach to affordable housing, but certainly co-operative housing can address those concerns in a very innovative and creative way, and I think it's working already in many communities. Many examples have been shared today of co-operative housing and how effective they have been at providing housing in a number of communities across Ontario. I think we need to support those initiatives any way that we can and look at other ways of ensuring that the people of Ontario have affordable housing, that it's not just a luxury or a privilege, but people should have a right to affordable housing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I heard the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton on the radio station CKTV this morning, and he was sounding much more moderate on the issue of auto

insurance than his leader, whom somebody has coached to have a more scolding and angry voice these days when making demands of the government. So I want to commend him on his reasonableness on radio this morning. I was disappointed that he didn't say that the NDP was going to bring in public auto insurance, because that was, of course, in the heart of NDP policy. But I digress from the topic at hand. I apologize for that, because the speeches were very good in the House so far on the issue of this particular bill.

Co-op housing in our part of the province, the Niagara Peninsula, is highly successful, as the member for Welland—I always want to change the name of the riding. I'll zero in on the member for Welland, who has said there are a number of developments in our part of the province which have been highly successful. The people involved are extremely proud, and should be, of the housing developments that are there, the co-op housing developments which allow people to own their own property but be part of a co-op and to have all the benefits that a co-op offers. I want to commend the leadership within these co-ops, because it is a responsibility that people must take on.

When Harvey Cooper has spoken and others have spoken here at Queen's Park when they have come to visit with us, they have been very compelling in their arguments for the need for this particular provision. I want to assure him and his group that, while I'm not supposed to say what happens in cabinet, I did not recall hearing a dissenting voice when this was brought forward for consideration.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One of the New Democrats has two minutes to respond.

The member for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thanks to the members from London–Fanshawe and Kitchener–Waterloo, the minister of community safety, corrections and francophone affairs, the member from Whitby–Oshawa, the members from Bramalea–Gore–Malton and St. Catharines, and the Minister of the Environment.

The Minister of the Environment talked about the successful projects that we've had in Niagara. I can tell you, having sat on the Niagara Regional Housing board for a number of years, that we have had some successful projects, but we could have had hundreds of successful projects had we actually had the money to move forward with them.

I can remember one expression of interest that went out probably in the last year that I sat on the board, where we had at least 100 applicants come forward. I think, at the end of the day, we moved forward with maybe six projects because that was all the money that was available. Certainly, the need is much greater than that.

But I want to reiterate and go back to the co-op piece. This has been a long time coming: 10 years since it was first brought forward by the co-op federation. I think the bill will actually improve speed, efficiency and fairness—all of those things—for tenants. It'll save money for tenants and co-ops and will also save money generally for taxpayers.

I say let's move this along and get it into committee. Everyone had an opportunity to actually speak to it when it was Bill 65, so hopefully we won't be at this for 20 hours, and we can get it into committee quickly and have the other discussions that we need to have there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'll be sharing my time on Bill 14 today with the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, who is also the minister responsible for francophone affairs.

It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 14, the Non-Profit Housing Co-operatives Statute Law Amendment Act, 2013. What I've heard of the discussion this afternoon around the chamber is that it is meeting with a degree of approval from all parties, I think. Some people are saying that it's long overdue; some people, in a sense, are saying that perhaps it goes a little too far; and some are saying it doesn't go far enough. So, chances are, that's a good indication that where it is at this point in time is just about right, and it should move forward. As a previous speaker stated, let's move this on through the committee process. Let's take another look at it, and then let's turn it into legislation.

It's interesting: In Canada we have a number of choices when it comes to the type of housing that we prefer. There are people that have and always will prefer to own a home outright, and they can go from luxury homes to those of modest incomes. Some people prefer to rent all their lives. Some people prefer to lease. And for some people, one of the options that has been available to us now for some time as a society is that of being a member in a co-operative housing—"project" wouldn't be the word—a co-operative housing community.

Over the years, I think it has proven—certainly in the town of Oakville, and from what I've heard from other people who have spoken in the chamber today, the success of co-ops in their own community is something that I think we should all be proud of. Oakville is no exception to that. There's a number of co-operative housing ventures in Oakville that are a part of the community. They've been a part of the community for some time, and provide an option in housing that a lot of people find very, very attractive.

What's being proposed today under Bill 14 is a way to make a system of housing that we think is very good better and to improve upon it. As I said, there are people who think perhaps we could make more improvements or less, but this seems to me to be a balanced approach that's going to bring certainly a lot more efficiency and accountability to the process—accessibility, transparency, the things that we would like to see in any process or any piece of legislation that's passed in this House.

