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(Hansard)**

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des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Wednesday 6 March 2013**

**Mercredi 6 mars 2013**

Speaker  
Honourable Dave Levac

Président  
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk  
Deborah Deller

Greffière  
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 6 mars 2013

*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prayers.*

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 4, 2013, on the motion for 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 Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Further debate?

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** I was listening to the prayer this morning, I think it's a Buddhist prayer—after the Lord's Prayer—and there was that beautiful line, "Everything vanishes and reappears again and again." It's appropriate that we prayed that prayer because here we are with a bill that vanished and appears again and again, hopefully for the last time.

Again, a shout-out to those from the co-operative housing movement who are here and who have been here on this particular issue, I think, since 2004. I've often said that being in this place is a little like pushing an elephant uphill. Occasionally it budges, so today we witness the elephant budging just a little bit, taking a long, long time.

Needless to say, off the top, we're going to support this. We wished it had passed before the prorogation. I know today we're going to hear more about prorogation, but we wished that prorogation hadn't happened and we wish that this bill had happened before the House rose. Hopefully, the amount of money that's been spent, since prorogation, on this issue is a small amount.

In a nutshell, for those listening and watching who perhaps have not heard this before, although it's unlikely that you haven't—it's been on the agenda, as I say, many times—this is a bill that's simply going to take the disputes that happen in co-ops between tenants and the co-op boards out of the court system and take them to the tribunal where they belong.

I want to give some shout-outs to my co-ops right off the bat in Parkdale–High Park: We've got Dufferin Grove; we've got Fort York; we've got John Bruce; just down the street from myself, Junction; Swansea—and also, of course, just an acknowledgment that the co-op movement is not only about housing; this bill is. But the co-op movement is far larger than housing. We have a groundbreaking co-op that I also want to give a shout-out to: the West End Food Co-op in Parkdale–High Park that has now opened a store, just around the corner from where I live. It's wonderful. So, incredible kudos to the co-op movement.

We in the New Democratic Party would like to see more co-ops right across the spectrum of human endeavours, and particularly in the housing market. I have to also, in talking about housing, mention sadly the defeat of our federal bill that called for a national housing strategy. That's sad. It is sad, I think, especially for our neighbours to the right here, the Progressive Conservatives, because when I think about the co-op movement, I can't help but think about St. Lawrence Market. Really, when St. Lawrence Market was developed back in the 1970s, it was the gold standard of mixed housing. Back in the day, in the 1970s—and it's still the gold standard, sadly. Back in the day when that was developed, there was a Conservative at city hall, there was a Conservative here and there was a Conservative in Ottawa. Somehow, under Conservative governments, we got this groundbreaking project off the ground.

For those of you who aren't Torontonians, who don't know St. Lawrence Market, what you will find if you go down there is, of course, St. Lawrence Market itself, which is exciting and a tourist attraction, but all around there you will find housing and you'll find mixed housing. You'll find housing that is TCHC, you'll find housing that is commercial and market-driven, and you'll find co-ops all around there. And here's the beautiful thing about St. Lawrence Market: You won't be able to tell the difference, one to the other. Everybody lives and works well together.

How did it start? Well, let me tell you the story. I learned the story myself since being elected. We had a

visioning day and a visioning week, actually, in Parkdale–High Park on issues that beset our community. Pre-eminent among them was the issue of lack of affordable housing, and we invited David Crombie, Conservative mayor of Toronto at the time. Remember, we used to call him the “tiny perfect mayor”? I’m not so sure. He’s tiny for sure. And particularly where St. Lawrence Market is concerned, we think that was a good move.

We invited him to talk to us about how he ever got the St. Lawrence Market development off the ground. He came and he was very gracious. He spoke to us and he said, out of his own mouth, “It all started with a co-op”—that that entire gold standard of affordable housing started with a co-op. We took that as advice. We decided to look in our own riding at, how can we get other co-ops going? So we in Parkdale–High Park set out on an adventure. It’s an ongoing adventure. The end of the story hasn’t happened yet.

We have a Tibetan community, a very well-entrenched and organized Tibetan community. They were interested in housing. We suggested the co-op model. We got a grant from CMHC, and we’re currently, and we have been for the last two years, looking for a place to do this. Here’s the problem, and I’m going to point to a problem with starting a co-op in the province of Ontario: Historically, 20% to 25% of projects developed under social housing—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Well, folks, it seems that we have about six sidebars going on. I can’t hear a word the member is saying. As I say always, if you want to have a real heated discussion or something fantastic, take it outside. I would suggest that we cut it down a notch or two on the decibel level.

Go ahead.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It cost me a few seconds, but thank you.

Where was I? To backtrack, the Tibetan housing co-op, which we’re still in the process of trying to get going, is hampered. It’s very, very difficult to get a co-op off the ground now in Ontario. This is not what we should be doing. We should be enabling co-ops to get off the ground, and we should be doing everything possible to allow them to keep functioning. That clearly was true in the 1970s, when the St. Lawrence Market redevelopment project got off the ground and became the gold standard, and it’s true today in 2013.

So I hope—here’s the hope—that as far as the co-op movement or housing is concerned, that this is just a very small step in, I hope, an ongoing revision of government policies around not only affordable housing—I’m going to talk about them in a moment—but particularly in enabling co-ops to get up, get functioning and continue to function, because truly they are the cornerstone of any affordable housing response, and that’s what we need.

As I said, it’s sad to see a Conservative majority government vote down the possibility of a national housing strategy when clearly in their own history, the history of their party, they’ve been advocates for affordable

housing. I hope that my colleagues to the right here will talk to their colleagues in Ottawa.

**0910**

So what is the situation in Ontario where housing is concerned? Well, it’s absolutely and irrevocably bleak. In fact, it’s bleaker than in any other province in Canada right now. We have approximately 160,000 families waiting on affordable housing lists, the average wait being between 10 and 12 years. That is, I think by anybody’s standards, completely and absolutely unacceptable. Here’s a fact: In 2009, Ontario spent \$64 per capita on affordable housing—half the average of other Canadian provinces. This particular administration has nothing to be proud of where housing is concerned.

I spoke on another topic the other day about the number of homeless deaths. We’ve seen six since January; we’ve seen over 700 since the 1980s. The rate of homeless deaths has increased under this current regime. It used to be considered a national disaster; now we just step over the bodies that sleep on the grates. It’s as if we don’t care anymore.

I remember my very first portfolio when I was elected, lo, those almost seven years ago; it was housing, and I remember the now Attorney General was the housing minister back then. I remember very well—he might too—sitting at a committee with him, at government agencies, and asking him; I said, “Here are the stats, Mr. Housing Minister. It actually costs more to keep someone in the shelter system than it does to provide affordable housing for them. Why are we doing this? It makes no moral sense and it makes no economic sense.” To give him his due, he agreed. The then housing minister agreed with that. He said, “Yes, we should be doing more for housing.” The sad reality is, that was almost seven years ago, and here we are. Nothing, really, has changed.

**Interjection:** It takes time; it takes time.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Well, as I said, pushing an elephant uphill, sometimes it budes. It has budged very, very slowly with this bill. We need that elephant to start running up that hill where affordable housing is concerned.

Not only do we have 160,000 women, men and children waiting, but this is an increase of 6%—we’re increasing those waiting lists—since January 2012. The simple reality is, both the federal government and the provincial government have gotten out of the business of providing housing for their citizens. This is unacceptable. This is absolutely unacceptable.

We have about 13 million people in Ontario. I point to other jurisdictions in the world. There are nine million people in Sweden. In Sweden, they managed to build 100,000 units of affordable housing a year for 10 years. There is no homelessness problem in Sweden; quite frankly, it doesn’t exist. It’s doable to eliminate that wait-list, and here’s the amazing news: It doesn’t only rely on tax dollars to do it. In fact, a bill that I put forward—that I’m going to be bringing back again soon, this spring—on inclusionary zoning would allow us to provide up to

12,000 units a year of affordable housing without one tax dollar being spent.

How do you perform that miracle? Let me describe to you how. It's the same way other jurisdictions around the world that are cash-strapped provide affordable housing. Here's what you do—first of all, here's what we do in this Legislature. What we do is provide a change to the Planning Act so that municipalities can bring in inclusionary zoning. That's all my bill wanted to do: just allow them the option, the possibility, of bringing in inclusionary zoning.

What is inclusionary zoning? It's the requirement—and it varies from municipality to municipality—that developers who build, in my bill, over 50 units have to provide a certain element within that building or development of affordable housing. It doesn't even say what kind of affordable housing. It could be rent-to-own, it could be flat out rent—there are many, many things that municipalities could do if they had the tools to do them. They don't right now, because what happens right now is, if a municipality tries to do that, tries to require—for example, in Toronto, instead of section 37 dollars—dollars for housing from their developers, then that developer could take them to the OMB and win, because there is no revision to the Planning Act at the provincial level.

So, there's an option—inclusionary zoning—that this government could have picked up on. In fact, it passed this bill on to second reading; of course, it never got to committee. Now that we have a minority government, I'm sending a plea across the floor that when it comes back again, let's actually act on it. Let's send it to committee and let's get it past the committee and let's bring it back for third reading: a very simple, tax-free way of providing housing and one that I must say just about every municipality signed on to. I have a file this thick of letters from municipalities, some of whom have actually passed resolutions at their councils in support of my bill. So let's move on that; let's move on affordable housing. But to get back to this bill, wow, let's just do it.

It was interesting. I had a couple of Conservative members yesterday on my radio show, called 3 Women, for those who are interested: 89.5 FM every Tuesday morning at 9. That's the plug. Christine Elliott was there, the member from Whitby–Oshawa and deputy leader, and also the member from Burlington was on the show. They were talking about some of the frustrations of this House, and this was one of them, one where I think we have agreement around all parties, and that is how slowly things move, how slow it is to get even the smallest thing done here. I think our constituents are quite frankly gobsmacked at the process that it takes to get even something this small through the legislative process. They had made suggestions. I'm not going to warrant their suggestions or to put forward any of my own right now, but simply say that this is something that should have happened long ago. This should have happened long ago, and it should have happened much more seamlessly than it is happening.

The fact is that the housing co-operative folk have had to come back time and again, that it's been on the radar

since 2004, and really, it's almost a regulatory change. Really, this shouldn't be an earth-shattering law. There's something very wrong with a process that would take almost 10 years to get something like this passed. So that's the broader picture.

Mr. Speaker, even the Drummond commission talks about the sad reality of this province getting out of the housing business. The sad reality, of course—even Don Drummond mentioned the federal government getting out, and Don Drummond, as we know, is not known as being a rabid leftist in his prognostications.

So to summarize here: Co-op housing is one of the cornerstones of affordable housing. It has to be part of the mix. We as government have to make it easier. In fact, we have to facilitate, I would say, new co-ops getting built and up and running. That is not the case. I've discovered that first-hand. When you can get a sizable grant from CMHC, when you can get people to step up with money of their own and still face a mountain of red tape and a nightmare just to get a co-op off the ground, that's not good enough.

What we need is what we had, and that is exemplified, as I said right off the top, in the gold standard: St. Lawrence Market. And it's not about partisanship; it's about people just getting back into the business and feeling it's their moral obligation to provide housing for their citizens.

We're in a crisis situation. We had a report come in last week that showed that 50% of our full-time jobs in the GTA are precarious; 50% of people in full-time jobs said they didn't know if they'd have that job next year. This is a pretty grim portrait of life in the GTA, and a very large part of that precariousness is their ability to maintain housing. When 50% of our renters are paying more than 50% of their income on rent, this is a precarious situation. We need to have answers for it.

We need to have answers for the homeless deaths that are taking place on our streets. Six people have died on the streets since January 1. It used to be considered a national disaster. Where's that sense of urgency? Where is the sense that we need to do something about this? Where is the moral indignation that it's not okay in one of the world's richest countries and richest jurisdictions to have our citizens dying on the streets for lack of a bed? That's not acceptable. It's not acceptable, and the solution doesn't always start in Ottawa. It starts here. It starts at the city level, too, but it starts here. This is where we have to have some political will to provide housing.

#### 0920

We have not had that political will for two separate administrations now. We haven't had that political will since 1995. That's not good enough. And it's not about who is in power—it's not about what political party is power—it's about the will of those folks sitting around the cabinet table to actually get something done. As I said, we had the gold standard produced under Tory administrations. We can have it done under any administration. The question for this administration is, why isn't it being done? Why isn't it even being entertained under this administration?

This administration promised 20,000 units. It hasn't delivered. We, in our platform, put forward a minimum of 10,000 new builds—minimum. Where is the discussion about new builds for housing? It's gone. It's off the table. And when we look at social assistance reviews, when we look at how we're going to get people out from under poverty, housing is the critical determinant of that. If they don't have housing, they can't get a job. If they can't get a job, they will be relegated to poverty. And they will be relegated to poverty if they don't have housing. It's a vicious cycle, and we have no answers in this place—no answers whatsoever.

So just to summarize, yes, of course we support this bill—absolutely. My goodness, it's a baby step, a baby step that should have been taken 10 years ago. Finally, much talk later, it will maybe, I hope, be passed. Let's speed it through committee, let's get it back here and let's get it done.

But more than this bill, Mr. Speaker, let's see some gumption on the housing file from my friends across the aisle. Let's see some action on the housing file. Let's see some new bills. Let's see something as simple as inclusionary zoning or density bonusing put into the mix. It doesn't even cost a tax dollar, so we can't use the deficit as an excuse here. Let's see some solutions. Because my goodness, we have a problem, and part of the problem is to begin to open our eyes to see that we have one. It's admitting we have a problem. We have a problem when people are dying on our streets. We have a problem.

Everyone here should have those deaths on their conscience. We are charged, at the very least, to prevent deaths, and housing would do that. So let's build some housing. Let's pass Bill 14. Let's get on it with it. My goodness, let's get on with it. Let's give that elephant a good push so it can get over the hill this time on this one. Let's give our poor friends in the co-operative housing movement a break so they don't have to come back here day in and day out.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** I want to thank the member from Parkdale—High Park for her comments.

I would mention one thing for our friends in the gallery from the co-op sector, who are back here today. There's been a bit of a consistent theme in this debate over the last few days when it comes to the effect of prorogation on this particular piece of legislation. I think it's fair to say that that angle or that theme has been slightly overstated. It's important to remind our friends in the gallery that while this was at second reading in September/October of last year, had it passed second reading it would have been referred to committee, and instead of second reading here, we might have been at third reading now. It wouldn't have advanced things that much further down the road than they currently are. And of course it would have been up to the committee it was referred to to make the decision on when the bill would be called and what amendments would go forward. I think it's important to state that.

In terms of the consistent support for the bill that I'm hearing across the way, we're happy to hear that. In effect, trying to diminish what's being done here—I would say that if it was that easy to do, both of the opposition parties, while they were in power in the last little while, had an opportunity to do this very same thing. Of course, as you know, the main piece of this is taking referrals out of the court system and referring them to the Landlord and Tenant Board. That's the main piece of this. Each of the opposition parties had an opportunity to do that when they were in government, and for whatever reason—I wasn't here at the time—chose not to do that.

The last thing I would say is that, on the long-term affordable housing strategy, we are concerned as well. The feds seem to be stepping away from this—the agreement ends soon. Of course, an even more serious announcement from the federal government very recently—we've seen the federal government downgrade how much money they're going to spend on infrastructure across all of Canada from \$6 billion down to \$3.9 billion. We in Ontario are committing much more than that just in our province alone. We need the feds to give us a little help when it comes to these issues as well.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Jack MacLaren:** Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of merit in this bill. It's intended to help people who are having a tough time—low income, can't afford proper housing—and we want to provide them with non-profit housing, and we want to look after them in a fair and responsible way. I think it's an obligation as a society. We have an obligation to help those in our society who can't help themselves.

The intention of this bill is to streamline the system of solving problems and disputes, and we applaud that and we support that. It appears that there has been significant cost in going to court as opposed to going to the Landlord and Tenant Board to solve problems, and this would seem like a logical thing to do.

We have some minor concern that not enough consultation has been done at this point with landlords and tenants and advocacy groups that speak for these people across the province. We would like to hear from those people before this bill goes to third reading. The committee could travel, hear these folks and better make a decision on what the appropriate thing to do here is to try to help these people.

We're aware that this is an opportunity to do something good. We embrace that; we look forward to that. We have to do it in an appropriate manner. We have to do it in a responsible manner. If we do this right, it will be a good thing. It will also be a good thing for landlords as well as tenants, and it will be an encouragement for landlords to invest in more non-profit housing. I think we have to keep that in mind. It's not just a one-sided story to help those who need help, which is unquestionable; we have to look out for both sides. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Miss Monique Taylor:** I listened intently. I like that word that my other—

*Interjection.*

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Pardon? Anyways.

The member from Parkdale–High Park has it right on when she talks about the history of housing in our province and in our country. We need to make sure that we're supporting co-operative housing. We need to make sure that we move this bill forward and get it into committee. If the Conservatives have some kinks that they want to work out, I'm sure that everybody can work together to find a way of moving this bill forward.