What it does specifically, is it allows for the option—and it amends the Residential Tenancies Act and the Co-operative Corporations Act. It will allow the movement of most co-op disputes to the Landlord and Tenant Board. What that means is that it won't have to go through the expensive route of going through the courts.

It also would allow for the added benefit to co-op members of being able to access mediation services along the way to perhaps even try to resolve any issues that arise along the way without even having to resort to the Landlord and Tenant Board or to the courts themselves.

1710

If you take it out of the co-operative setting, it's got the added benefit of allowing our overburdened court system to spend its time on something else. So it unplugs the system, not only to the benefit of those people who are members of a co-op, but it helps the justice system too. It allows the justice system to do more with less time, obviously.

Some examples of resolutions of disputes that would now be able to be dealt with by the LBT, or the Landlord and Tenant Board, would be such things as arrears, persistent late payment of rent, illegal behaviour of any kind, interfering with reasonable enjoyment of the co-operative and of course wilful damage, which is something that I think nobody wants to see but obviously is a problem—an issue that does arise from time to time—that can now be dealt with by the LTB. It can be sent to the LTB instead of through the court system.

Those issues that can't be provided for under the Residential Tenancies Act will still have the option to go through the courts. So it's not like we're replacing one option with the other; what we're doing is giving increased flexibility by passing this.

The reaction I'm aware of from stakeholders on this issue is quite positive. Everybody, I think, supports the program—everyone I've seen. CMHC, the Ontario Co-operative Association, the opposition parties, the government—I understand there's an awful lot of support for this at the staff level—the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario: Everybody seems to be in support of this move taking place.

Some previous speakers have outlined the amount of time it has taken us to get to this point, and I think there's some validity to that criticism. But it seems that now that we have this on the floor—we've got three parties in some rough agreement on this—the wisdom of those advising that we should allow this to move forward, I think, is the opinion we should be favouring.

I'm quite excited about this, and I know that some people have been supporting this for quite some time and have been advising us that we should move forward with this. Some people are saying that 2003-04 is when the journey to this began, when the advice started to come from the co-operatives themselves that there was a better way of doing this. It's probably taken more time than it should have to reach this point, but I don't think that should be a reason at all for us stopping now. I think now is the time to move forward.

We've had this before us in the past on a number of occasions from a number of parties. We've had private members' bills approximating this, and now I think we're actually in the position where it's time to move this forward through second reading, on to third reading and

then on to royal assent. I think the furthest it's got in the past is second reading—the same bill under a different number, Bill 65, I think was mentioned in the past.

I think that any time we can take advantage of where we can make something that is working well work better, we as legislators should seize that opportunity. That's what this allows us to do here. The co-operatives, those people who are most knowledgeable about the co-operative housing movement themselves, understand the important role that co-operative housing plays in an overall affordable housing policy for the province of Ontario. The advice they're giving us is that by passing Bill 14 we'll be strengthening the underpinnings, the foundation, of the co-operative housing movement, and that can't help but be a good thing. I think it lays a foundation that is going to solidify these organizations and allow them to continue to provide the housing options they have in the past.

Stakeholder support is high, as I've said, and the proposals that are being brought forward, I think, are very sensible, very well thought out; they're process-oriented in a lot of ways. I think it really is time to just let this happen, just allow it to happen, give it the support of the House, allow it to move to the committee stage. If there are any suggestions coming from the opposition parties, or indeed the government, in the form of amendments at that point in time, that would be the time and place to allow that to happen. There's nothing wrong with making a good bill a better bill. I think the people in Ontario are expecting us as a Legislature to work together, to bring our best to this place, to listen to each other. We have the owl and the eagle on either side sort of looking at us here, which is a sign that we should be listening to each other; we should be learning from each other.

This, I think, is probably the sort of bill that is needed right now, given the friction in the House over the past year or so and the almost inability of the House to function in a minority situation. I think it's kind of refreshing to see a bill come forward that's got support from all three parties, that allows us to work together. That's what Ontarians are really hoping that we're able to do on a number of bills. This, I think, gives us the opportunity to show to the people of Ontario that we do have the ability to work together when a bill is brought forward in a form that the opposition parties find is something they can be supportive of, something that they can pass comment on, something that they can perhaps suggest amendments to or improve upon. That is the way that people in the province of Ontario, from all political stripes, envision this place operating.