We need to make sure that we have more housing in this province. We need to make sure that people who aren't able to pay a full market-value rent are being able to have adequate housing, and I know that co-ops provide that. They work together as a community to make sure that everybody is living in good housing conditions.

I have several co-ops in my riding, and I work with them on a regular basis and have made very good friends with people in the co-ops on the Mountain. Everybody is working for the same goal, and that's to make sure that everybody has a happy, healthy place to raise their families.

So I completely support this bill. I'm looking forward to it getting to committee and making sure that they have a fair cost price looking at them, and when they have to deal with evictions and when tenants need the assistance of the tribunal board, that that will also be there to assist them. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** I know the member opposite who just spoke knows of my passion for affordable housing as well. I've been involved in one way or another, I guess for the last 40 years, in municipal non-profits, private non-profits and co-op housing because I think that housing is an absolute right for people. I'm absolutely convinced of that.

Let's not forget—she talks a lot about what hasn't been done. But one of the opportunities that I had on behalf of the government back in 2005 was to sign that historic agreement with the federal government, the Martin federal government at the time, to provide \$600 million of new affordable housing to the people of Ontario; \$300 million came from the province and \$300 million came from the federal government. I don't know how many units were created, but I know they were in the thousands that were created as a result of that.

Now, dealing with this bill specifically, Speaker, the reality is that right now, if co-ops want to get rid of a tenant—and they're not really tenants, anyway—they have to go to the courts. Courts are not the best place to deal with eviction issues. Quite frankly, most judges don't like to deal with them. So why don't we use the expertise that's available in the Landlord and Tenant Board—the adjudicators who deal with these issues on an

ongoing basis—to deal with any kind of eviction notices that may be required of people who live in co-op housing? That's what this really is all about.

**0930**

The other issue is the waiver of fees with respect to low-income individuals. May I just remind the Conservatives, who may not be in favour of that, that actually we have that waiver-of-fee provision as well in other tribunals such as the Ontario Municipal Board, social services review boards etc., and they were initiated, by the way, by the true Progressive Conservatives who used to be in power here many, many years ago. We're not doing anything all that radical by adding that in this bill as well.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member from Parkdale–High Park has two minutes.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Thank you to everyone for their comments. I want to focus on a couple of them.

To the Attorney General: Housing is a human right, of course. It's what the United Nations has asked for and, in fact, it was a motion I introduced in this House that the government did not support. I wanted it enshrined in our Legislature that housing was a human right. It didn't pass over there.

The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan knows full well that it is the government's and only the government's prerogative to bring bills back for third reading, and he knows full well that, had this bill gone forward and prorogation not happened, if it had seen committee time in a timely manner, this government could have passed it before Christmas. He knows that. That's just to correct the record.

Also, just to go back to two main points here: Co-op housing is one of the most cost-effective ways of providing affordable housing. This bill is a very small step. Yes, it should be passed, and in a timely manner. I hope that it goes in and out of committee quickly, and I hope that this government calls it back for third reading in a timely manner as well.

But more to the point, to my friends across the aisle: The fact remains that our province spends less than any other province on affordable housing. That is not a good record. We need political will from across the aisle to step up. We know the federal government isn't doing what they should; that doesn't get you off the hook. You need to step up. We need to have a plan, and it's a plan that needs to see new units being built, but also, lots of other solutions and tools can be used to provide housing without much cost—even at all—like inclusionary zoning.

So, yes, pass the bill. Yes, let's correct the record, and, by all means, let's get on with providing housing for people who need it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Further debate?

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** Thank you—

*Applause.*

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** I have one friend, Mr. Speaker—maybe two, with you. I've always considered you a friend, Mr. Speaker.

I want to start off by just making a few comments about the comments made by the member for Parkdale–High Park, and her efforts. I want to acknowledge the very positive contribution she has made and the extraordinary work she has done in this area.

When I was in my previous political life, when we had no federal or provincial housing programs, we built about 4,000 or 5,000 affordable housing units, which I think is a record in Canadian history in any municipality. It was done through a very grassroots partnership. We talked about some of the tool kits that we could create to do housing. The member from Parkdale–High Park has introduced ideas, and I think this government should look at many of them very seriously.

I always find that there are certain ironies in history. We almost had a national housing strategy in this country that was unprecedented. The Martin government was defeated on December 8 by the Conservatives and the NDP, and we lost our national housing policy, which many of us in the municipal world had worked very hard to achieve. It would have been the first time we had a national housing strategy, a national transportation strategy, a national climate change strategy and a national child care strategy—the four pillars of what I think are the four things that are most missing right now in our national dialogue. Our federal government, quite frankly, has abandoned us on all four.

My grandmother, who came from Ukraine, used to always say to me, “Glen, God never hits with a stick.” I always thought that there was great irony that now both the Liberals and New Democrats are in opposition; our party, federally, is led by a former NDP Premier of Ontario and the NDP is led by a former Liberal cabinet minister from Quebec. There are some lessons on the value of co-operation in that. My grandmother, I think, would always say, “That is karma.”

I think that there are places where this party agrees with the Conservatives—on tax policy and other areas. There are areas in which we agree with the NDP more. I think it behooves us all sometimes to be Ontarians before we are Liberals, Conservatives or New Democrats.

I’ve always believed—and I think if you go back to Bill Davis and David Crombie—one of the things that we should be able to offer every citizen in Ontario is a key to a safe place to live. I agree with members in a number of parties who have made this point, and I would consider my political career a failure in this province if within the next decade, every Ontarian doesn’t have a key to a safe place to live—and not just a safe home. For many women who go home to violence, for children who go home to sexual abuse, the complexity of a safe place to live is not an easy one, and it is not an easy one to achieve.

While government spending is important—and in my community of Toronto Centre, with Regent Park and the West Don Lands, we have been building more affordable housing right now, in my community, than anywhere else. I’m working across party lines, across government, with Pam McConnell and Kristyn Wong-Tam and our school trustees, on an integrated neighbourhood plan.

We’re doing some of the stuff that all of us have brought together in our previous experience, because Councillor McConnell as well has a lot of experience as a housing activist. We’re doing some remarkable things with the private sector and community, without the government being at the table in a significant way. But I think all government has to come to the table.

The member for Northumberland–Quinte West made a comment about cheap shots at the federal government. I don’t think this is a cheap shot. We have a real crisis coming in affordable housing. This is agricultural literacy week. As someone who comes from a family who had a farm in Alexandria, Ontario, I’m really glad that—those of us who now live in cities need to be much more literate about rural and agricultural Ontario.

One of the things that all of us, regardless of where we come from, have to be literate about is the importance of co-ops, because if the federal government does not start to renew its funding and its commitment to co-ops, our co-ops are going to go from being one of the most important sources of affordable housing and human dignity and choice. Co-ops are much more than just housing. They are a community and a culture of caring about your neighbour, and collaborative community-building. They reinforce the best qualities of our citizenship and the best character of ourselves as Canadians, in the spirit of how we want to live and care for each other and worry as much about our neighbour down the hall as we do about ourselves. Anyone who has ever lived in a co-op or has lived in a condo knows there’s a very different kind of culture that often sets in, in both those places.

When the federal subsidies and the federal contributions to co-ops run out in the very near future, that is going to create an affordable housing crisis in many parts of Ontario. We are not asking the federal government for more money at this point. We are just simply asking them to renew their commitment and to maintain an active hand on finances on that file.

And why should they do that? Not just because former Premier Bob Rae did such a great job on co-ops, quite frankly. I mean, all you have to do in my constituency is walk down the Esplanade to see the incredible legacy of that government in co-operatives.

But, quite frankly, it was also our friend David Crombie, former Progressive Conservative, former mayor of Toronto, former Progressive Conservative cabinet minister, who was one of the authors of that legacy. The official opposition, the party opposite, shares in that legacy of activism for affordable and co-op housing. It would seem to me to be a bit of a shame if that’s not continued.

Mr. Speaker, you’ve been very kind, because I’ve wandered so far off topic that it’s not funny, but you’ve given me the same latitude as others, and I should probably come to the point at some point.

Making tenure dispute resolution for co-op residents more efficient, cost-effective and transparent is really the focus of this bill. It has been pointed out by others—I’ve never seen a piece of legislation try to get through this House so many times. I feel like we’re rolling the rock up

the hill over and over again. I agree with people who have talked. I hope all parties are committed to getting this through the House.

This is just one of the basic, decent things that we do as MPPs to create some fairness, to create a situation in which people who are living together in co-ops can deal with disputes in a civilized and respectful way. It protects people's dignity. It removes litigation from the courts. If passed, Bill 14 would 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. That seems to me to be such a simple and civil thing to do. Only parliamentary Legislatures could make it complicated, Mr. Speaker.

**0940**

It's interesting, too, because I think that tenure-based disputes based on the grounds not provided for in the RTA would finally continue to be handled through the internal democratic and co-op tenure disputes process, and then, only if necessary, and very rarely, would these ever be resolved in the courts.

I can't tell you, Mr. Speaker, in Toronto Centre, which I think has more co-ops than almost anywhere else—I think that my friend from Ottawa–Vanier would give me a run for my money on that, but there are certainly a few of us on this side of the House who are more than familiar with co-ops, who I think would say that our constituency offices have handled these kinds of concerns and have seen some really heartbreaking disputes, not just for individuals—because these kinds of things can create a great deal of tension in the co-operative housing community, make going home at night very uncomfortable, create divisions between neighbours. We have been promising for a long time to do something about it, and we have certainly on this side of the House tried very hard to get this bill through a number of times. I again want to thank our friends in the third party, in the New Democratic Party, for their continuing support for this. Hopefully, the official opposition will join in this effort.

We now have about 550 co-op providers. This is no small number of people. There are 44,000 co-op households now in Ontario. There are 125,000 people who live in co-ops. This is larger than a mid-sized city. The cost of the evictions is about \$3,000 to \$5,000. This is money that could be much better spent by co-ops in investing in facilities and upgrades, in maintaining the buildings and in subsidies, quite frankly, often where people pay higher rents in a co-op to cross-subsidize so that people of lesser means can live as part of that community. I don't think that any co-op likes to spend thousands of dollars on an eviction process. It's kind of contrary to the entire spirit of the place.

I'm hoping, as well, if there are suggestions or amendments from the opposition parties, that they'll be presented, that they'll move through that in an efficient way. I hope we don't have any cause to slow this down in any way.

Housing—and I can say this as the Minister of Infrastructure—is a critical part of our infrastructure. We own

a lot of land. We have a lot of abilities to create a tool kit and incentives to harvest some affordable housing through this amazing condo boom going on. Right now, in my constituency, there are 47 condo towers going up that haven't even broken ground out there. If you look at the electoral map for Toronto Centre, it is about one quarter of the geography that it currently is right now. When you realize that my constituency's footprint physically is going to be 25% after 2015 of what it is today, it tells you something. Right now, I think I have the second-largest population, after Helena Jaczek, my friend from Oak Ridges–Markham, or my friend from Vaughan. I'm approaching 200,000 constituents, and I think I have another 30,000 right now in the West Don Lands alone.

To the members opposite, many of you, I am gratefully humbled and honoured to be your MPP seasonally, and I hope you're satisfied with the service you're getting from your member. You are all my constituents. I feel that I actually have developed—

*Interjections.*

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** I run into the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex on most days, and shortly arrived on his doorstep canvassing, to meet his lovely wife, who was celebrating a very significant anniversary. I've gotten to know many of you by knocking on your doors, and I want to tell the members opposite who live in my constituency seasonally, though we're not of the same political stripe, you have always been very nice to me. A few of you have invited me in for coffee, which I'm sure is simply to keep me from knocking on more doors, but the coffee has always been quite tasty and lovely.

We have to do a lot more in affordable housing. I've always felt that this place is best when it's least partisan. I've always felt that most honourable members—and I'll go further: all honourable members—come here to make a difference.

When I lived through the AIDS epidemic—and I've said this many times in this House—the thing that marked my politics in my life more than anything else was celebrating my 30th birthday by going to a funeral for my 42nd friend who died in their twenties of AIDS. I don't think I would have run for office or done any of the things I've been able to do in my life—because I confronted my own mortality in my twenties. People who went off to war—when they talk about the great generation, it was a generation of men and women who confronted their mortalities at an extraordinarily early age and became one of the most creative generations, from whom we have inherited so much. The closest thing I've experienced—and I don't compare myself to that—is I discovered in my twenties that people die very quickly, our bodies are very fragile, and many of us live our lives into our fifties, sixties, and seventies and look back with great regret that we didn't do anything with our lives that we would have, could have, should have. I sort of promised myself and my friends that I lost that I wanted to make a difference in my life.

I think we can do so much more on housing than we are. I think this is an important piece. But we're the

wealthiest, healthiest, most tech-savvy generation in Canadian history. None of our parents or grandparents—and God knows, many of them came from countries with very little, came here with a shopping bag; or First Nations folks who grew up here in horrible residential schools in difficult situations. They left us a pretty incredible legacy.

I think it's time for us, on things like housing, to ask ourselves, why does every Ontarian not have a key to a safe place to live? Why is that not possible? Why can we not, as three political parties, as decent people who came here to make a difference, work in a less partisan way to accomplish more things? I think many of us would much rather go to the electorate in a few months or a couple of years saying that we have the best housing programs in the world.

I think we're doing some extraordinary things. You look at my friend Diane MacLean—because for some of us, our job is to criticize the government, but some of the things we've done—Diane MacLean just got the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal. This is a woman who got eight people together—there were nine of them; Regent Park was interested in co-ops. It was very hard to do co-ops because of land costs—and we need to look at how we make that easier again, because we need to be getting back to building them again. But she approached George Smitherman, the federal government and Pam McConnell and she started a conversation and went to some of the developers. That started in 2003. Within 24 months, the partnership between three governments and the communities and developers was building Regent Park, which, if you've been down there, isn't just amazing, affordable housing, it isn't just mixed income; there's an aquatic centre there which is being built between the city and the province which is remarkable. There's the Daniels Spectrum. They have more cultural and art groups—it's amazing to see the young people in Regent Park engaged in culture and jobs. We have businesses back in that community that are hiring people in that community. We're not just building housing; we're building a neighbourhood there.

The same thing is happening in my constituency in the West Don Lands. We have three major affordable housing projects going up right now on provincially owned land that had been sitting there. I'm very proud of that.

But beyond this bill, I'm hoping that one of the legacies of this session of the Legislature will be that we can actually use our infrastructure budgets, our land banks by community land banking, and we can actually bring forward a housing agenda collaboratively in this House. I have heard, from members on all sides, some very, very good ideas on these things. This simple dispute mechanism is such a simple thing to do. I always believe that you start with small things, you build some trust, you demonstrate that we can do things together by working and being honourable members first, and then take on some bigger things.

My biggest hope about this simple thing that we have been trying to do for so long—which will make so many

people's lives easier, will liberate thousands of dollars in co-ops that will make a difference in some children's lives and some seniors' lives, and someone with a disability may get a ramp now built in their co-op rather than it going into an eviction process. These simple, decent things can make a huge difference. Maybe let's just try to make this bill get through this House faster than any other piece of legislation. God knows, we owe it to the patient people who live in co-ops who have been waiting so long for this.

**0950**

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Maybe you shouldn't have stalled it so far.

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** I can see that some of the members opposite lost the spirit of Christmas and Valentine's Day very quickly. Maybe, Mr. Speaker, 106 of 107 of us can work together collaboratively on this. I have hope for my friend from—oops, I'm not that good yet at this—Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I'll buy him a beer sometime over in the neighbourhood and we'll become friends.

But I hope, Mr. Speaker, that this actually leads us to take on a larger project together and that many of us can reach out within our own caucuses and across the aisle to try and look at what are some of the next things that we could do. How do we start to kick-start co-op housing when the land thresholds are that? How do we actually start to create some opportunities to take this condo boom and make one of the legacies of this condo boom in my constituency and many others—and I've heard some very good ideas on that in this House—the creation of some affordable housing? How do we actually start to engage the federal government not to walk away from its commitments to federally established co-ops and keep that money so we don't lose that affordable housing?

If all of us work together on that, if we don't have a confrontational approach to the federal government but just simply say, "We're keeping our commitment with provincial co-ops; the provincial government is maintaining its commitment"—a simple resolution in this House wouldn't cost us any money, Mr. Speaker, asking the federal government. All of us have our sister parties in that federal House. This is an immediate thing where we could save thousands of affordable housing units if we could all cherish a legacy that is, quite frankly, in this province, a legacy of all three parties—everyone. There have been Liberals, Conservatives, New Democrats at every order of government who helped build that legacy, and it is very much in jeopardy right now in Ontario if the federal government does not continue—simply continue—its existing commitment to co-ops.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Slam the feds.

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** Well, 106 to one, Speaker; that's the way I look at it.

It's not slamming the feds; it's actually us working very hard to maintain our contribution and simply asking the federal government to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I used to live in another province. I saw the highway sharing on the Prairies, the matching dollars

that still go on. I know there's a floodway being built in Winnipeg where \$1 out of \$4 comes out of this province's tax base in federal transfers. We export \$22 billion. Having lived outside of Ontario, I used to always end my speeches as mayor of Winnipeg thanking Ontarians for being a foundation for the rest of this country. I don't think we ever need to apologize as Ontarians for the role—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Thank you, Minister.

Questions and comments?

**Mr. Rob E. Milligan:** The minister alluded to my earlier comment about always blaming the feds. Just for the record, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we've noticed from this government is that they repeatedly always seem to blame our federal counterparts for their shortcomings.

Obviously, we have a vested interest in ensuring that all Ontarians are included and brought in and that they have a proper home that they can call their own, and function and provide the dignities that a family deserves here in this great province. But the debt load that this government has brought upon the province of Ontario—when we're paying \$10 billion annually just in interest payments, imagine what that \$10 billion can do for low-income housing in this province. This government has denied future generations the proper dignity that they're going to need not only in getting a job but also finding a house, even if you are working.

When I hear the Liberals across the way—the minister—say it's the federal government's fault, we've heard this before. They repeatedly do this over and over again. They are not accountable for their actions, Mr. Speaker. That's one of the reasons why I'm here today. The minister discussed, absolutely incorrectly—I believe that all members here, regardless of political party, are here to make an improvement in the lives of Ontarians. That's why I'm here, Mr. Speaker, because I truly believe that what this government has done is taking us down the wrong path.

We can ensure all Ontarians have a great future.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Jonah Schein:** I'm happy to join the debate this morning. First up, let me just say that of course you can count on my support, on our party's support, for co-operative housing. That's where we've always stood on this issue.

The Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation referenced the Esplanade, the co-operative housing down at Parliament. In fact, that's close to my home. My mom lives in that co-operative housing. She's a person over 65 years old. She's still working. She has worked her entire life, but like many people who are aging in our province, she does not have much of a pension. The fact that she has stable housing is a relief to me and to my family and to her. She's a very active participant in that co-op, and I think they're lucky to have her there as well.

Speaker, today we stand in a province, in the GTHA, where almost half of workers don't have stable work.

They don't know if they're going to get paid next week or next month, and they can't count on any kind of benefits, on any kind of pension. That means that we have to create affordable housing.

We need to have a government that actually stands up and takes responsibility on this issue. While my colleague across the way speaks about friendship and so forth—and I appreciate that; I believe we should have a collegial Parliament—I also believe that we actually need to take responsibility for this issue. This government has been in power, by my count now, almost 10 years. So to continue to pass the buck to others does not actually feel respectful to the people who are looking for affordable housing in this city. There are people who won't go into shelters because our shelter system is so broken and because there are no affordable housing options.

Going back to federal Minister Martin, in history, is not acceptable either. If we look at the Liberal government federally under Martin, we delivered the biggest tax cuts, the biggest spending cuts, we've ever seen in this country. I'd like this government to stand up today and actually close the corporate loopholes that we're asking for. Put that in this budget bill and put that money toward affordable housing, and I hope that I can count on my friend across the way to come through on that issue.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments? The minister responsible for seniors.

**Hon. Mario Sergio:** Speaker, it's good to see you in the chair again.

I'm very pleased that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has introduced this particular bill which we are debating today. I have been listening very attentively to the remarks by Minister Murray as well as the member from Parkdale–High Park.

I have to say—and we have to give credit where credit's due—that the bill wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for the consistent and persistent efforts of the wonderful people representing the co-ops: Harvey Cooper and Dale Reagan. They are in the audience here today, Speaker, so I want to acknowledge their presence and their continuous knocking that this is an important thing to do.

We have 125,000 people living in co-ops, Speaker, and they have a few problems. In order to solve some of those problems, they have been asking the government to do something, and that's why we are here today. I totally agree with the member from Parkdale–High Park to move it ahead and get on with it. Let's approve it and do the right thing for the co-op people in Ontario.

The bill, as it is, aims to do a couple of things. There are three sections: one, it amends the Co-operative Corporations Act; the second part is, it's amending the Residential Tenancies Act; and the third section contains consequential amendments to the other acts affected by the proposed changes.

Speaker, this has been a long time coming. I have dealt myself with these issues I forget how many times. We all say it's got to be done. It's the right thing to do. I think we owe it to the co-op people of Ontario. This is

one way of moving it forward, so let's go ahead and do it, Speaker. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Rick Nicholls:** It's a privilege for me to stand and talk with regard to Bill 14. I appreciate the comments from my colleague on the government side, and the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation as well.

We do have a housing problem here in Ontario, especially for low-income tenants. I was privileged for 25 years to have sat on the board of directors for a seniors' complex back in the riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex, working with those people. We know some of the issues and challenges that they're faced with on a daily basis at times.

A couple of things: This act, Speaker, as we know, streamlines the internal dispute resolution process to non-profit co-ops that clarify that hearings before the LTB and the courts are determined based on the merits of the case.

1000

As we all know, Speaker, there are 125,000 Ontarians who live in the province's 550 non-profit housing co-ops. One of the things that this particular bill does is it waives that \$45 filing fee for low income. Of course, one of the things that I'm concerned about is that that \$45, as you multiply that out, may be borne by taxpayers along the way.

One of the other things that could also be a concern is the fact that this bill, Speaker, should have been passed in our last session. However, it was delayed because of former Premier McGuinty's prorogation. This should already be law.

We will support this particular bill in second reading. But what we really would like to do is to push for province-wide hearings on the amendments to the LTB so that the landlord and tenant advocates can flood the committee with recommendations.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation has two minutes.

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** I won't go through them all, because there were many of them, but I want to thank all the honourable members for their very positive comments.

The member for Davenport raised, I think, a very important issue. This is part of the challenge we have on this side of the House. Your friends to your immediate right will point out that we do not have the lowest taxes in Canada, and they're right. But we have very competitive taxes.

In your value system, from my perspective, is: What's the overall quality of life? I don't mind paying my fair share, because I came from a family—my grandmother had nine kids and lived in a two-bedroom cold-water flat, and, quite frankly, no one should ever have to live like that. That was a time before we had medicare and before we had bigger government, and bigger government has meant that my 85-year-old mother lives securely and safely. I support her, as my friend from Parkdale said. It should also be pointed out that we have the lowest per

capita spending of any province, which, my friend from Parkdale-High Park pointed out, also has consequences. So we have some tough choices to make here, and they're not always easy, because, as my friend from Davenport pointed out, we tried some things, and we should reach out across the aisle.

We tried the 2% surcharge on people over \$500,000. The challenge we have is that tax money is very mobile and corporate taxes are very mobile. There is \$38 billion stranded offshore in the United States. That tax may not generate much new revenue. As a matter of fact, over time, we could lose revenue. So we have to be a little more sophisticated in this world. It's not simply a matter of cutting or raising taxes; that isn't synonymous anymore with growing or reducing revenues or costs.

So I'm hoping that we can have a fact-based government and elevate this discussion to some evidence-based approaches to these problems. These are not simple challenges; they are very complicated.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Further debate?

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** It's a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 14 this morning—the reincarnation of Bill 65. I do want to welcome Harvey Cooper and other representatives from the co-op housing sector here this morning. I know he was welcomed by the minister responsible for seniors as well, but I think—and I'm not trying to speak for Harvey—he probably believes he has been here too often because, do you know what? We could have had this taken care of, Harvey. Bill 65 was introduced on April 12, 2012.

The member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan made excuses for the prorogation when he was speaking earlier, saying, "We really couldn't have got it through." Hold on a minute, Speaker. We're not completely paralyzed here yet, are we? April 12 was the introduction of that bill, I say to the member—April 12, 2012. This House never rose for the summer till the end of June. It never was called for debate once, until October 2, 2012.

I think Harvey would have liked to probably have visited this place sometime in April or May 2012 and maybe had Bill 65 debated on. Maybe we'd have passed the darn thing before Dalton McGuinty took a walk in the snow, as they say. Of course, there was no snow on October 15, but he was certainly thinking about winter—the winter of our discontent, when all of you folks were out farmed across the province, trying to prove to the people that you were the right one to choose by a few members of the Liberal Party to be the next Premier of Ontario.

I think that when the Liberals get up—and they opened the door; they opened the door to the prorogation discussion. Good Lord, I detect a guilty conscience—

**Mr. Grant Crack:** Did you ever prorogue?

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I detect a guilty conscience, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell was already asked once. Last chance.

Continue.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Speaker, you know it's hard enough for me to keep my train of thought without the interruptions.

I detect a guilty conscience over there. Every time a Liberal gets up to speak, they want to talk about how the prorogation really didn't amount to anything. Well, then stop talking about it. Stop talking about it. Let's get on with the business here. It was wrong. You did it for all the wrong reasons. Dalton McGuinty did it because he didn't want to have any more focus on the scandals that your government has brought on. He didn't want to talk about power plants, he didn't want to talk about Ornge, so he prorogued the House. I understand, but we've got a bill to debate in the House this morning, and they should stop talking about prorogation. They did it. It was their sin. We'll deal with it at a later date.

What I detect here this morning though, too, is that nobody is talking about co-op housing. They're talking about affordable housing. They've taken the debate into their own little areas, so I suspect, then, you're giving a fair bit of latitude on the debate this morning of which I may take advantage, and I may just speak right to the point—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Only if I let you.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I understand, Speaker. I may attempt to take advantage of that, and if you allow me, I will be grateful forever and ever. I'm not sure I'm offering to buy you that beer that the minister offered me, but I will be grateful forever and ever.

I want to talk a little bit about housing in general. The Attorney General said earlier that housing is a basic right, and he's correct. Good Lord, in a country as rich as Canada, in a province as rich as Ontario—getting poorer under this government, I might point out, but still a great province in Canada, the province of opportunity, the province that, historically, everyone looked to as the leader—housing is a basic right, and everyone should expect to have adequate housing.

Having said that, I think that we will always have homelessness, because there are other reasons—sometimes it's mental illness and other challenges. We'll always be having to deal with that, but we also have to have the systems and assistance in place to try to help people who find themselves in that category, as well.

The minister talked about his mother. I'll talk about my mother-in-law a little bit. She lives in a rental unit in Eganville, 89 Bruce Street—hardest-working person I've ever known. She's going to be 80 this year. It's only a couple of years ago that she quit cleaning other people's homes to make a little extra money. She has no income other than what she gets from the government. Her husband has been dead a long time. She never worked out of the home. She came from Germany in 1954 with my wife as her young daughter, and has just struggled through her entire life, but she never complains. She just puts her shoulder to the wheel and keeps working and doing whatever she can to help others. That's the kind of woman Elma Smith, my mother-in-law, is. She struggles

and she struggles, but I am extremely proud of how she has faced the challenges that she has in life. She won't be happy that I mentioned her in debate today, but I feel compelled that I must.

Our expectations in housing have changed so much over the years—our expectations of society. You know, when I was growing up, when I was a young boy—today, our kids all have always had their own rooms—I didn't have my own room. I shared a room, not with one, not with two, not with three, not with four, but five other brothers. I shared a room with five other brothers—

**Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:** Good night, John-Boy.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Yes, good night, John. It was like the Waltons.

But I'm one of 10 boys. I live in the same house that we grew up in—we're a much smaller family today than I grew up in, a much smaller family today—but it's just life's expectations. People expect more and more today. I'm just pointing that out to my own children, I think.

**1010**

Let's talk about the bill here—but you know, I don't have any complaints, because you always had somebody to talk to in that room with five other brothers. It was never a lonely time falling asleep, you know? And presumably, I didn't snore when I was that young, so I didn't bother everybody else.

Let's get to the bill, Bill 14. I think that's the matter at hand today. Basically, as I see it—and I want to thank my colleague Steve Clark, our critic for municipal affairs and housing, a great member from the great riding of Leeds–Grenville, where my great friend Bob Runciman hailed from before him. I want to congratulate Steve on the tremendous work he has done on behalf of our caucus on this file. I know how closely he has worked with Harvey Cooper and his people as well.

As I understand it—and I'm not, obviously, as well versed on this bill as my colleague might be. But one of the essential components of the act is to allow—when there are disputes between the operators of co-op housing and tenants in co-op housing, they can now go to the Landlord and Tenant Board to settle the dispute as opposed to going to the courts. I share the Attorney General's view that the courts are not the place to settle disputes such as that.

We have essentially supported the bill, Mr. Speaker. We committed to supporting Bill 65 on second reading in the House whenever the government finally got around to bringing that to second reading—but I'm not talking about the prorogation; they keep talking about it. So we bring the bill back—it's now Bill 14—and we're debating this bill. That is the right thing to do, to allow the Landlord and Tenant Board to deal with those disputes.

We do have situations, and it's not an either/or. When you have disputes, it means there are two parties that can't agree. Sometimes one is completely wrong and sometimes the other is completely wrong, but most times there's a little bit of a shared responsibility. It's just like a discussion or an argument with someone else. I say “discussions.” When I have a discussion with my wife,

usually I am entirely wrong. Then there are some other people who have discussions with their wife, and they might share some of the responsibility. In my case, it's usually me all the way.

But I want to talk about my wife. My wife is a real estate agent. She has had many situations when she has been charged with the sale of someone's home, and those people have a tenant; and they did a very poor job, maybe, of assessing—what's the word?—evaluating, getting the background on that tenant before they signed the dotted line on the lease. Folks, that is like pulling hen's teeth when you get one of those tenants, and they know they got you, and they ain't leaving.

She has had situations where she has got the house for sale—I'll tell you about one. I say this to the Attorney General. She has got the house for sale, and these people really want to sell because they're older. They want to rid themselves of the asset. So she goes and makes the appointment. You have to call the tenants and make the arrangements, so she calls the tenants and makes the arrangements. See, the tenants don't want the house to be sold because they are not paying the rent and they're behind on hydro, but they don't want to get out. It's like trying to pull a stump that has been cemented in out of the ground when you're trying to pull them out of there.

She gets there for the real estate appointment. Well, they've got about 12 friends there. They're all drinking beer, smoking dope. The lady walks in to buy the house—they turned around and walked out. There's no way in hell they wanted to buy the house at that point. Mission accomplished on the part of that particular tenant.

**Hon. Jeff Leal:** Is this up at Barry's Bay?

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** No, I cannot reveal that. I say that to the member for Peterborough and the Minister of Rural Affairs.

Those are just some of the things that happen in the real world. In the theoretical world of lovey-dovey politics, everybody gets along. But in the real world, there are some real challenges.

In general, as I said, we're supporting the bill. But I do want to ask why they brought in this provision of waiving the fee of \$45 to apply to—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** I thank the member.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** It being that magical time of 10:15, the member will resume when we start again on this debate on this bill. He'll be—

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I could be dead by then.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** You could be.

This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

*The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.*

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I'm pleased to rise today to recognize a number of people who are here from the

great riding of Oxford. To make sure that I listened to you last time, Mr. Speaker: They're here in the members' gallery.

I will go through the names: Deb Tait; Wayne Walden; Monika Rauch; Suzanne Crellin; Heather Gingerich; Reed Elliott; Judah Gingerich; and Robbie Gibson.

They're here as part of a group concerned about a proposed landfill in Oxford. I want to commend them for their work and for bringing forward their concerns, and I want to welcome them to Queen's Park.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I appreciate the member from Oxford's introduction.

Introduction of guests?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Speaker, I am delighted today to introduce members of the Association of Ontario Midwives. They're here for their Queen's Park day. Lisa Weston, Kelly Stadelbauer, Juana Berinstein and Allyson Booth are all here today. Allyson Booth is a special midwife because she helped catch my grandson Pax.

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** Thank you, Speaker. Please help me welcome James Jonker to the visitors' gallery. He's here to watch his son A.J. perform his duties as a page. Welcome.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I am pleased to welcome to the west visitors' gallery this morning Moreen Miller, the CEO of the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association; and also two members of OSSGA: Craig Copping of Rankin Construction and Marlene Yakabuski of Bot Construction, who is also my sister.

**Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:** I am pleased today to introduce my friends who are here from Belmore, Ontario: Kevin and Marilyn Ashley.

**Mr. Rick Nicholls:** It's my pleasure to welcome to the Legislative Assembly today Mr. Steve Baker, president of Union Gas, and Mel Ydreos, all from the great riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex and who, by the way, gave a very compelling presentation of natural gas to our PC caucus this morning.

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** I promise not to say anything about gas and the PC caucus.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to indicate to the House that joining us will be the 9th Pickering Scouts, who were at the launch of the second round of the Great Lakes Guardian Community grant program this morning. The Scouts have been actively involved in teaching youth appreciation and the need for environmental stewardship, along with cleaning up garbage from streams and marshes, and encouraging the use of freshwater resources for recreation so youth can appreciate the value and need to preserve our Great Lakes.