As I said, Speaker, I'm sharing my time with the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, who's also the minister responsible for francophone affairs. I'll sit down now, but I just wanted to encourage all members of the House who are present and those who may be listening on TV: Those members of the public should have a level of confidence that this is a well-thought-out piece of legislation that's going to mean nothing but good things for the co-operative housing

movement in the future and allow the people who are co-operative members to be able to facilitate any sort of discussions they have in the future or disputes they have in the future in a better way, in a more transparent way, and that can't help but be a good thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the Minister of Community Safety.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Président. Thank you very much. Again, I welcome the people from the co-op organizations here today. I think that our paths cross often, because I've been to many of these 20th anniversaries, 30th anniversaries, 10th anniversaries of the co-ops in my riding, and it's always a pleasure.

It's a pleasure to have so many co-ops in my riding because for me, that's the best model of affordable housing in a community. As I said previously, when there is a co-op project which is going up in one part of my riding, you never hear anything. The neighbours are happy because they know that they will act as owners. Everybody takes much pride in their property—and it's a good model also for those who want to buy their own house later on. They can save money because it's not as expensive, and most of them pay according to their income, so it's kind of a transition, a stepping stone for something else. Others much prefer to stay there—they know their neighbours—and there are rarely vacant units. The list of people waiting to go into co-op housing, their applications, is always very long.

Like I said, this bill, Bill 14, is very much needed. If passed, it will allow co-operative boards to apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board to resolve tenure disputes that are currently provided for under the Residential Tenancies Act. I know that everywhere I went, the board or the provincial association were asking me for that, because it's too expensive. It's expensive for the board and it's expensive also to those tenants there because they have to go to the court. Sometimes they cannot, so they just accept what the board is saying; or the board will tolerate someone who does not pay their rent or whatever because it's too expensive to go to the court to have this person expelled from the co-op.

Mr. Speaker, in Ontario, there are approximately 125,000 people who live in co-op housing. I was surprised to see that there were just 125,000. We should have more, and we should encourage you to encourage the co-ops in your riding to apply and look at other pieces of land to build these projects.

1720

In addition, if Bill 14 is passed, the proposed legislation will allow the Landlord and Tenant Board to waive or defer the fees, if charged, in specific circumstances and in accordance with its rules. That's another good addition, because some of them cannot afford it. They just have their money to pay for the rent, so taking the money to apply—it's often less that they will put on their food bill that week or that month. So I welcome this addition.

I just wanted to speak about some co-ops in my riding and to show how great the program is working. For

instance, I'm talking about the Co-op Beausoleil, which has been there for quite a long time. They finished paying the mortgage on the co-op, so they were able to borrow the money to renovate all the units. They put in new kitchens; they put in new windows, and they do improve.

Why is this so wonderful? It's because the co-op is administered by occupants of the co-op. They know the needs, they knew that they wanted to improve it, and they know that for quality of life, a lot depends on the state of their units. Also, they have pride in their co-op and they don't want the co-op to deteriorate.

A good friend of mine and a great supporter, Maurice Pagé, has been living there since day one and has been the manager there for a long time; he is still involved.

Through that, they were able to get involved in building a health unit close by. So, as you can see, they are building their own community. They started with the co-op, and now they're building their own community. They're very much involved with Le Patro, which is right next door. They sit on the board of Le Patro. One of the brothers of the Patro also lives in the co-op. So it's a very nice community model.

I hope that everybody in this room will be supporting. At the beginning of the afternoon, I thought that we were all on the same page. I suggest that we may move third reading this afternoon so that there will be no danger—the government does not last too long, at least this bill—

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Do you know something we don't know, Madame?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: We don't wish. But as you know, in a minority government, you never know.

Don't you agree with me? You will be supportive this afternoon, at a quarter to 6, when the minister will get up and say, "I move third reading of this bill"?

There's nothing contentious in it. I know that some may be hesitant because of the waiving of the charge. I know that sometimes, some people will take advantage of the fact that they don't have to pay when they want to challenge the board of the co-op. But in a perfect world, we have to give some and we get some back.

I am very much in favour. As the member of the third party from—where?

Interjection: Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: —Bramalea–Gore–Malton was saying, this is one of the multi-tier approaches to social housing. I know that co-ops do not fit—are not proper for everyone, because in every downtown we have all sorts of social housing. That's a very good one, but for some reason, for those who need other supports, it may not be the right model.

But for the majority—we have a co-op with a lot of students close to the university. La Coop Voisins has a lot of university students who live there. As you all remember, when you were at university you didn't have much money, but the students are there helping their neighbours in the co-op. Some are helping with income tax; some are helping with babysitting; some are helping with activities.

There are some other co-ops where most of the people there are now retired and are seniors, but there are young families coming in because it's often the only place where you have units that have three bedrooms or four bedrooms. Especially for newcomers, who often have larger families, they need a three- or four-bedroom unit, and often that's the only place that they can find the proper housing for them.

I hope that we will not defer this too long and that we will all support the bill put forward by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and we will help all our friends who live in co-ops and we will help all my constituents in Ottawa–Vanier who also are on the boards of co-ops or live in co-ops. Thank you for being here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's an honour to rise to respond to the discussion by the member from Oakville and the Minister of Community Safety.

When we look back, this bill was first introduced early enough last year by the then Minister of Municipal Affairs, now the Premier, Kathleen Wynne. We talk about the importance in moving the disagreements or the challenges out of the courts. As I think my honourable colleague mentioned, millions of dollars are spent every year. The prorogation has been a waste of the effort. It's costing the residents of the co-op much money that needs to be looked at—and our courts. We have a backlog in courts.

I'd like to talk about one of the success stories of my riding with the Brookdale tenants' association, whom I met with on February 6. This is a co-operative that paid off their mortgage a number of years ago and they've been able to reward or have been able to give their tenants a very low income. The success is so great that the members are now becoming older and looking at ways of keeping them or allowing them to stay there by looking at some renovations that would allow them to add handicapped washrooms and utilities. It speaks to just how successful the program has been and how we should look at this co-op program as being a great alternative for many areas. Unfortunately, we have very limited facilities in Cornwall, in my riding, but it would be a great initiative to expand that.

The residents are very happy. You look at the volunteer time they put in to make the situation work, the improvements they've done over the years. It's a great organization and I wanted to commend them, in my short two minutes, for the work they've done in the past and the work they are looking to do in the future to make it an even better place and provide more services for the residents. So thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to rise and address this measure. I want to say to the representatives of the co-op housing movement here today that, in part, this is a story straight out of Greek mythology. Sisyphus

continues to roll the boulder towards the brow of the hill. It is our hope that, at this try, you actually get it to the top of the hill.

1730

Minister Meilleur was perhaps being very subtle in suggesting that we expedite the passage of this bill, given the unpredictability of government in these times, and certainly the unpredictability we have seen in the last six months.

Speaker, we've debated the substance of this bill in the past. We know that non-profit housing co-operatives provide good-quality, democratically controlled housing for residents. Housing is a critical need across this province. Making sure that housing is affordable by eliminating costly and unnecessary steps, giving co-op housing members the benefit of access to a lower-cost tribunal—landlord-tenant bureau—makes a lot of sense, Mr. Speaker.

The co-op housing movement has done tremendous work to try and ensure that people have a foundation in their lives for stability, for growth, for success, and this very small step for the province as a whole is of material assistance to those who live in co-op housing.

I agree with the minister. Let's get on with this debate. Let's get through to committee. Let's expedite this process so that this Sisyphean task will come to an end. There will be success and, frankly, savings of money for everyone all around in this society.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm very pleased to be here and given an opportunity to speak in support of Bill 14. Like the previous speakers, my colleague from Oakville and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services—it is very clear from all the speakers this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, there is clear support of this bill and what the intent of this bill is.

Just this past Friday I met with the Bridletowne co-op members in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, and they urged each one of us—the 105 of us—to expedite this bill because, as we heard this afternoon, there is interest, but more than just interest; there is an urgent need to move this bill along. We have heard from the opposition parties, Mr. Speaker, and given it's a minority government, the opposition colleagues of ours have all indicated express interest that we should move this debate forward to go to committee, so that they can tinker with it and hopefully bring the bill back to the House for a final vote.

The other piece here, Mr. Speaker, is, if the intent of everybody in this House is to move this along, let's not delay the discussion in committee. Let's not move this from the process of debate in the House and continue debate in committee, because, at the end of the day, the intent is to pass it before too long, and at the same time, to support the co-op community because they have asked us numerous times to expedite the process of disputes.

So let's not continue more debate; the debate is here, but more importantly, when we go to committee, let's not

delay the whole conversation and tease out more clause by clause and drag this out in committee, because we want to pass this bill.

I want to thank the co-op community and say thank you for your leadership, but also recognize the minister for her continuous work on this file. At the end of the day, this is where the leadership is at.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question and comment, and I look to the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Speaker. It's my pleasure to comment. I have to say that I agree with my colleague from Toronto–Danforth; it does seem like a pretty big boulder at the bottom of the hill going straight up, considering that this Liberal government said in 2007 that they wanted to make this happen. I've heard, "Let's not delay," "Let's not talk," "Let's not add a whole bunch of bureaucracy." I think you maybe just need to look in the mirror and go backwards a little bit. Most of the times when we stand in the House that's what we are asking for: Let's get rid of the bureaucracy, let's get rid of the waste of administration, let's stop the rhetoric and the words, let's put action on the table and move forward.