Welcome to the 9th Pickering Scouts.

**Hon. David Zimmer:** I'd like to recognize the presence of some visitors from my riding of Willowdale. Stephanie Tom is going to be a page captain this week, and her family is visiting to wish her well. Joining us are Jack and May Tom, Stephanie's grandparents; Julie and Christopher Tom, Stephanie's parents; and Stephanie's sisters, Katherine and Evelyn Tom. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Just before we move into question period, I will offer a gentle reminder. I'm not upset about it, but I would ask you to get to your introductions and leave the editorials aside, as it creates discourse with statements and all of those other rules that do apply. I would ask for everyone's indulgence, to allow me to not be seen as picking on the member from Oxford. It is actually convention for us just to do the introductions, and I'd appreciate it if we stuck to that as best we could.

It is now time for question period.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### POWER PLANTS

**Mr. Victor Fedeli:** My question is for the Premier. Your government said it would cost \$180 million to cancel the Mississauga gas plant. Then you added \$10 million in financing; it's now \$190 million. That's your number; it has been in the papers a hundred times.

But I have new documents here, Speaker, that show a "side deal" which provided an additional \$5 million "above the amount of \$10 million."

The cost is more than \$190 million but, Premier, you already knew that. In the 600 just-released documents, there is proof that cabinet had this back in 2011, yet you stood here in 2012 and said, "You have all the documents," knowing full well that we did not have this document at that time.

Premier, will you admit that you said one thing but knew the absolute opposite to be true?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** To the Minister of Energy.

**Hon. Bob Chiarelli:** The opposition are trying to count the number of angels on the head of a pin.

We have a committee that is looking into this. The Premier has indicated that she's willing to go and be a witness at committee, where they can produce documents, where they can put them in front of witnesses, so they can answer the questions in a credible matter.

The Premier has been outstanding in her clarity, in her transparency, in opening up the process. We have nothing to apologize for. We look forward in every way possible to answering these questions in a professional manner, with the proper documents in front of us, instead of somebody waving a piece of paper in question period and expecting any credible answer to come out of that—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Order, please. Thank you.

Supplementary?

**Mr. Victor Fedeli:** The page that I'm referring to was in the secret documents that were released in the fourth document dump.

Premier, in July 2011, a cabinet minute on Project Vapour, your government's code name for the Oakville

gas plant cancellation, was circulated. You were a member of cabinet at that time. But on September 25, 2012, you stood in this House and stated that "all of the documents that have been released ... are the ones that were asked for."

Premier, you said that, but you knew full well at that time that all of the documents were not released. So I ask you today, do you stand by your statement in the House at that time, or will you stand today and apologize to the members of this House and the people of Ontario?

**Hon. Bob Chiarelli:** All parties asked for the relocation of the Mississauga gas plant. That's on record. What also is on record is that this government won power again, and we fulfilled our commitment and our promise and we relocated it.

We then asked the Ontario Power Authority to provide us with the cost of relocating the power plant in Mississauga. They provided us with that information; we made that information public.

I want to add again that we were transparent and forthright in asking the chair and the CEO of OPA to come here and answer questions before the media for an hour. They said clearly and precisely that the release of documents was a decision of the OPA, and that they made it of their own will, of their own volition, without interference. It was clear there's absolutely no contempt, and there's absolute transparency from this side of the House.

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

**Mr. Victor Fedeli:** Premier, this newly released material, the 600 secret pages presented today, prove that you and your members did indeed know we did not have all of the documents. Yet one by one, they stood here and said something opposite to that fact.

The member from Sudbury said, "All the documents associated to those gas plants were released."

1040

The member from Guelph said, "The minister has in fact tabled all the documents." These are members of cabinet who had the secret document. The member from Peterborough said, "All the documents that have been requested have certainly been delivered"—even though this new document proves, new information proves, they knew.

The list is very, very long, Premier, of your members who stood up. If you won't apologize, will you at least ask your members to?

**Hon. Bob Chiarelli:** The opposition continues to ask questions, trying to parse and analyze what has happened. It's very, very clear what happened, Mr. Speaker. It's extremely clear what—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, come to order. The member from Leeds-Grenville, come to order.

**Hon. Bob Chiarelli:** I want to again refer to the CEO of the Ontario Power Authority. The question that was asked to him was, "At any point during these searches"

for documents “—we are talking about all of them, not just this one—did you feel you were under a great deal of political pressure to either produce or not produce records?” The answer was a clear no.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, the question to Colin Andersen, “Are you sure you were not under any pressure from the government to delay telling when you had those documents? Why that time?” The answer was, “Government had no involvement in regard to the timing of our disclosure. It was totally our decision.” The information is very clear.

#### POWER PLANTS

**Mr. Todd Smith:** My question is for the Deputy Premier this morning. We know that in July 2011, cabinet was aware of the existence of Project Vapour. That’s your government’s code name for the Oakville gas plant cancellation. You were in cabinet at that time. But on October 2 of last year, you stood in the House and stated, “The Minister of Energy has complied with the request to release the documents.”

You knew of the existence of Project Vapour more than a year earlier, and you also knew that none of the Project Vapour documents were released by the government initially. So what I want to know and what the people of Ontario want to know is, do you stand by your statement of October 2, or do you believe that it’s not part of your job to read confidential cabinet emails?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** To the government House leader.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Lanark will withdraw.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** I withdraw.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, you provided a ruling to this House on the very issue of statements that were made by members of this Legislature about the issue of documents during the debate and question period during that period, and I congratulate you on your ruling.

But I think there is a bigger issue at play here, and that is that the justice committee has begun its work. I confess that I slipped out of the House yesterday during my House duty to watch it on TV, and I’m not sure if all members are aware of this—I could not believe my eyes. The government brought forward a motion at that committee to offer all government documents on the power plants. They brought it forward. Mr. Speaker, do you know what PCs and the NDP did? They joined together to vote against it, Mr. Speaker. They put their hands up unanimously to vote against it, that they didn’t want this—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Nepean–Carleton will come to order.

Supplementary?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** First of all, I’m standing. Second of all, I’ve asked you to stop. Third, when I do get the quiet, people start up again. I’m going to remind you that I’m not going to tolerate that, because the only way in which we can make this thing work is you.

Supplementary?

**Mr. Todd Smith:** That was the motion that the member is referring to that was ruled out of order by the Clerk, I’m assuming; right.

My question is back to the Deputy Premier. Cabinet knew and was briefed on Project Vapour. That means you knew what it was, and you were briefed on it as well. You knew during debate on the contempt motion last October that no Project Vapour documents had been released, but that didn’t stop you from saying, “The documents have been tabled. That work has been done.”

Minister, I’m going to give you a chance here. You’ve known at least since the second batch of documents were released on October 12 that you made an incorrect statement to the House on October 2. Will you stand and correct your record and apologize to the people of Ontario?

**Hon. John Milloy:** Mr. Speaker, I think if anyone needs to correct their record, it’s the honourable member who just stood up and talked about what happened at the committee yesterday. A motion went forward to the committee, put forward by government members, to produce all documents on the gas plant issue held by the government of Ontario. I watched on television as members of the Progressive Conservative Party and members of the New Democratic Party voted against that. I was going to call Legislative Assembly television to say, “There’s something wrong with my television; the opposition will not take yes for an answer and they would not vote for it.”

They talk about how they want to get to the truth, but it’s all just talk. When we have offered them, over and over again, initiatives for them to allow to look into this matter, they have repeatedly turned them down, Mr. Speaker. I think they have some explaining to do.

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

**Mr. Todd Smith:** The political games are continuing. Every time I turned on my TV yesterday, there was no committee on there because the government continued to recess time after time after time. Political games are continuing on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

My question is back to the Deputy Premier. You were a senior official on the last Liberal campaign. You’ve been a senior cabinet minister for both the old Premier and the current one. You were involved in briefings to cabinet and minutes distributed by the secretary of cabinet about Project Vapour. If anybody knew about Project Vapour, it had to be you. Yet for months, you’ve risen in the House day after day. You’ve refused to correct your record about statements that were incorrect.

Why don't you folks do the honourable thing? You know you were saying incorrect statements in the House; stand up and correct your record, like the House leader did.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Mr. Speaker, let's review. First, the member from Cambridge tells us that a public inquiry would be too expensive. Then the member from Nipissing holds a press conference asking for a public inquiry. Then we offer the opposition a select committee, and the opposition says no; they want to go on a mean-spirited, vindictive witch hunt against the former Minister of Energy. Then we come forward and offer to broaden the mandate of the committee, Mr. Speaker, and it takes them a week to get back to us. Then the government yesterday puts forward a motion at the committee offering to produce every government document on the gas plant, and they, to my astonishment and the astonishment of everyone watching, vote against it.

### HEALTH CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Ma question est pour la première ministre. Speaker, I am hopeful that the government will take the good advice of the New Democrats and introduce my private member's bill, the Skin Cancer Prevention Act, to finally protect our youth from cancer by banning the use of tanning beds for minors. It would be a good thing to do—a good small step but an important one.

As the Premier knows, though, there are more than 6,000 people waiting for home care, and sometimes, the waits stretch for over 260 days. Will the Premier take action on a five-day home care guarantee?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I think the member opposite knows that we are very keen to work with her on the issue around tanning beds and cancer prevention initiatives, Mr. Speaker. I know that the Minister of Health and she have been talking, and I am very much looking forward to us being able to find common cause on this. Again, I think this is one of these issues that really is not partisan. I think that there is lots of evidence that demonstrates that this is a direction that we should be going. So, as I say, we very much look forward to working with her on this legislation.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I tend to agree with what the Premier has said: that banning tanning for youth is not partisan. It's actually a no-brainer. If you ask any of those youth in the gallery, they will tell you that it's the right thing to do.

Bringing a guarantee of five days for home care is also a no-brainer. We know that there is work to do in home care, but we would like a simple commitment. We would like this Premier to commit to a five-day guarantee so that people don't have to wait. Is the Premier willing to do that?

1050

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** This is an issue that the member opposite also mentioned in her first question.

Mr. Speaker, it's again another area that we have been, I have been, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has been very clear on: that as we transform our health care system, one of the foundational pieces of that transformation is making sure that people get the health care that they need, where they need it and in a timely way. Moving those services out of acute care hospitals into homes, into the community, is a fundamental part of what we need to do in order to make the health care system sustainable.

We know that there is more to do, Mr. Speaker. We have spent millions of dollars and have provided millions of hours more of home care. We know there's more to do, and I think it's, again, an area that we can work together on.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** For the thousands and thousands of Ontarians who are waiting for home care right now, they would like to see real results. They would like to see improvements to our broken home care system, and they would like to see improvement in their own lives.

The government seems willing to move ahead with some proposals but unwilling to do things such as capping CEOs' salaries, and you seem unwilling to implement the five-day guarantee for home care. People want to go beyond working together to actually getting results, and the way that they describe results to us is getting a five-day guarantee for home care services.

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

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Again, I am delighted that the NDP is focusing on the need to enhance home care, because we are in complete agreement with that.

We are making progress, Speaker. We do measure wait times, and what we're saying is that now 90% of people who are referred to home care from hospital upon discharge are waiting less than seven days, so we're getting close to the five-day wait there. If referred when they're already in the community, that wait is nine days, but it was 13 days, so we have gone from 13 days to nine days.

We are making additional investments in home care because we do want people to get the home care they need so they can stay home safely, so that they do not need to go to hospital unnecessarily and they can be discharged from hospital when they're ready.

### PROROGATION

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Would the Premier agree that the decision last fall to shut down the Legislature was a mistake that shouldn't be repeated?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I have been quite clear that my predecessor made the decision that he believed he needed to make in order to be able to give an opportunity for a leadership in order for us to be able to

work with our broader public sector partners and to come to some agreements. All of that happened, Mr. Speaker.

I was committed to bringing the Legislature back as quickly as possible on the legislative calendar. There were many who said it couldn't be done, but we did it. We were back on February 19. We're here, and the work of the people of Ontario is going on.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Premier, people are getting cynical about politics, and we owe it to them to do better.

Last fall, the government made a desperate attempt to win majority power in a by-election. They used divisive tactics that created chaos in our schools. When all of those games failed to deliver a win, they shut the doors to the Legislature to avoid any sort of accountability.

Does the Premier understand that this is exactly what is making people cynical about politics in the province of Ontario?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I know the member opposite is very genuine in her desire to have real engagement in politics and for people to feel optimistic and hopeful about their politicians. I know the member opposite, and I know that that is her desire. Mr. Speaker, I feel exactly the same way.

I made a commitment that we would bring the Legislature back as quickly as possible, Mr. Speaker. We did. Every party in this Legislature has used the rules of prorogation at one time or another, has made decisions on legislative procedure, has made those decisions in the context that that is the parliamentary history and the existing rules.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that what is most important is that we make our interactions real, that we make sure that we reflect the needs and the desires of the people of Ontario and that, to the very best of all of our abilities, we allow the business of the people of the province to go ahead so that people get the services that they need in this province.

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

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Premier, I had the honour of being elected in that by-election, and 11 days after I arrived here in this House, the Legislature was shut down. I don't think that's acceptable, and the people who sent me here don't think it's acceptable either.

Tomorrow, we'll be debating a bill that would stop the partisan use of prorogation in the future. Can I count on the Premier's support?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I welcome the discussion that's going to happen in the Legislature tomorrow. I think some of the most interesting discussion in this place happens in private members' bills, because there are issues that come forward that reflect some very specific opinions and desires of people in the province. I look forward to hearing the debate in the Legislature. I don't think that there is any rule, any process or any tradition that can't be questioned and discussed. I think it is a very worthy subject that the member opposite is bringing

forward, and, as I say, I will be listening very carefully to the debate.

## POWER PLANTS

**Mr. Rod Jackson:** My question is not for the House leader; it's actually for the Minister of Finance. Since the minister was a key beneficiary of the billion-dollar gas plant scandal, I'm hoping I can derive some insight from him directly about the gas plant cancellations.

Last fall, he stood before this House to tell us about the documents. Apparently, and I quote you from Hansard, Minister, "The government put each and every document on a USB key," and, I quote from Hansard, "The request of the committee for these documents has been satisfied."

Finally, in Hansard again, he assured us, before three reluctant document dumps, that the energy minister "has complied with the committee's request and the ruling of the Speaker."

Minister, you knew full well at the time that none of the Project Vapour documents were among those that had been released by the government prior. Luckily, credibility didn't factor into your recent promotion. Minister, do you think it's time to correct the record and apologize to the people who voted for you and to the people of Ontario about the gas plant cancellations?

**Hon. Charles Sousa:** This is what I do know: I know I fought for my community before I was even elected. I fought for my community when I sat in the rump. I asked for support from the Conservatives and the NDP to support the issue, and I continue to do so. I fought for my community. I will continue to fight for all of Ontario on this issue—

*Interjections.*

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

**Hon. Charles Sousa:** —and I don't apologize for that. I did the right thing—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Order, please. The member from Renfrew will come to order.

Supplementary?

**Mr. Rod Jackson:** The McGuinty-Wynne campaign team did not believe the minister could retain his seat on his own in the last election, obviously, so as a reward, they infused his campaign efforts with at least \$190 million in tax dollars by cancelling the Mississauga gas plant. Then he had the gall to stand before the House last fall, trying to convince anyone who would listen that his government was complying with committee requests for the information. Instead, this was followed by one document dump after another document dump after another, confirming that the minister was one of the key beneficiaries of the gas plant cancellations. This minister was then boosted to treasurer of Ontario, despite the lack of confidence in his credibility in winning fairly in his own riding.

Minister, will you correct the record today, do the right thing and the honourable thing, and apologize to the

hard-working families of Ontario who ensured you have a job here today?

**Hon. Charles Sousa:** To the House leader.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Mr. Speaker, I am very, very happy—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Kitchener–Conestoga, come to order. The member from Lanark, come to order. Anyone else?

Carry on.

**Hon. John Milloy:** I'm very happy to talk about what went on in Mississauga South, and here's an oldie but a goldie: "Hi there. This is Geoff Janoscik, your Mississauga South Ontario PC candidate. I'm calling about the McGuinty-Sousa power plant that the Liberal government decided to build in your backyard. I'm against this power plant, and as your MPP, I will fight to stop the power plant from being built.... Our team has been out knocking on doors every single evening for several months, talking about the power plant and making sure that we defeat the Liberals in this riding and put an end to their bad decisions. On October 6, choose change that puts our community first."

All parties of this House were opposed to it. My question to the PCs is, when are they going to let their documents and their—

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

New question.

1100

## CASINOS

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** My question to the Premier: MGM Resorts has retained Metrolinx head Robert Prichard as lobbyist for their proposed casino. One of the pressing issues for the casino at Exhibition Place is gridlock, yet the chair of the very organization that is in charge of finding the solution, the chair that the Liberal government appointed, is a lobbyist for a casino in Toronto.

Is the Premier comfortable with a Liberal appointee lobbying for a casino over the objections of the people of Toronto?

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

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

*Interjections.*

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** I have lots of time.

*Interjections.*

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** Mr. Speaker?

*Interjection.*

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** Okay. Mr. Prichard has done the right thing. He is—

*Interjections.*

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

It's kind of disappointing on both sides. The nuances of this place require me to have quick conversations. I

would recommend to everybody that we allow that to happen, and at the same time, when somebody is seeking to have quiet, that you don't amplify.

Carry on.

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You asked us to take a race to the top; I don't think that's happening today.

Mr. Prichard has done the right thing. He properly sought the advice of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, which is what all of us should do in those situations. He did that of his own volition. I am confident that the chair of the board will follow the rules and continue to take the advice of the commissioner going forward. The commissioner has provided excellent advice.

The decision we should be discussing right now, quite frankly, is the important conversations that Metrolinx is trying to have with the public and is having very successfully.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. John Tory called 2013 a turning point for transit investment in the region. He is on board with the Big Move and the need to make smart transit investments for the future.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** Speaker, I'm going to go back to the Premier; the question was for her.

Torontonians are turning up by the thousands to make it clear they don't want a casino. Yet this government is ignoring the voice of the people whose communities will be affected.

Torontonians can see the government's utter disregard for the wishes of the community, but that's the case across Ontario, from Hamilton to Kingston.

Will the Premier be listening more closely to Liberal insiders or will she be allowing municipalities to decide this issue through referendums in the next round of municipal elections? Whose voice will she listen to?

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** Mr. Speaker, this government is unmatched in the history of this province in respect for municipal government. We are uploading services. We have turned over to municipal councils the proper authority to go with their responsibility. We gave the city of Toronto the City of Toronto Act, which is the most progressive piece of municipal legislation in North America. The city of Toronto has more taxing and control over its spending authority than any other municipal government in North America. It is the envy of everything.

Our Premier rightly has stood up and said that she will respect, as will this government, the decisions of the city of Toronto and other municipalities regarding casinos. I meet with my city councillors—Councillor McConnell, Councillor Wong-Tam and others—who think that we are showing the proper respect for the city, and they're thankful for it. Since some of them are members of his party, maybe he should talk to them.

## ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

**Mr. Phil McNeely:** This question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Minister, last summer, farmers across the province experienced dry, hot weather for

extended periods, which impacted their crops. This in turn affected the growth and availability of livestock forages.

In response to this, the government worked with farmers to assess the damage and initiated an Agri-Recovery file with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada—which, as you know, is a responsive program under the Growing Forward sweep of the national Business Risk Management program.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you please provide the House with an update on the Agri-Recovery file?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I want to thank the member for this question—thank you very much.

I just want to take a moment to explain how the program works. The AgriRecovery program, Mr. Speaker, is triggered by provincial requests, not federal. That's how the program is designed nationally. It was my colleague, the former Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, who requested an assessment under the Agri-Recovery program in July of last year. That led to a federal-provincial task team being struck to work on assessing damage done by the drought and related impacts on Ontario livestock producers.

While that assessment was under way, the provincial and federal governments agreed to jointly provide immediate support of up to \$500,000 upfront, and then up to \$2.5 million to match donations in support of Hay-East. The provincial and federal governments worked as quickly as possible to complete the AgriRecovery assessment and to negotiate the details of the Canada-Ontario Forage and Livestock Transportation Assistance Initiative.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Phil McNeely:** Thank you, Speaker, and through you to the minister: I'm glad to hear that the federal government had been willing to co-operate with the Ontario government in assisting farmers during this difficult period. I've heard from farmers in my constituency, and they are pleased the program is available for them this year.

Nevertheless, this has not been easy for anyone. Farmers are concerned about the timing of the program and whether it will be effective for them. Specifically, there has been a call for an extension of the program.

Minister, can you please address this concern?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I've heard this a number of times. I heard it from the members opposite, but I also heard it directly from farmers, that there was an issue around the timing.

So last week I asked ministry staff to look at options for extending the timelines and to work with the federal government on extending the existing program, because that would require their co-operation. Right now, ministry and Agricorp staff are available to assist producers with their application forms because part of the issue around the timing—and this is what farmers have said to me—is that the forms are very complicated, and so they need some support in helping to fill those out, Mr.

Speaker. I'm looking forward to that federal-provincial collaboration.

I just want to comment that this support that I spoke about in the first part of my answer was actually on top of existing business risk management programs, especially \$106 million from Ontario's own Risk Management Program. So these were additive dollars.

## POWER PLANTS

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** My question today is for the Minister of Transportation. In July 2011, a cabinet minute on Project Vapour—your government's code name for the Oakville gas plant cancellation—was circulated. You were a member of cabinet at that time. But on September 26, 2012, you stood in the House and stated, "I have looked at them. I don't see a lot wanting. I don't see much substantive that's missing." Minister, you knew full well at that time that none of the Project Vapour documents were among those that had been released by your government prior.

Minister, I ask you today: Do you stand by your statement in the House that I just read to you, or will you do the honourable thing today and apologize to the members of this House and to the people of Ontario?

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** To the government House leader.

**Hon. John Milloy:** I'd like to share some quotes with the member opposite here. On October 1, 2011, the Leader of the Opposition talking about the Mississauga power plant: "We don't support ... it."

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

From October 5, 2011, the *Canadian Press*: "Asked if he'd scrap the Mississauga plant if he formed the next government, Hudak replied"—and this is my favourite—"That's right. Done. Done, done, done."

So my question to the honourable member is, why will the Progressive Conservatives not come forward with the costing and the policy analysis they did in terms of cancelling this plant? It obviously is a top-of-mind issue, it's the only question they've asked here today, and I'm sure they have a lot to talk about their position going into that election and why they opposed it.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** I asked the question to Minister Murray. It's too bad you've got to turn the question over to this guy.

We know Project Vapour was a term cabinet was aware of, discussed and was briefed on back in 2011. You knew what it meant and what it referred to, that being the Oakville cancellation. You knew when you stood in the House to debate the contempt motion last September that no Project Vapour documents had been released to anyone, yet you said, "Unless we have evidence to the contrary, it is our responsibility to take their word as honourable people."

1110

Obviously their word wasn't good enough, and neither is yours. Your credibility is on the ropes here, so please don't pass this question on. You're part of the Liberal team that spent a billion dollars to save the political careers of five of your seatmates.

I ask you again: Will you stand in the house today and apologize to the hard-working people of Ontario, and will you ask all of your Liberal colleagues to do the same thing? Please answer the question. Don't—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Be seated, please. Government House leader?

**Hon. John Milloy:** Mr. Speaker, that member opposite was part of a Progressive Conservative team that went into the last election over and over again and talked about how they would cancel the plant in Mississauga.

We have asked them again and again to talk about their costing, to talk about their policy analysis, to table the information that I know they must have about the work they've done.

Mr. Speaker, the promise they made was to cancel the plant. "Done, done, done," said the Leader of the Opposition. At the end of the day, it was a promise they made and it was a promise we kept.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** New question.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Order, please. Order.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Order.

Now, as we get to this point where I do get attention: For those who are not sitting in their seats, I will ask them to sit in them so I can call them to order anyway.

New question. The member from Kenora-Rainy River.

#### PROPERTY TAXATION

**Ms. Sarah Campbell:** Thank you, Speaker. To the Minister of Finance: Municipalities across the north have expressed deep concern with the MPAC assessment process. A few weeks ago, the city of Dryden received devastating news that MPAC had reduced the assessment of its Domtar mill by an astonishing 72%. This reassessment will result in the city losing \$1 million in property taxes this year and having to repay Domtar \$5.4 million, or roughly 25% of its operating budget for the past four years.

Will the minister act now to review this flawed process that threatens to devastate small communities across the province and issue a stay of decision until a permanent solution is found?

**Hon. Charles Sousa:** Thank you for the question. It is something that I addressed yesterday as well in this House. It's something that we are going to look at. I know the ARB decisions have been made. We are taking the extra steps to ensure that they're making progress, and I've asked my staff to look into it.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary? The member from Welland.

**Ms. Cindy Forster:** My question is to the Minister of Finance as well. Last week Niagara Falls and the surrounding region were ordered to repay the Niagara-area casinos \$16 million after an MPAC reassessment of the casinos. In addition, local governments will lose an additional \$6 million in future tax revenue from those casinos.

Will this government order an immediate review of the Niagara casino reassessment decision, which threatens to devastate another community in Niagara and in this province?

**Hon. Charles Sousa:** Mr. Speaker, the member from Niagara Falls actually approached me on this yesterday as well. As I've said repeatedly, it's something that we're reviewing. We want to make certain that the process is appropriate and that we're taking the necessary steps to facilitate municipalities.

Certainly, this government has gone out of its way to upload as many services as we can, to provide the supports necessary to municipalities, and we'll always partner with them. We recognize there is only one taxpayer in this system. We have to make certain that the public and those who are affected are appropriately assessed. We will do everything necessary to protect them as well.

#### WOMEN'S ISSUES

**Ms. Soo Wong:** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. As you know, this week is International Women's Week. This is a time to celebrate and reflect on the leadership and achievements of women around the world and right here in Ontario. This week, we recognize how much the women's movement has accomplished over the past 100 years.

Our province made history this year with the first-ever female Premier, and I'm very proud that that is part of this history.

Of course, we know that there's more work to be done, especially when it comes to the violence women continue to face. Domestic violence is a very serious problem that crosses economic, social and cultural barriers. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What is our government doing to halt domestic violence and support victims?

**Hon. Laurel C. Broten:** Thank you to the member from Scarborough-Agincourt for asking this important question, and for her advocacy on this issue.

The member is right: Violence against women is far too prevalent in our society. Every woman deserves to live her life free of fear. Every child deserves to grow up knowing there is no threat of violence in their home.

The importance of this theme is recognized in this year's International Women's Day. The United Nations theme is "A promise is a promise: Time for action to end violence against women."

What we have seen is by working together, we can better support victims and we can put an end to domestic

violence in the long term. We've seen the positive effects of our efforts in that regard. That's why the province supports the Neighbours, Friends and Families public education campaign. It's a campaign that teaches people how to recognize the signs of abuse and what they can do to help. It's why we've trained 28,000 front-line workers and it's why we have expanded language interpretation services.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Soo Wong:** These are extremely important initiatives our government has taken to help women who are victims of domestic violence.

We know that one of the best ways to help women escape these circumstances is to help them achieve economic independence. I'm very proud as a member of this government, which has consistently prioritized the economic independence of women in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt.

In a time when we have to reinvent our economy through new and innovative businesses, we find women who wish to start their own business but are faced with economic barriers. We know that with the right skills, training and support, we can remove these barriers and help women become successful business owners and entrepreneurs.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What is the government doing to help low-income women get the skills and support they need to build their own small businesses and careers?

**Hon. Laurel C. Broten:** Microlending has been proven to be effective in lifting women out of poverty here in Ontario and around the world. I was so proud to stand with my colleague, now the Minister of Research and Innovation, to announce the establishment of the Microlending for Women in Ontario program to add to this record.

Through this program, we are going to help low-income women start and build their own businesses. With a commitment of \$760,000 over the next three fiscal years, our government will use the microlending program to help low-income women across the province. Under the program, as many as 400 women who are business-ready will be eligible for microloans to help them build and grow their businesses.

In the words of Kirsten Eastwood, the executive director of the Women's Centre for York Region, "We wanted to create a well-rounded program that would not only give applicants the knowledge and support needed to run a successful business but the self-confidence to start one from the ground up."

#### POWER PLANTS

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. In the weeks leading up to the 2011 general election, a cabinet document was circulated, using the code name Project Vapour. It has since been determined that this was your government's veiled reference to the Oakville gas plant cancellation.

Obviously you were a member of the cabinet at that time, but on October 1 of this past year, you stood in this House and stated—and I quote from Hansard—"Documents were requested, flags were raised, the debate and the discussion ensued and the documents in their entirety have been provided to this Legislature."

When you made that statement, you were well aware of the fact that no Project Vapour documents had been provided by your government. In light of this, I would ask whether you are sticking to your previous statement, which I just read, or whether you will do the honourable thing and apologize to the members of this House and the people of Ontario.

**Hon. Linda Jeffrey:** Government House leader.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Mr. Speaker, we are in the 21st century, so let's talk about Twitter, shall we?

Just to echo back what the member said, tell me about the weeks leading up to the 2011 election when Geoff Janoscik, the Mississauga South PC candidate, was tweeting the following: "An Ontario PC govt will stop the plant for good." That was September 24, 2011. The next day he tweeted, "@timhudak government will cancel this power plant." The same day he tweeted, "A @timhudak PC govt will cancel the east Miss power plant once and for all."

Again, since the Progressive Conservative Party has spent the entire question period talking about it—

*Interjection.*

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

**Hon. John Milloy:** —I imagine there is accounting, there is costing, there are policy documents, and we look forward to seeing those, and having the Progressive Conservative Party explain their position heading into the last election.

1120

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I again try to give the opportunity back to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to apologize. We all know very well that the cabinet had the documents relating to Project Vapour. She was a member of that cabinet at that time. I can repeat the quote if she likes, but we know what she said.

I'm giving her an opportunity—she's an honourable lady—to apologize to the people of the Legislature and the people of Ontario. So, I ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to please answer the question, not the House leader who has already apologized.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Mr. Speaker, if I can borrow from some of the heckles that have come from my side of the House: When the horse is dead, it's time to dismount.

I mean the simple fact is that last October—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Order.

House leader.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Mr. Speaker, last October, I rose in this House, as did the then Minister of Energy, and provided an explanation to the Legislature about the

situation related to comments that were made during the debate that the member references. At the same time, several weeks ago, a point of privilege was made and yesterday, Mr. Speaker, you delivered your ruling. I think the tradition of this House, if I'm not mistaken, is that the matter has been dealt with.

Again, there are all sorts of questions surrounding the gas plant issue, and we look forward to learning about the Progressive Conservatives and the work that they did heading up to the 2011 election, and their very firm promise to relocate this gas plant.

#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** My question is to the Premier. Senior citizens are very concerned and losing sleep in London. Residents of the Cherryhill apartment complex may not be able to afford to keep a roof over their heads if the Ontario Landlord and Tenant Board allows a corporate developer to slap them with huge retroactive rent increases above and beyond the legal yearly limit.

My question is simple: What will this government do to protect seniors living on a fixed income in London and across the province from unaffordable rent hikes?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Linda Jeffrey:** I want to thank the member for the question. Obviously I wouldn't be talking about a specific issue, but certainly this ministry works very closely with municipalities and landlords in order to find a solution because affordable housing, as everybody knows, is something that our government has been working on very hard over the last decade, and has made a difference. Affordable housing is certainly a strong need for those vulnerable populations like our seniors, and it's something that we work hard to find a resolution to.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Speaker, the Ontario Liberal budget in 2012 cut the operating budget of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for the fourth time in the last four years, and that's a 12% reduction from 2009.

Back to the Premier: Seniors living in the Cherryhill apartment complex are worried sick about making ends meet. Yesterday, over 200 seniors went through the ordeal of climbing on a bus and sitting all day through an Ontario Landlord and Tenant Board hearing that will decide if many of them can afford to stay in their homes. This isn't the kind of excursion Ontario seniors should have to make.

When will this government commit to protecting seniors living on a fixed income from massive rent hikes they simply can't afford?

**Hon. Linda Jeffrey:** Certainly this government believes that safe, affordable housing contributes to the health and the livelihoods of our communities. We work hard to find resolutions and limits to the amount of increases, and the Landlord and Tenant Board is one of

those tribunals that can help those individuals find a resolution—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Renfrew, come to order—again.

**Hon. Linda Jeffrey:** Certainly our government has invested more in affordable housing than any other government before. We're proud of our record. It's something that we can work on with municipalities and with residents' groups, and I look forward to working with the member on this.

#### ABORIGINAL LAND CLAIMS

**Mr. Grant Crack:** My question is to the very knowledgeable Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. I've been hearing a lot about the Algonquin land claim in eastern Ontario. In my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, we're also reading about it in the local news, and we're also hearing about it on local radio. More specifically, we're hearing about some of the specific elements of what we can expect to see in a proposed settlement.

Speaker, it sounds as though there has been significant progress made in the negotiation of the Algonquin land claim. Can the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs please provide us with an update regarding the status of the land claim negotiations and what this means for my constituents in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and for all of the people of Ontario?

**Hon. David Zimmer:** Thank you for the question. Canada, Ontario and the Algonquins have been working together for a number of years to resolve the historic aboriginal land claim. A negotiated settlement of the Algonquin land claim will produce Ontario's first modern constitutionally protected treaty.

In December 2012, the negotiators reached a milestone in the negotiation process with the release of their preliminary draft agreement. While this is not the final product, it's a significant development in the negotiations process. The draft preliminary agreement in principle sets out the main elements of a potential settlement. They include: a transfer of certain Ontario crown lands to Algonquin ownership, a financial settlement provided by Canada and Ontario, and defined Algonquin rights related to lands and natural resources.