The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services—it might have been a Freudian slip; I was trying to get the Minister of Energy's attention to see if he was going to bring his paper down to see if there was some truth to that, that there may be a prorogation in sight again. Let's hope not. We just got back to work.

The hope is, and the co-op folks here today—on their behalf, I hope truly that we can move this forward. They do great work; it's a great service. But I think any time we introduce this legislation—I said it in my earlier comments—we need to do it with balance. We need to do it so that each side has an ability to have input; so that when we put legislation forward, it's efficient, it's timely and it's serving the true people who are actually going to take benefit from this.

We will be supporting, from my perspective, this bill. We do want to see some province-wide hearings to ensure that there is, in fact, an ability to amend some of these before they go forward so that people are actually getting the service they need at the end of the day.

It's great to say all the right buzzwords. But at the end of the day—2007 and we're still not seeing this bill enforced and implemented. You can say all you want about me talking, but at the end of the day, you're the government, you've had the ability to implement and you have not got the job done.

My hope is that we will have discussion in committee, we will move it forward quickly and we will get this through before, once again, the government prorogues and takes all of those great bills off the table like they did last fall.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments.

I return to the member for Oakville, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Once again, it is a pleasure to respond to those members who expressed an opinion on the comments that were given: the Minister of Community Safety; the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound; the members from Toronto–Danforth, Scarborough–Agincourt and Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Based on the comments I've heard all afternoon, and based on the most recent comments, I have a sense that Bill 14 is going to move forward. I think that there's some level of unanimity that it should move forward. I'm not sure I agree with the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound that we want to hurry up and have province-wide hearings; I think we want to hurry up and get this bill passed. I think it has taken 10 years for us to get this far.

I come from a community that has a great community in that community of Oakville, and it's called Glen Abbey. There's a famous golf course there; the Canadian Opens are held there—a beautiful golf course. Glen Abbey has a range of housing, from quite affordable housing to quite expensive housing. But what a lot of people don't know is that when the community was first forming in the 1980s, one of the very first buildings that took place in the community of Glen Abbey was actually a co-operative housing organization. When the community was very, very young and the homes were just being built and people were just starting to get to know each other as neighbours, they actually used the community centre for the co-op housing as a meeting place. It was a place that drew people together, and I think—obviously, it's part of the name: co-operative housing—it allows people to co-operate with each other in a co-operative way.

I'm hoping that as a result of the co-operation that we've seen here today, this piece of legislation is going to go through at a fairly rapid rate, is going to receive royal assent and is going to allow these organizations to avail themselves fully of the benefits that are contained in this bill.

My thanks to the other speakers for their support for this initiative.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise and join the debate here today on the Non-Profit Housing Co-operatives Statute—Bill 14. I want to also commend the people here today representing the Co-operative Housing Federation. They're very patient. They have stayed with us all afternoon, and that's to be commended. That doesn't always happen. That's Mr. Harvey Cooper, Dale Reagan, Diane Miles and Judy Shaw and all the people they represent across this great province. I appreciate their time and effort in being here today.

I also want to commend, first of all, my colleague the critic of municipal affairs and housing and the member for Leeds–Grenville for his very insightful comments leading off this debate today, and also all of the debate that took place here today from all three parties. I listened

quite intently to the biggest share of it, and it was very interesting.

I know that this bill, in its previous iteration, was one of the 109 bills that the former Premier, the member for Ottawa South, deemed unnecessary when the prorogation of the Legislature took place. I hope for the sake of the new Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing that the debate is not interrupted again by any prorogation of the House.

Co-op housing is an important option for residents in our province who need access to affordable housing. Whether it is an effect of skyrocketing home prices in the GTA, or the lack of job creation and economic growth in Ontario during the last decade of the McGuinty-Wynne government, increasingly families are having difficulty finding housing options that they can afford.

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As an affordable housing option, housing co-operatives are not-for-profit organizations in which members do not own equity in their residence, but agree to be active members of that co-op community. In return, residents are expected to participate in the regular administration and maintenance of this community. If residents move, their home is returned to the co-op to be offered to another individual or family who needs an affordable home.

Some co-op members pay reduced monthly rent that's based on their income, with the government funding the difference. Because these co-ops are non-profit, co-ops charge members only enough to recover the cost of repairs, as well as ensuring that they can sustain a reserve of some funds. The result is that they provide housing that can be more affordable, which is why we need to champion them as a very important part of Ontario's affordable housing strategy.

Further, co-ops are democratic organizations that are controlled by their own members. Every member has a vote in decisions about their housing, including electing that co-op's board of directors. Each housing co-operative is a legal organization incorporated as a co-op.

The Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada states that there are currently more than 550 non-profit housing co-operatives in the province, which add up to a total of almost 44,000 households in which more than 125,000 people live. I think it's important to reiterate the fact that there is co-operative housing in 95 of Ontario's 107 ridings, so it's very important. It affects 90% of the MPPs in this place and also all of their residents and constituents. So co-ops provide a very valuable mix in our communities.

To be local a little bit—as Tip O'Neill from Congress used to say, “All politics is local”—in my riding of Sarnia–Lambton, as a housing option, co-op housing makes up a small but very important percentage of residential units in that community. In total, we have four co-op apartment arrangements in Sarnia. We have the Alexander MacKenzie Housing Co-operative; Hoskins Housing Co-operative; Faethorne Place Housing Co-operative; and St. Clair Meadows Housing Co-operative.

Together, these four co-ops have about 200 units that help to meet the geared-to-income needs of families in my community.

The need for affordable housing continues to be high to this day in my community. Currently—I just spoke to the manager as early as this morning in Sarnia–Lambton—there are at least 450 families in Sarnia–Lambton on a waiting list for affordable housing. This means, regrettably, that most families in need of affordable housing wait about two years to find places to live that they can afford. If, as a by-product of this bill, those families will have a better chance of finding affordable housing sooner, then along with my colleagues in the PC caucus, I want to see this bill move into committee so it can be fully reviewed.

In speaking with my colleague the critic for municipal affairs and housing, I've learned that the changes that this bill proposes would remove those 300 co-op dispute cases that are currently dealt with in the Ontario court system. As we all know—anyone who has a constituency office—you hear from all your constituents about the issues around Family Court and other court systems. Co-ops being allowed to be dealt with like this would be like many other residential disputes.

The current system, with costly legal wrangling in courts, costs people outrageous amounts of money. Having a standardized dispute resolution with the Landlord and Tenant Act would certainly be a step in the right direction for the co-op community.

Our critic for municipal affairs also tells me that Bill 14 makes some minor amendments to the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010, and Ontario Clean Energy Benefit Act, 2010. But the primary purpose of the bill is to move most co-op tenure disputes out of the courts and put them before the Landlord and Tenant Board.

Speaker, this is a reasonable adjustment and again begs the question: Why has it taken this government so long to be able to put this bill forward?

The inner workings of this bill set up a process by which a non-profit housing co-op can make application to the Landlord and Tenant Board to terminate a former member's occupancy and ultimately evict that former member. This could be an important tool for the co-op community.

These provisions under part V of the Residential Tenancies Act are the same that any landlord in the province would use to evict a tenant. A co-operative at this date has two avenues to terminate a member's occupancy. As with other landlords, the co-operative can issue a notice when it is pursuing an eviction under one or more of the 11 instances set out in the Residential Tenancies Act. These include nonpayment of rent, committing illegal acts or causing wilful damage to the property.

Mr. Speaker, in Sarnia–Lambton, which I am more familiar with, I said there were nearly 500 families waiting for geared-to-income housing. Having units tied up in unnecessary prolonged court disputes is keeping

those families on the waiting list for affordable housing for an undue time instead of in a good home.

This new process would also allow the co-operative to pursue an eviction in the Landlord and Tenant Board without notice in some very limited circumstances. They include:

—where a former co-op member has either terminated his or her membership and therefore their occupancy rights;

—where the member's occupancy rights have expired by virtue of a predetermined date; and

—where the former member is a post-secondary student in a student housing co-operative.

These are very straightforward circumstances which, under the existing system, would have required that the co-op head to court to complete what really amounts to routine paperwork. Under this bill they will be able to get these situations resolved by applying directly to the Landlord and Tenant Board.

We should note that this legislation does not entirely remove the role of the courts in the dispute resolution process. There will remain, of course, some tenure disputes that will continue to go before the courts which are not spelled out under the Residential Tenancies Act. These deal with specific bylaws to individual co-ops, and they include provisions like the no-pet rule violation and also failure by the member to undertake certain members' duties, like, say, snow removal or lawn care.

These disputes that can't be resolved by the board itself or the co-op still would ultimately have to be adjudicated by our provincial courts. Bill 14, however, adds a new section to the Co-operative Corporations Act to ensure that these cases will be judged on the merits of the case. In other words, procedural irregularities will no longer be able to trump the basis upon which a co-op board has decided to revoke a person's membership. This is important, Mr. Speaker, because it ensures the wishes of the co-op board, which, after all, represents the members of the co-op.

It's easy to see how this provision will ensure these hearings don't get bogged down in procedure wrangling and stay focused on the issue at hand.