This is important. No new—

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

**Mr. Grant Crack:** Thank you, Minister, for that thorough answer. It's great to hear that progress is being made in settling this important land claim. I know that once a final settlement is reached, it's going to benefit the economic development of the entire region and will strengthen the relationships that we have with our First Nation partners.

Mr. Speaker, some of my constituents in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell have inquired as to how the proposed elements of the land claim settlement as outlined in the draft agreement in principle will impact them directly.

We all recognize here in this House the importance of public consultations.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: Will there be an opportunity for my constituents to engage directly with members of the negotiating team and have these specific questions answered?

**Hon. David Zimmer:** As I was saying, no new reserves will be created, Algonquin Park will be preserved for the enjoyment of all, and land will not be expropriated from private owners as a result of this settlement.

Now, with respect to the agreement in principle, we've had lengthy negotiations since May: 40 municipal negotiations and two MPP briefings for the opposition members. The preliminary draft treaty is on the website, and at the recent ROMA conference, I met with any number of delegations. There will be public consultations conducted as follows: in Ottawa, in Perth, in Kingston, in North Bay, in Mattawa, in Pembroke, in Bancroft and in Toronto. These public negotiations will be conducted over the next few days.

This government will always conduct its negotiations with the aboriginal community and the people of Ontario in a meaningful way, in a respectful way, and in a transparent way.

#### POWER PLANTS

**Mr. John O'Toole:** My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, in July 2011, a cabinet minute on Project Vapour, code name for the Oakville gas plant cancellation, was circulated. Minister, you were a senior member of—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Attorney General, come to order.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** However, on September 27 last year, you stood—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The Attorney General will come to order. He also knows that I've made a comment about this before: We will always refer to the members by their riding or their role.

Carry on, please.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Thank you very much for that intervention, Mr. Speaker.

I'm reading from Hansard, Minister. This is what you said: "The official opposition and the third party have attempted to create ... a myth that the" Ministry of Energy "wilfully attempted to hide or conceal these documents from the Legislature.... Nothing could be further from the truth." That's what you said.

We know full well that you knew all about Project Vapour, and none of that was released in the documents by your government. You knew that as well.

So I ask you today, Minister: Would you stand and apologize, as minister, to this House for those beguiling remarks to this House?

1130

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** Government House leader.

**Hon. John Milloy:** I'm happy to repeat again: Last October—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I think it's just about enough from everybody.

Minister.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Last October I stood in this House, as did the former Minister of Energy, and provided an explanation of what happened. Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, after careful consideration, you brought forward a ruling—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Leeds-Grenville has a warning.

**Hon. John Milloy:** You brought forward a considered ruling and, Mr. Speaker, I believe it's the tradition of this place that that now means the matter is settled.

But there's a more important issue. I've yet to hear from the Progressive Conservatives or the New Democrats why, yesterday at the committee—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Simcoe-Grey, come to order.

**Hon. John Milloy:** —when the government attempted to put forward a motion—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Member from Stormont, come to order.

**Hon. John Milloy:** —Mr. Speaker, a motion which would have asked the government to produce all the documents that we had on the gas plant, going far beyond anything that had been requested in the past, the opposition voted against it. They talk about transparency, but their actions—

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

**Mr. John O'Toole:** It's a question back to the minister. Minister, I'd ask you not to refer it to the House leader, to receive the same dumb answer every single time.

We knew—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Stop the clock. I suspect that you've gotten the idea that I'm a little on the edge now, and to get the Speaker to that point took a lot. Whoever said that: I can show you.

Finish, please.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister, again, you knew about Project Vapour as a member of cabinet. You were aware of it. It was discussed, and you were briefed. Nothing could be clearer that you knew full well—what I repeated to you, in Hansard, which you said on the 27th. You knew full well—I believe that you misled the House. All I'm asking from you today is to—

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member will withdraw.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I withdraw that remark. I could probably use another word.

But what I'm saying is, all I'm asking you to do is to take the opportunity—the galleries are full; the people of Ontario are listening—to please stand up and withdraw the remark, or at least apologize. Take this opportunity—

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Thank you. Government House leader.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Again, I respond to some of the heckles I'm hearing when I refer to yesterday's committee meeting.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Haldimand–Norfolk, come to order.

**Hon. John Milloy:** Mr. Speaker, I have here a transcript of the vote that was called for by the Chair. It says: “We are now ready to proceed with the vote”—that's on the government motion. “Those in favour again of the motion minus paragraph 2?”

You know who put their hands up, Mr. Speaker? The government put their hands up, because we are anxious to provide those documents to the committee. You know who opposed it, Mr. Speaker? The members of the Progressive Conservative Party and the members of the New Democratic Party.

And there's this issue of paragraph 2. That was a discussion that we tried to start about political parties coming forward with their documents. But you know what was surprising, Mr. Speaker? When it came to the question of the Progressive Conservatives providing their documents, all of a sudden the opposition didn't want to talk about it. The opposition had absolutely no interest in talking about political parties bringing it forward, Mr. Speaker.

They have lots to explain, Mr. Speaker, and we—

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

#### AIR-RAIL LINK

**Mr. Jonah Schein:** Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Transportation. The NDP has long argued that the new Union Pearson Express line should run on electric, not on diesel trains. On Monday, the minister said that electrification was possible by 2017.

Minister, are you making a firm commitment to run electric trains on the Union Pearson Express line in 2017? To the minister: We would appreciate a simple yes-or-no answer.

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** I have learned in my political life to, quite frankly, under-promise and over-deliver on things. We said—and most of it, we've been able to achieve. Myself and the member from York South–Weston are working very hard together to achieve electrification by that date.

Mr. Speaker, I have always been surprised—and I really do sincerely believe that the third party is very concerned about the environment. This government has been trying to move electrification forward. Our GO trains right now: The new diesel is 75% more clean than the best other diesel in the world.

I live half a block from the Gardiner Expressway, the CNCP line and GO line. I know what the air quality challenges are there. I know that many of these lines run through the same members opposite—this government has closed coal plants and brought air quality up—

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

**Mr. Jonah Schein:** With all due respect, talk is cheap, and the minister has not actually answered our question.

There is no disagreement about this. Metrolinx has said that this should be electrified, and our communities have asked for it to be electrified from the very beginning. Our communities are sick of hearing half-truths and platitudes and broken promises.

Back to the minister: In 2017, will these trains be run on electronic energy or will they be fueled by more Liberal broken promises?

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Renfrew, third time and last.

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** Mr. Speaker, there are three parties in this House and there are three positions on transit. There is the party opposite that thinks that transit projects are bulldozers filling in subway lines; they like to destroy transit. There is the third party that has never really built very much transit, but gee, they like to talk about it a lot. There is this party, that is spending 400% more than previous governments on infrastructure. It's building more rapid transit, more subways, more LRTs; putting more money into it; cleaning up air.

When I came back to Toronto 10 years ago, we had over 50 smog days. Last summer, we hardly had any at all. That's because of cleaner transportation and cleaner energy. You'd think the third party would champion that.

#### MIDWIFERY

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Midwives are gaining popularity in today's society and in my riding of York South–Weston. Midwives now play an integral role in providing health care services to expecting mothers. In our province, however, four out of every 10 women who seek the services of a midwife are unable to obtain one. We need to work to ensure that those who would like access to services offered by midwives are able to do so.

Through you, Speaker, to the minister: Is this government increasing access to midwife services?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Thanks so much to the member for that question. Midwives provide exceptional care to women and babies across Ontario. Their care has been shown to lead to fewer medical and surgical interventions. That provides better value to our health care system and, most importantly, benefits mothers and their babies.

I want to thank midwives for the important work they do, and I want them to know that I'm committed to supporting midwives and giving more Ontario women and families the opportunity to receive the midwife care that they want. We're putting our money where our mouth is:

Funding for the midwifery program is five times what it was when we were elected. We're increasing the number of midwives by 50%. We've increased the number of midwife seats. As a result, more women are getting the care they want from midwives. The new news is, we're adding two new birth centres in this province.

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

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would seek unanimous consent for the House to expect the Liberal Party to expand their vocabulary and include the word "sorry."

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Unanimous consent was sought. Agreed?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I heard a no.

This House has no deferred votes and stands recessed until 3 p.m.

*The House recessed from 1139 to 1500.*

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Mr. Speaker, you know that I don't get visitors very often. Well, today, I do.

It is my pleasure to introduce to you Tammy Stevens, her mother, Christine Stevens, and her sister, Tina Makell. It's also my pleasure to introduce the MP for Nickel Belt, Mr. Claude Gravelle. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** We welcome our guests to the Legislature. You get to tell whether or not it's the same between Ottawa and Ontario, if you watch.

Introduction of guests?

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** It's a shame you missed question period.

The member for Prince Edward–Hastings.

**Mr. Todd Smith:** I'd like to welcome Sharon Shortt, who is the past president of the Quinte and District Real Estate Board and the member of the pack. We welcome her for the first time to Queen's Park.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I'd like to welcome members of the midwifery profession who are giving a lecture here at Queen's Park today. Some of them are from the riding of Durham. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Well, it's a little bit embarrassing, because they don't seem to be here yet, mais les étudiants du Parlement jeunesse devraient être ici dans quelques minutes, donc j'aimerais leur souhaiter la bienvenue à Queen's Park.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Merci beaucoup.

It is now time for statements.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### FAMILY LAW

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Across the province, men and women are calling for change in the way the family law

court system handles sensitive matters before the courts. Designed to help mitigate challenges that arise from unwinding legally recognized partnerships and marriages, today many view the family law court system in Ontario as a barrier to amicable, affordable and timely resolutions.

In Sarnia–Lambton, an advocacy group called Canadians For Family Law Reform have repeatedly tried to schedule an audience with the Ministry of the Attorney General to discuss their ongoing concerns with the family law court system, and as the member of provincial Parliament for Sarnia–Lambton, I have written to the Attorney General on multiple occasions asking that he make the effort to meet with the CFFLR and address their concerns. On each occasion, the Ministry of the Attorney General's staff has refused to hold even a single meeting with these constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to demand that the Attorney General of Ontario direct his immediate attention to the family law court system in Ontario, and respectfully request once again that you immediately meet with Canadians For Family Law Reform to address their concerns with the Family Court system in Ontario.

### TRUE NORTH HARDWOOD PLYWOOD

**Mr. John Vanthof:** True North Hardwood Plywood could have just been another footnote in the history of Timiskaming–Cochrane. The facility had been permanently closed, throwing 200 people out of work—just another casualty of the forestry collapse that swept Ontario, but the people of Cochrane refused to let one of their major employers go down without a fight. They would not take no for an answer.

The community banded together and looked for partners and investors to revive the facility. It was a long, hard fight with a few bumps along the road, but the community persevered and a deal was struck with former employees of the mill, the Taykwa Tagamou Nation and CMV Investments, a company with ready access to the American market.

The new team again faced many hurdles in their task of reopening the mothballed mill, but once again they rose to the challenge and True North Hardwood Plywood soon had product rolling out the door to eager customers.

Sadly, they have now encountered their greatest hurdle: lack of wood supply. How can that be? The mill has an operating licence issued by the province and the wood allotment associated with that licence. The majority of this allotment is through a ministerial directive. They have entered into MOUs with other companies as directed by MNR. The company, the mayor of Cochrane and I have all urged the past and current Ministers of Natural Resources to intervene. The fact remains that, in this case the Ontario crown forest is not being put to the best end use.

Once again, I ask the Minister of Natural Resources to intervene to ensure that jobs at True North are not jeopardized by government inaction.

## SARS

**Ms. Soo Wong:** I would like to take this opportunity today to recognize the 10th anniversary of the SARS outbreak in Canada, one of the worst health crises to ever hit Canada. I would like to recognize the impact of this crisis on Ontario, especially in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt.

In March 2003, the World Health Organization first issued a global SARS alert after Sui-chu Kwan, a 78-year-old resident in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, died in Toronto of what became known as sudden acute respiratory syndrome, better known as SARS. Her son also died at Scarborough Grace Hospital a week later. Scarborough Hospital, then known as Scarborough Grace Hospital, was closed down temporarily on March 23, 2003.

Ontario saw 247 probable cases and 43 deaths.

My community suffered extensively during the SARS crisis. There was limited support and assistance to the community. Then-Premier Ernie Eves refused to provide adequate grant compensation to those forced to take time off or whose businesses were affected as a result of the deadly disease.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to recognize the survivors and the many heroes who have lost their lives while caring for others, as well as the families who lost loved ones. I also want to pay tribute to the businesses and residents in my riding of Scarborough who suffered extensively, but today they remain a strong and vibrant community.

## MILTON'S WALK OF FAME

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** It's my pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon and congratulate the latest inductees into the town of Milton's Walk of Fame in my riding of Halton.

Mr. Kevin Callan: Kevin is the author of 15 books, including the bestselling *The Happy Camper*. Mr. Callan writes periodicals for *Canoeroots* magazine; is a frequent guest on CBC Radio, Canada A.M. and Breakfast Television; and is one of Canada's foremost canoeists.

Mr. Lloyd Chisholm, 1911 to 1992: Lloyd served on a number of citizens' boards, including the Canadian Guernsey cattle association and the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. Mr. Chisholm was recognized for his accomplishments in the Canadian horse racing industry by being inducted into the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame. He was also the proud owner of two royal grand champion all-Canadian cows, a very rare feat.

Mr. Norman Etheridge: Mr. Etheridge is an aircraft maintenance engineer and was inducted into the Canadian Aircraft Maintenance Engineers Hall of Fame in 2012 for his leadership in rebuilding the Avro Lancaster, one of only two World War II Lancaster bombers in the world that still fly today. Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum officials have steadfastly maintained that the Lancaster would not have returned to the air without the

leadership and knowledge of Norman Etheridge. Apparently, when he arrived there was a fuselage and a pile of parts, and he put it all together.

Mr. Ronald Roberts: Ronald was a hockey executive of the World Hockey Association and later for the National Hockey League. He negotiated more than 100 contracts for professional hockey players and coaches. Mr. Roberts represented players in negotiations for the 1974 US-Canada summit series—that's the one we won—and played hockey himself for the Milton Merchants, Galt Red Wings and Scotland's Dundee Tigers.

Congratulations to these four great men and their contributions to Canada.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Good-news stories always get a little lenience.

## LONDON CARNIVAL

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** I'm happy to stand in front of members of the Legislature today to talk about a winter carnival I recently attended in northeast London.

The carnival was held on Saturday, February 23, hosted by Beacock library and organized by the North East Working Group. An estimated 400 children and adults came out to partake of this event. This was a wonderful community event and was an excellent opportunity for London families to get together and enjoy a day of free food, activities and games.

The Salvation Army was on-site, and volunteers were there to serve a chili lunch and a warm cup of hot chocolate. The fire department supplied a fire truck, and firefighters were there to help give tours of the fire truck and discuss fire prevention and the importance of smoke alarms with the community.

The London police department was also supporting the event and allowing the public to sit in one of their cruisers and try out the siren.

There were many activities for everyone to enjoy, like snowshoeing, potato sack races and snow sculpting outside, and a variety of literacy-based activities for children inside.

A lot of hard work and dedication went into planning this event, and I would like to thank all of the organizers and volunteers for making this such a huge success.

## 1510

This carnival was a great time for people in the community to build new relationships with others and an excellent opportunity for local organizations to showcase their support and commitment in building and strengthening the city of London.

## TRAVEL INSURANCE

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** This message is to help Ontarians avoid a needless financial tragedy. With March break next week and warm weather approaching, many of us will travel or welcome guests here. If you're travelling outside Ontario, even for a day, and especially to the

United States, please ensure that you get third-party travel insurance for yourself and for each person travelling with you. The Ontario Health Insurance Plan will not cover all of the costs of even minor medical treatment in the United States. You can get insurance at your bank, through many credit cards, from your insurance agent or at any Canadian Automobile Association office. It's cheap. Please don't forget.

For everyone receiving a friend or a family member from abroad, please remember that the Ontario Health Insurance Plan does not cover your family members who are not full-time Ontario residents. Ensure that your guests visiting you from outside Ontario get third-party travel insurance in their country of origin and that it covers them from the day they get on the plane until the day they return home again.

Accidents and illnesses happen. For the sake of only a few dollars, don't run the needless and avoidable risk of a major financial tragedy.

#### ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** The following statement is an excerpt from a letter to the editor from Alberta electrician John, and it was sent to various papers across Ontario:

"The new Ontario College of Trades organization that will start next month is going to be the worst thing that happens to the Ontario labour system.

"I am an Alberta resident for the past 22 years after moving from the city of Sarnia and have always renewed my electrical licence with a simple \$60 fee every three years to the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities. I heard about the Ontario College of Trades for the first time last week when I received a letter from them stating I will now have to pay them \$360 per three years.

"My current renewal through the Ontario colleges and universities expires in 2014. I have also been advised by the new Ontario College of Trades that I must start paying them immediately even though my tradesman certificate of qualification renewal was just completed through the government of Ontario.