Bill 14 also changes the co-op act in a number of ways to streamline the internal dispute resolution process used by individual housing co-operatives. Co-ops have functioned very well under these democratic rules for years, and it is essential that they retain the ability to do so regardless of the amendments outlined in Bill 14.

We also should note that while respecting this well-established internal dispute resolution process, Bill 14 does not allow individual members to make application to the Landlord and Tenant Board. Disputes that co-op residents may have with the housing provider regarding issues over charges or maintenance will continue to use the internal process. That's the right decision because there's no need to further encumber the Landlord and Tenant Board with these disputes when a very sound process is already in place within each co-op in the province.

Proponents of this legislation have said that it will streamline the dispute process to make it faster, more efficient, more cost-effective and more transparent for both co-ops and their members, and we can all applaud that.

As such, the Ontario PC caucus welcomes the opportunity to send Bill 14 to committee to consult with Ontario's co-op community about this legislation and its primary function of taking most co-op disputes away from the courts and moving them to the Landlord and Tenant Board. The Ontario Progressive Conservatives have long supported amending the Co-operative Corporations Act and also the Residential Tenancies Act in a way that would allow for this new process. We've done so for some very good reasons. First, as I have said already, Ontario's courts are already clogged, and it simply doesn't need the additional burden posed by having its dockets filled with this type of civil matter. Our court system has enough trouble already, and anything we can do to reduce the number of cases in that system should be welcomed.

Beyond reducing clutter in the courts, I think we can all agree that that's not really the appropriate place for a landlord and tenant dispute over tenure. After all, when any landlord in the province is dealing with an eviction or other dispute, they follow well-established Landlord and Tenant Board processes. It only makes sense for non-profit housing co-operatives to do the same, but they can't do this under the existing legislation because co-op accommodations are governed by the Co-operative Corporations Act rather than the Residential Tenancies Act.

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In welcoming this move to the Landlord and Tenant Board, I want to stress very clearly that I know there are some serious problems with the Landlord and Tenant Board. Both landlords and tenants aren't happy with the way the board currently operates, but regardless of those problems, I think we would agree that Ontario's courts are not the venue to resolve disputes between co-ops and their members. We know it takes too long, and the costs are much too high to continue using that eviction process.

My colleague the member for Leeds–Grenville tells me that, annually, there are some 300 co-op disputes before the courts every year; it's estimated that these cases saddle co-op members with an annual legal bill of approximately \$1 million. These cases typically cost between \$3,000 and \$5,000 to resolve. However, in some cases, a single case could be up to \$50,000, and those figures don't take into account the tremendous amount of time that both parties are involved with, in terms of paperwork, to resolve this dispute in our already-overburdened court system.

Again, it's unfortunate that the government has taken so long to finally get this moving. Using the figures provided by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the five-year wait seems to mean that some \$5 million are spent on legal costs to resolve these co-op tenure disputes through the courts. It would have been

nice to have some action on the file earlier—something that I think all three parties would agree with—so that that \$5 million could have been saved and spent on housing itself.

In conclusion, I will be supporting Bill 14 today at second reading. I believe it is important that this bill receive a thorough review at committee, where we can have members of the co-op community from across this great province—including those in Sarnia–Lambton, my community—come in and work with the committee to create the best system possible for the co-op community and the people of Ontario. With this important committee work, hopefully co-op housing can remain an important component within Ontario’s housing and residential mix. And hopefully, as a Legislature, we can focus our time on finding more solutions to get these people into affordable housing and off those wait-lists that are far too long.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Walker: It’s my pleasure to address this. I think my colleague has done a great job. He’s brought out the fact that we need to get these situations out of the courts, so that they can continue on with more pressing needs. I think he’s very much highlighted the great work that the co-ops provide to our communities, and I think he’s also pointed out that we need to get to committee and get this done in an expeditious manner.

What we need to do is to ensure that both sides in these cases have the ability to come forward and have their sides heard. We need to make sure that we listen and actually engage both sides of the party, so that we have very good, effective and timely legislation in place when it is finally passed.

I think Bob has really articulated well that there’s an ability here and a willingness for our PC caucus to work with the other side to ensure that this gets through, finally; I think this is the third or fourth time now. Because of a number of prorogations, it hasn’t made it there, and we need to make sure that it does, as quickly as we can, so that it helps those people in the co-op housing.