"I have a choice. Pay them the ransom demands or lose my interprovincial electrical licence. I was told by the client services department at the Ontario College of Trades that I will have no benefit from the Ontario program, no say into the program and ongoing absurd maintenance fees in order for me to continue to hold my electrician trade certification. It is the most disgusting thing I have seen in my 33 years as a qualified tradesman.

"What does this mean to an Ontario young worker who may want to become a tradesman? He/she has choice. Start an apprenticeship and become a tradesman in Ontario that has too many new regulations in the new College of Trades and pay ongoing enormous membership fees in addition to skill improvement course fees or they could come to Alberta, where the licence is issued and good for life, with no ongoing fees or hurdles."

That is sent by electrician John.

#### MIDWIFERY

**Mr. Phil McNeely:** I'd like to use this opportunity to highlight a very special project in my community. Ottawa is home to a thriving midwifery practice called the Midwifery Group of Ottawa. Soon, the group will be the occupants of the new Ottawa Birth and Wellness Centre. This centre, announced in January, will be the second such establishment in Ontario providing mothers-to-be and their families with a broad range of programs and services led and delivered by Ontario midwives.

I want to congratulate Genevieve Gagnon on her tireless efforts educating people about the importance of building up the practice of midwifery in my own riding of Ottawa-Orléans. This centre is the culmination of years of hard work and reputation-building by dedicated midwives like Genevieve.

I was proud to accompany the health minister to make the announcement for the new centre, along with Ottawa Centre MPP Yasir Naqvi. Also in attendance at the announcement were Champlain LHIN CEO Chantale LeClerc and president Dr. Keon, both tireless champions of health care improvement in eastern Ontario.

The art and science of midwifery has served to help bring new lives into our world for centuries. An ancient practice, and often labelled as "alternative," midwifery has become very popular in modern society. So, today, I'd like to thank the midwives who are here with us today for demonstrating to us the wonderful care you offer to our Ontario mothers. I think we should give them a good hand.

#### NURSES

**Mr. Bill Walker:** It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize the hard work and dedication of all nurses in my riding, and undoubtedly of all nurses across Ontario and Canada. I'd like to especially thank and extend my sincere congratulations to a number of nurses in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound who were recently awarded by their patients and communities with the Caring Nurse Award from Bayshore's Healthy Tomorrows association for their outstanding work.

It is important to note that the work performed by these recipients and many other nurses goes beyond their work in local hospitals. Many nurses are involved in various initiatives involving their respective communities, and many also go above and beyond their expected duties to ensure patients are receiving the best care possible.

On that note, I would like to congratulate and thank Mamie De Groot, Robyn Hewson, Shelly Dolson, Kim Calverley, Kory Whitlow, Garry O'Toole, Joan Stephenson, Pauline Wyville, Ann Thompson, Roberta Jackson, Margaret Thompson, Shirley McCarthy, Leanne Edwards, Brenda Merchant, Jennifer Cowan, Kari Johnson and Pauline Linton on receiving this Caring Nurse Award. They're perfect examples of dedicated, determined and hard-working nurses.

Having exceptional nurses is a vital component for the well-being of any community, and it is great to see that such hard work and dedication is being put in the spotlight.

Again, congratulations to all the recipients for this well-deserved recognition, and I thank all nurses for their outstanding work.

#### CORRECTION OF RECORD

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

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** Mr. Speaker, in my statement I inadvertently suggested that the 1974 series was the one that we won. It was in the 1972 series that we beat the Russians—unmercifully, we beat them, actually. I wanted to correct my record on that.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** On that particular point of order: It's always in order for any individual member to correct their own record.

#### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Mr. Leone assumes ballot item number 8, Mr. Dunlop assumes ballot item number 11, Mr. Smith assumes ballot item number 9 and Mr. Wilson assumes ballot item number 10.

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
AMENDMENT ACT  
(STANDING COMMITTEE  
ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS  
FOR HEALTH CARE  
AND EDUCATION), 2013  
LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI  
SUR L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
(COMITÉ PERMANENT  
DES COMPTES PUBLICS  
SUR LES SOINS DE SANTÉ  
ET L'ÉDUCATION)

Mr. Ouellette moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act to establish the Standing Committee on Public Accounts for Health Care and Education / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative pour créer le Comité permanent des comptes publics sur les soins de santé et l'éducation.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

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

**Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette:** Effectively, what this bill does is it establishes a committee from the Auditor General that deals directly with health care and education. With health care and education taking in excess of 62% of the provincial budget, it gives the opportunity for the Auditor General to spend the due time necessary to ensure that they're functioning in the best interests of the populace of the province of Ontario.

#### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

#### LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Ms. Fife moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 24, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act with respect to prorogation / Projet de loi 24, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative relativement à la prorogation.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

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

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Mr. Speaker, the bill amends the Legislative Assembly Act as follows:

(1) The Premier is prohibited from advising the Lieutenant Governor to prorogue the Legislature unless the assembly has adopted a resolution in support of the prorogation.

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(2) If the Lieutenant Governor prorogues the Legislature, the Premier is required to advise the Lieutenant Governor to call it back within the time frame set out in the assembly's resolution and to announce the return date promptly and publicly.

(3) The powers of the crown to prorogue, dissolve or summon the Legislature are preserved.

#### CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH IN CANADA ACT, 2013

Mr. Crack moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr13, An Act to amalgamate The Sisters of St. Joseph of Hamilton, The Sisters of St. Joseph of the Diocese of London, in Ontario, The Sisters of St. Joseph of the Diocese of Peterborough in Ontario and Sisters of St. Joseph for the Diocese of Pembroke in Canada.

**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.

SICK DAYS ARE FOR  
SICK PEOPLE ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 RÉSERVANT  
LES JOURNÉES DE CONGÉ DE MALADIE  
AUX PERSONNES MALADES

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 25, An Act governing sick days in the broader public sector / Projet de loi 25, Loi régissant les journées de congé de maladie dans le secteur parapublic.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

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

**Mr. John O'Toole:** The bill enacts the "sick days are for people who are ill" act, 2013. Under the act, public sector employers are not permitted to compensate employees for unused sick days. That's the intent of the bill.

LIVING WITHIN OUR MEANS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA NÉCESSITÉ  
DE VIVRE SELON NOS MOYENS

Mr. Leone moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 26, An Act to enact the Balanced Budget Act, 2013 and to amend the Financial Administration Act / Projet de loi 26, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur l'équilibre budgétaire et modifiant la Loi sur l'administration financière.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

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

**Mr. Rob Leone:** The short title of this bill is the Living Within Our Means Act, 2013. It's a bill that will enact balanced budget legislation to ensure that this Legislature finally approves a budget that is balanced, and that it holds the government accountable and responsible for doing so. If they don't balance the budget, the cabinet and the executive council have to reduce their pay. In addition to that, there is a debt limit provision that we will not put more debt on the backs of our children, and we cap that debt at 50% of GDP.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS  
CONSOLIDATION ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA FUSION  
DES PROGRAMMES D'AIDE SOCIALE

Mr. Barrett moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to require the introduction of legislation for a consolidated program of disability support and employment and other financial assistance / Projet de loi 27, Loi exigeant le dépôt d'un projet de loi créant un programme qui regroupe le soutien aux personnes handicapées, l'aide à l'emploi et d'autres aides financières.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

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

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** The bill requires the Minister of Community and Social Services to introduce a bill in the assembly that merges the program established by the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997, and the program established by the Ontario Works Act, 1997, into one consolidated program that is administered by the same body, in this case, at the local level, the municipal or First Nations level. One purpose is to ensure that the services available to those on disability remain distinct.

ELECTRONIC COMMERCE  
AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI  
SUR LE COMMERCE ÉLECTRONIQUE

Mr. Smith moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 28, An Act to amend the Electronic Commerce Act, 2000 / Projet de loi 28, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur le commerce électronique.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

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

**Mr. Todd Smith:** This bill is aimed at removing red tape in the real estate industry. It would remove the current exemption from the act for documents, including agreements of purchase and sale, that create or transfer interests in land and require a registration to be effective against third parties. However, those documents are subject to requirements of subsection 11 relating to the reliability of electronic signatures.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY  
AND RESPONSES

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY  
JOURNÉE INTERNATIONALE  
DE LA FEMME

**Hon. Laurel C. Broten:** It's my pleasure to rise today to recognize this week as International Women's Week and this Friday, March 8, as International Women's Day.

C'est un moment pour célébrer les réalisations et le leadership des femmes dans le monde entier et ici en

Ontario. C'est un jour pour nous remémorer quel chemin les femmes ont parcouru et pour essayer d'imaginer jusqu'où nous pouvons aller.

This is a time to celebrate the achievements and the leadership of women around the world and here in Ontario. It's a day to look back on how far women have come and ahead at how far we can go.

In Ontario, we are marking two important milestones in progress for women this year: the 30th anniversary of the creation of the Ontario Women's Directorate, and Ontario's first female Premier. Both events speak to the continual evolution in the role of women in Ontario society and the need for government to lead in building further opportunities for women.

This year, the United Nations' theme for International Women's Day is "A promise is a promise: Time for action to end violence against women."

En qualité de ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine et de ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ma promesse aux femmes ontariennes est que je continuerai à prendre des mesures pour mettre fin à la violence faite aux femmes.

As minister responsible for women's issues and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, my promise to the women of Ontario is that we will continue to take action to end violence against women. I am proud when I see the difference our domestic violence and sexual violence action plans are already making in the lives of women who have experienced abuse. But I also realize that violence will only end when many voices say in unison, "A promise is a promise. Let's end violence against women"—voices like those of the courageous women in India who spoke out against the epidemic of violence toward women in their communities; voices like those in support of Malala Yousafzai, the 15-year-old Pakistani girl who was shot because she advocated for girls' rights to education; voices like those that took part in the One Billion Rising campaign's events in 205 countries around the world on February 14.

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These growing and vocal movements around the world signal progress. They demonstrate that women, men and young people can stand together and demand an end to violence. They put into action the words of Michelle Bachelet, executive director of UN Women, who said, "There is nothing excusable about violence against women and girls anywhere, at any time. Nothing."

Monsieur le Président, l'Ontario a la chance d'avoir des femmes et des jeunes filles qui prouvent qu'elles sont des leaders tous les jours. Six femmes remarquables ont reçu l'Ordre de l'Ontario plus tôt cette année. Et nous avons rendu hommage à 66 femmes et jeunes filles en leur décernant des certificats soulignant leurs réalisations dans le cadre du programme de reconnaissance des femmes et des jeunes filles chefs de file en développement communautaire pour leurs contributions à l'amélioration de la vie d'autres membres de leurs collectivités.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario is fortunate to have women and girls proving they are leaders every day. Six remarkable women were invested into the Order of Ontario earlier

this year, and 66 women and girls are being honoured with Leading Women, Building Communities and Leading Girls, Building Communities recognition certificates for their contributions to improving the lives of others in their communities.

Like many Ontario women, I was drawn to the fight for women's equality early. I volunteered at a women's shelter. That led to my law career, assisting women who are vulnerable and watching them find their own voices and become stronger.

I am proud of the progress that Ontario has made in the area of women's issues. I am proud that we can share our expertise with other jurisdictions and communities here and around the world. But we acknowledge that there is more to be done and more we can learn from our stakeholders, and particularly from the women of Ontario.

In honour of International Women's Week, I encourage all of us in this chamber to raise our voices: to raise our voices in support of equal opportunity; to raise our voices as we applaud the achievements of Ontario's outstanding female leaders; and to raise our voices to take action for an end to violence against women.

As author and activist Maya Angelou once said, "All great achievements require time." But let me assure you, Mr. Speaker, by working together, we will achieve true equality for women, we will build strong communities full of opportunity, and create a safe and fair society for all women and girls in Ontario and around the world.

## MIDWIFERY

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Speaker, earlier today I was delighted to meet with some of our dedicated midwives at the Queen's Park reception for the Association of Ontario Midwives, and I had the joy of holding little Hugh as I gave my remarks.

I would like to again take this opportunity to thank our midwives for the exceptional care they provide to Ontario women and babies each and every day.

In a couple of days—on March 8, to be exact, Speaker—we will be celebrating International Women's Day, a day when we have a chance to raise awareness of women's issues, and amongst them, maternal, newborn and reproductive health. And when we think about maternal and newborn health here in Ontario, we are reminded of the tremendous contribution of midwives.

Midwifery care has been shown to lead to fewer medical and surgical interventions. That benefits both mothers and babies and provides better value to our health care system. That's why our government is committed to supporting midwives in providing the highest standard of care to Ontario women and families.

There are now about 640 midwives registered to practise here in Ontario. That's almost 60% of all midwives in Canada.

The midwifery profession has made great strides since we were elected in 2003. Over the past nine years, midwives' compensation has quite rightly increased by approximately 38%. Annual funding for the midwifery

program has increased to almost \$118 million, representing an almost 400% increase.

In addition, our government increased the enrolment of midwifery education seats by 50% at Ontario universities, from 60 people training to be midwives, to 90 seats, Speaker.

These investments mean that more than twice as many women now have access to midwifery services. In 2003, about 8,000 women had access; now it's 22,000 this year, Speaker.

You know, about 150,000 babies are born each year in Ontario, and now 15% or about 22,000 of those births will be delivered by midwives this year.

While this is wonderful news, we want to do even more. To continue improving care, I was delighted to announce last December and in January of this year that we are creating two provincially funded free-standing midwife-led birth centres: one in Ottawa and one in Toronto.

The Ottawa Birth and Wellness Centre will be on Carling Avenue in Ottawa South. It's set to open this summer and will provide mothers-to-be and their families with a broad range of programs and services led by midwives, with a special focus on the needs of the francophone population. The Ottawa Birth and Wellness Centre expects to provide services for about 500 births each year.

The Toronto Birth Centre is set to open its doors later this year. Located in Regent Park, it will bring together GTA midwives in a community partnership. It also expects to provide services for approximately 500 births a year, with a focus on providing culturally appropriate services for aboriginal women and their families.

The birth centre model will ensure that low-risk pregnant women get the right care, at the right place, from the right provider, at the right time and at the right cost. That's what Ontario's Action Plan for Health Care is all about. We want to give Ontario mums more choices where to deliver their babies, especially women with low-risk pregnancies. At the same time, we want to free up hospital beds to focus on high-risk births.

Through the action plan, our government is committed to moving routine procedures out of hospitals and into specialized, not-for-profit clinics in the community when the evidence shows that better-quality care and better patient outcomes can be achieved for better value.

Midwifery care can benefit the health care system with shorter lengths of hospital stay, fewer medical interventions and lower readmission rates. Birth centres can be an excellent environment for mums to give birth in a non-institutional setting. They give women and their families more freedom to choose who will attend the birth, and promote person-centred care.

I would also like to recognize the College of Midwives of Ontario for ensuring the safety of mums and babies at birth centres through their quality assurance role. College staff worked very, very hard all last summer on developing a quality assurance program and will continue to work with us to ensure that the safest care is provided by midwives in the community setting.

Most especially, Speaker, I know that all members of this Legislature would like to thank the members of the Association of Ontario Midwives for their ongoing and passionate commitment to the health of women and of babies and for working with us to give women greater choice in where to give birth.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Time for responses.

#### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** Today I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of Tim Hudak, our leader, and our PC caucus in recognizing this week as International Women's Week and the 102nd anniversary of International Women's Day on March 8. This day provides us with an opportunity to recognize and applaud women's achievements as well as identify the challenges that still confront many women around the world.

In Ontario, the gains which women have made are notable. Take, for example, the continuing gains that women are making in education. Colleges and universities used to be a male-dominated world, with a smaller percentage of women than men pursuing post-secondary education.

Today, the situation is completely different. Women now outperform men in many measures of education achievement. Girls are more likely to earn their high school diplomas on time and are less likely to drop out. More women than men enrol in college and university programs after high school. Women are more likely to finish these programs with a diploma or degree.

In Ontario today, many women occupy positions of authority, demonstrating incredible talent and energy. My female colleagues in this chamber serve as just one shining example. Across the province, women can go to university; women can work and have a family; women have real choices and real opportunities.

Despite all these successes, women still face significant challenges. In Canada, women still, on average, earn less than men, even with the same education level. Women are less likely to be employed, and those with jobs are more likely to be working part-time. The majority of minimum-wage earners are women. For immigrant and aboriginal women, the numbers are even worse.

#### 1540

In the corporate world, some women have broken through the glass ceiling, which has historically blocked access to the highest levels of achievement. However, the fact remains that 41% of companies listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange still have no women on their boards. This figure has not improved appreciably for the better part of a decade.

The UN has declared that this year's International Women's Day theme is "A promise is a promise: Time for action to end violence against women." This is a poignant reminder that around Canada and the world, far too many women remain at risk of violence. In the global context, many of the gains made by women in Ontario

have not been shared by women in other countries. Even in Canada, we know that many instances of sexual or domestic violence are simply not reported to the authorities.