In my community, there’s certainly lots of need, people that could benefit from this housing. I think that Bob made a comment in regard to \$5 million spent on court costs. That could have gone to the front lines. That could have provided more people with this type of housing that is so urgently needed by them. I think, at the end of the day, what we continually bring to the table is, let’s make sure with these types of bills, when they come to the table, that we’re all coming leaving our partisan hats at home. Let’s ensure that we’re thinking of the end user. Let’s make sure they’re fair, they’re timely, and that we put the legislation in place that truly gives both sides their day in court, and that we keep them out of the courts needlessly so that those courts can spend their time on much more urgent matters that probably are, again, getting backlogged because of some of these. It needs to be fair, it needs to be very well-decided by each side that

they had their day in court and they had good input. Then, let’s enact the legislation. Let’s pass it and move it forward as quickly as possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this, three times now today, Speaker, and let’s hope that we can actually get this big ball up the hill and over before this legislation is prorogued again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I think this is a very positive sign in the Legislature today. All sides of the House are sounding very positive, very cordial and very co-operative. I hope this type of feeling, this kind of atmosphere continues, moving forward, and we can see eye to eye on other issues as well. I think we all see the benefit of helping out co-operatives. I think they’re a wonderful institution, a wonderful way of organizing, and I think we all agree.

The next step now is: What can we do to work together to make sure this bill does become enacted? Some of the earlier suggestions that, given the volatile nature of a minority government, though we all want to work together and be co-operative, sometimes there may be differences which cannot be settled, so maybe we need to look at expediting this bill and getting it passed sooner rather than later.

Again, I want to stress one of the points that I didn’t get to touch on enough in my last opportunity to speak on this piece of legislation: that more and more we’re seeing the cost of litigation increasing, and so providing the cost-effective mechanism of a tribunal is a great idea. I think that we need to do more than just address, in this instance, co-operative housing; in many areas of the law, there needs to be a more cost-effective mechanism so that people don’t have to resort to litigation and don’t have to resort to courts in order to access justice. I think that we’re seeing a trend that many people are being denied access to legal aid, that the funding for legal aid is being cut and needs to be bolstered. As an alternative, we need to find other ways of ensuring that people have access to justice in this province. Providing co-operatives with an access to tribunals is one way, but we need to work on others as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: This sounds like very co-operative legislation that we’re going through, and I don’t think I can add any more to the support this bill has had today.

Co-operative housing is not only for the lower incomes; co-operative housing is for everyone. I just think that with what’s happening in Ottawa–Orléans now—we’re going to be losing 15,500 jobs; the federal government is moving from 50,000 to 70,000 people from east of Bank Street out to west of Bank Street. So I will want to talk to the people who do a lot of co-operative housing, because we’re going to need a lot of help in Orléans by the time the Baird gang is finished. But it’s something

I'm working on with many people, and we may be able to do it.

It's a real privilege for me to stand up here today and support such good legislation and see something that is working. It's working because the legislation is going to be changed so that the people who own in co-operatives are able to deal with those people who break the rules, cause vandalism and don't pay their share. So that is going to make the bill a lot better, but I am going to think about it—and the unbalanced approach the city of Ottawa has taken in Ottawa; the east end right down to Prescott and Russell—Ottawa—Vanier is losing 4,000 jobs; we're losing 15,500 jobs; Prescott and Russell are losing 2,300 jobs—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? We'll return to the member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I know my time is limited. I'd like to first thank the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen

Sound for his comments, and the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton and my colleague from Ottawa—Orléans.

Yes, we won't belabour the point. We do all agree that we need to see something done in co-operative housing. I know that Bill 65 was the bill that they originally wanted, but now we've got Bill 14, so let's move forward. My colleague from Bramalea—Gore—Malton talked about the delays and how this might be better to go to something like tribunals; I think it's true. The old story: Justice delayed is justice denied. So those people who do go forward for those eviction notices or whatever—we need to get those disputes resolved as quickly and painlessly as possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Millroy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron-Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	London West / London-Ouest	
Vacant	Windsor-Tecumseh	

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COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

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Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Grant Crack, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Bill Mauro
Taras Natyshak, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Vacant
Dipika Damerla, Steven Del Duca
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Monte McNaughton
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Bas Balkissoon, Rick Bartolucci
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Mike Colle, Rosario Marchese
Laurie Scott, Todd Smith
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day (pro tem.)

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Laura Albanese, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Joe Dickson, Jim McDonell
Phil McNeely, Paul Miller
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Teresa J. Armstrong
Steven Del Duca, Bob Delaney
Frank Klees, Jack MacLaren
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Gilles Bisson
Steve Clark, Mike Colle
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Bill Mauro
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Dipika Damerla
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Jerry J. Ouellette, Shafiq Qaadri
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Margaret R. Best, Vic Dhillon
Joe Dickson, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Monte Kwinter
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Margaret R. Best
Ted Chudleigh, Cheri DiNovo
Ernie Hardeman, Helena Jaczek
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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