I want to conclude by congratulating all the female trailblazers for their dedication and commitment to advancing women's rights and equality. International Women's Day provides us an opportunity to commemorate these efforts, celebrate progress and call for a commitment to continue the push for women's equality.

#### MIDWIFERY

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of the PC caucus to recognize the phenomenal work done by midwives during International Women's Week. I can't think of a more fitting time to celebrate the midwives who work so hard in our province to provide excellent care and keep expectant mothers healthy and safe.

Midwifery has long played a role in the prenatal care and birthing of babies around the world. Today, there are over 500 midwives in the province, including in rural, remote and northern areas, and today we did have the pleasure of welcoming a number of them here to Queen's Park. I actually had the chance to hold one of my newest constituents, eight-day-old baby Myka. It was a wonderful experience for all of us.

Since 1994, when Ontario became the first province in Canada to regulate the profession, midwives have attended more than 100,000 births in Ontario. Midwives understand that a thriving community is one where the health of its citizens is its top priority. This understanding is apparent through the work midwives do to keep their communities healthy and in the philosophy that guides their work.

Ontario midwifery is based on three principles. First, continuity of care: Midwives provide care throughout pregnancy, labour, birth and the first six weeks following birth. Second, informed choice: Midwives emphasize that women are active decision-makers in their care, and midwives offer information to help women make informed decisions. Third, choice of birthplace: Midwives are trained to help women give birth at home or in hospital. In fact, midwives are the only health professionals specifically trained in home birth.

We have tremendous respect for the values, skills and professionalism that midwives bring to our health care system. We would like to thank the midwives of Ontario and the Association of Ontario Midwives for the work they do every day to support and promote midwifery in Ontario and the health of women and children in this province.

#### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** On behalf of Andrea Horwath, our leader, and all New Democrats, I want to herald and

extol women on International Women's Day and International Women's Week. However, unlike my friends here in the House, I think that we actually have to do something for women at this time.

We have had 10 years of Liberal government in this province, and under the Liberal government we have seen Victim Services, which is the only agency that goes out with the police on domestic violence calls and deals with women victims—we've seen their funding go from \$286 per victim to \$31 in 2010. These are our front-line workers—women workers, mainly—who work with women.

Under this Liberal government—10 years of Liberal government—we've seen women make 71 cents on every dollar. I've stood up seven years in a row and said this, and it still hasn't changed.

Under this Liberal government—10 years of Liberal government—we still have only one in 10 women in Ontario who have access to child care, Mr. Speaker. The average child care cost in this province is over \$1,000. No child care, no equality—it's that simple.

Under this Liberal government—10 years of Liberal government—we've seen dangerous offenders—and we had a case just recently—released on bail without proper assessments, who go and kill their spouses. I'm talking about domestic violence.

I stand here on behalf of all New Democrats and on behalf of women saying, we can do more, we must do more. Why aren't we doing more?

#### MIDWIFERY

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** It is my pleasure to welcome to Queen's Park midwives who have made the trip to come and visit us, and to say how proud I am to welcome them to the Legislature and how proud I am of the work that they do for the 22,000 families and their babies each and every year. To the 640 midwives who practice in Ontario in the 90 different communities where they have set up their practice, we say thank you.

Ontario midwives provide the best quality care. There are many, many stories of families that have been shared with me this afternoon and at lunchtime, and they were all good stories. The story of a woman who had her first child through C-section and, like many women, believed that after you had a C-section your next pregnancy had to go the same way—that's not the case. Her midwife was able to help her deliver a healthy baby through the natural birth canal, and she didn't have to go through that procedure.

That brings me to the point: Did you know, Mr. Speaker, that one woman in three delivers through C-section in this province? We are way off the charts. But when you look at the good work that our midwives do, they are at 15%, way more in line with the rest of the world. Why is that? Because of the quality care that they do. Did you know that if C-sections were able to go from 30% to 15%, our hospital sector would save \$29 million? Think of how many more midwives we could have,

because at the end of the day, the less intervention, the happier will be the mom and the baby, not only our health care system.

Also, New Democrats support midwives working to their full scope of practice. To this day, I don't understand why we're making it so hard for those women to do their work. There is still 23% of hospitals that limit their privileges so that they cannot access hospital births. Eleven per cent of hospitals in Ontario limit the number of births that they can do; that makes no sense. You're with a midwife but you're not allowed to deliver because—you will still deliver in that hospital, but under a physician's care, although the midwife is the one you want. That makes no sense.

Same thing with the scope of practice. The college has made sure that those women are able to do epidurals. HPRAC has cleared the way. We have passed a bill that said that they should be able to practise to their full scope, yet they go to those hospitals and the hospitals decide to play God and say, "No, you will not be allowed to give epidurals." An epidural is to help control the pain during childbirth, something that is sometimes very needed. Why is it that we continue that every step of the way for this profession has to be so hard is beyond me. But I will be there, I will help them, and every other New Democrat will do the same. To the midwives: Thank you, merci, meegwetch.

## PETITIONS

### ELECTRICITY GENERATION

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** It is now time for petitions. Oh, I don't know, maybe the member from Durham.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's such a surprise.

**Interjection:** His first petition.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Yes, my very first petition today to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

"Whereas on March 22, 2012, the Ontario government completed a review of the feed-in tariff—commonly known as the FIT program—"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'"—these are said by the government;

"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—return on investment—"for Ontarians by making certain that surplus revenues are reinvested for the betterment of" that community;

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

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

**1550**

"That the members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario 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."

I'm pleased to submit this to the Legislature on behalf of Jeff Mole, and I'll sign it.

### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Ms. Cindy Forster:** A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Re: Dr. Kevin Smith's Niagara Health System report to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care proposed changes to the hospital services in south Niagara.

"Whereas the residents of south Niagara will not have equal, fair, safe and timely access to in-patient gynecological, obstetrical and pediatric services due to distance; and

"Whereas excessive travel times and lack of public transportation for residents in south Niagara will put patient safety at risk; and

"Whereas if implemented, Dr. Smith's recommendations and the proposed location of a new south Niagara hospital in Niagara Falls is approved, a two-tier health system in Niagara will be created, where north Niagara will be overserved and south Niagara will be under-served in relation to the safe and timely access to health and hospital care; and

"Whereas if hospital services including in-patient gynecological and mental health, and all obstetrical and pediatric services from the Welland hospital site and the Greater Niagara hospital site will be relocated to the new north Niagara St. Catharines site in 2013 it will undermine the continued viability of these two sites as full-service hospital sites;

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

"We request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to maintain existing services at the Welland hospital site and the Niagara Falls hospital site and that no services are to be moved until this new south Niagara hospital is open and request that any approval for a new Niagara south hospital include a site that is centrally located in Welland."

Some 20,000 thousand signatures and climbing—I support this petition, I affix my signature, and I will give it to page Jaden to take to the Clerk.

### LANDFILL

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I have here a petition presented to me. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and

the names were all gathered by the committee for social justice in Oxford county. They gathered over 2,000 names, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

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

“Whereas the District of Timiskaming Social Services Administration Board (DTSSAB) has decided to remove all security tenant positions from their affordable housing units across the district; and

“Whereas many buildings have high percentages of seniors who require more care than a 1-800 number can provide; and

“Whereas none of the tenants or security tenants were consulted regarding this drastic change to management at the affordable housing buildings;

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

“To formally request District of Timiskaming Social Services Administration Board (DTSSAB) reverse their decision to dismiss the on-site 24-hour security personnel that is presently being utilized so they can install third

party 1-800 security services in the affordable housing buildings in the Timiskaming district.”

I agree and send this petition down with Jessica.

#### AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** A petition to uphold the decision of the consolidated hearings board for Duntroon quarry:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Office of Consolidated Hearings, a panel made up of two members of the Ontario Municipal Board and a vice-chair of the Environmental Review Tribunal, heard evidence for 139 days over the course of 39 weeks, where they heard from 36 experts, seven lay witnesses and numerous participants; and

“Whereas the evidence at the hearings made it overwhelmingly clear that the proposed Duntroon quarry would create over 150 jobs and contribute significantly to the local” community; and

“Whereas the proposal has been studied for nine years and represents the continuation of a long-established land use in the area, where an existing quarry has been operating for over 40 years without significant negative impacts; and

“Whereas Walker Industries has entered into agreements with Clearview township and the county of Simcoe to provide substantial benefits to the municipalities that are above and beyond those required by the Aggregate Resources Act, the Planning Act and the Municipal Act; and

“Whereas the haul route along Simcoe County Road 91 has been used for this purpose for more than 40 years, steps have been taken to minimize environmental impacts, and there has been no opposition from the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the county of Simcoe or Clearview township;

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

“That the McGuinty government respect the decision made by the Office of Consolidated Hearings and allow the Duntroon quarry to move forward so that our environment can be protected and good jobs can be maintained and created for local families in need of work.”

I agree with this petition and I sign it, and I remind the petitioners it is now the Wynne government.

#### AIR-RAIL LINK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I could not agree more. I’m going to sign it, and I’m going to give it to Charlie to be delivered to the table.

#### HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

**Mr. Steve Clark:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary provincial highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation;

“Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health;

“Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

“Whereas the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka’s private member’s bill provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

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

“That the private member’s bill which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated provincially owned highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature and send it to the table with page Luisa.

#### WORKPLACE INSURANCE

**Mr. Bill Walker:** “A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Bill 119:

“Whereas beginning 1 January 2013 WSIB was expanded to include groups of employers and principals who had previously been exempt from WSIB and had private insurance; and

“Whereas this new financial burden does nothing to improve worker safety and only drives up the cost of doing business in Ontario;

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

“To repeal the statutory obligations created by Bill 119.”

I agree with this petition, I will affix my signature and send it with Jenna to the Clerks’ desk.

#### WIND TURBINES

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

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

“Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects, we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines; and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning;

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

**1600**

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

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

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Petitions? Last call for petitions.

Seeing none, orders of the day.

Orders of the day. Someone is asleep at the switch.

**Mr. Phil McNeely:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker. The Great Lakes Protection Act.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** You can’t do it. It has to be a minister.

**Hon. David Orazietti:** Government order G6.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Thank you.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### GREAT LAKES PROTECTION ACT, 2013

##### LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROTECTION

##### DES GRANDS LACS

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 5, 2013, on the motion for second reading of Bill 6, An Act to protect and restore the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence River Basin / Projet de loi 6, Loi visant la protection et le rétablissement du bassin des Grands Lacs et du fleuve Saint-Laurent.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member from Northumberland–Quinte West. You have four minutes left, I believe.

**Mr. Rob E. Milligan:** It’s a pleasure to continue debate on Bill 6, the Great Lakes Protection Act, 2013, put forward by the member from St. Catharines.

As mentioned yesterday, Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns we have, and that we’re seeing repetitively, over and over, from this Liberal government, is the creation of new bureaucracies to administer and oversee these proposed superficial bills being brought forward.

There is already in existence, as I pointed out yesterday, Ontario water legislation, such as the Clean Water Act, the Environmental Protection Act, the Nutrient Management Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act and the Ontario Water Resources Act, which may all be in conflict with the proposed legislation under Bill 6.

Here we have another example of a long line of Liberal regulatory duplication, overlap and conflict. We see this over and over again. This is a movie that my esteemed colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound says he can barely make it through once, let alone watch the same movie over and over again.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** Groundhog Day.

**Mr. Rob E. Milligan:** Groundhog Day is a great example of what this Liberal government is doing.

As I pointed out, water power and water conservation are obviously near and dear to my heart, coming from the great riding of Northumberland–Quinte West where we are blessed with an abundance of water—the Trent–Severn which is a fantastic tourist attraction.

I would encourage all members here and their families and individuals back in their ridings to come down to Northumberland–Quinte West and traverse the Trent–Severn and come and do some fishing.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** See the big toonie.

**Mr. Rob E. Milligan:** Absolutely.

So again, though, we do have a vested interest in the conservation of water and what water actually does, not only for our local economies but for the economies of the province in general.

The Liberals can say, and they can dress it up with window dressing as fancily as they please—their intent in bringing this legislation forward in the vested interest, but again, this is duplication upon duplication. We have some serious concerns with another layer of bureaucracy, much like the LHINs that were brought in to look after health care at a cost of \$360 million a year. That's \$360 million that can go directly into front-line health care.

What is this actually going to do? What is it going to cost? As I alluded to yesterday when I was discussing the bill, there's no financial cost that has been accounted for in this bill. So, what is it actually going to cost the province—the taxpayers of this province who are already overburdened with red tape and debt and trying to find a job? There are 600,000 Ontarians who woke up this morning and didn't have a job because this government has burdened them with over-regulation, with bureaucracy. So what is this going to actually accomplish, Mr. Speaker? That's the thing we have to ask ourselves.

I want to thank you very much for allowing me to talk about this bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Once again, it's an honour to rise in this House and make some remarks on Bill 6, the Great Lakes Protection Act and make some comments regarding the comments of the member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

I don't think anyone in this House doesn't want to protect the Great Lakes or doesn't want to protect water. I think we can all agree on that. I think where our disagreement is coming from is whether we're actually doing that or whether we're just talking about doing that.

One of the things that concerns us about this act is—and hopefully we can fix it, as and if it goes to committee—although there is mention of accountability in the strategy, there's no mention of accountability in the act. When you introduce legislation, when you pass legislation, as we have learned in our careers here, whether they be short or long, accountability isn't actually something—although we assume it's part of the parcel, it has proven not to be, and in this act, once again, there's no mention of accountability.

If we're going to be here passing legislation, it's very important that both the legislation and the bodies that are created by this legislation, whether they be guardian councils or boards or independent corporations, whether we call them by numbers or colours, or names that aren't quite colours, like Ornge—you know, it's not quite a colour, but once again, it was something created, and it wasn't accountable. Once again, with this act, it sounds good.

I believe the opposition have some very valid concerns—not all we agree with, but I think, for one thing, there is a lack of accountability. The strategy says we want to talk about accountability, but the act itself doesn't, and that's a very big problem and something that has to be addressed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Phil McNeely:** I'm pleased to respond to the debate. One of the important things we're doing with the bill is to go forward on the Great Lakes goals of engaging and empowering communities. I think the minister announced eligibility for the program, that it's under the Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund. This morning he mentioned that \$1.5 million in funding was available to communities, conservation authorities, organizations, and it's very important, engaging and empowering the communities so that the awareness is there. That's important.

Protection of water for human and ecological health: We know the major expenditure in water treatment and sewage systems that has been going on in our cities, but we have that 6% growth around the Great Lakes, and that's always difficult to handle.

Improving wetlands, beaches and coastal areas: The wetlands are so important in cleaning the water, so that's one of the things that will be coming out of these community and conservation authority efforts.

Protecting habitats and species: We know that each year there are additional species that are listed as endangered in this province, and so that's important, and we have groups across the Great Lakes. I saw a great program last night of people who were putting up the platforms for the nests for birds. I think it was on Lake Erie.

Enhancing and understanding adaptation, because we have to adapt. We're not doing much about controlling emissions, so we have to adapt.

This is a great piece of legislation that's going to get that awareness out there and help Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Jack MacLaren:** This is a piece of legislation that we are very suspicious of. I'm disappointed that the Liberal government would go so far as to create this piece of legislation, which is a duplication of legislation that already solves all of these problems, addresses all of the problems they are concerned about.

We have the Conservation Authorities Act, the Planning Act, a host of clean water acts, the Environmental Protection Act, the Nutrient Management Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, Water Opportunities Act and the water resources act, not to mention the international bodies that already address how to take care of the Great Lakes: the International Joint Commission, the Great Lakes Water Quality Board, the Great Lakes Executive Committee, the management committee of the Canada-Ontario agreement—all of which implement the priorities outlined in the US-Canada Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. If that isn't enough legislation to look after land that belongs to somebody else, I don't know what is.

**1610**

I see no mention in this legislation to consider private property rights, and I'm very suspicious that, like some of the other green legislation that we have in this province, more land use designations will be placed on private property without any consideration for the person who owns the land. In the public interest, it will be another taking of land from private property owners in Ontario up and down the Great Lakes and the Ottawa Valley.

I see the groups in here that are mentioned are environmental groups, so it makes me suspicious of what the Liberals are doing. Is this a political agenda to try to gain support to survive, and it's an endangered government, like the Endangered Species Act might support?

Mr. Speaker, this is an absolutely unnecessary, redundant piece of legislation that the PC Party is totally opposed to. This must not pass. This would be a crime against the people of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** It's a pleasure to rise to give a brief comment on Bill 6, the Great Lakes Protection Act.

I think we have to be honest about the state of the lakes. There's growing concern, not just from people who are private owners along the lakes, but businesses that understand that having clean lakes, having lakes that are actually part of the broader economy—they need to be protected. The record on ensuring that some environmental protection standards are upheld is not a good record.

From our perspective, we welcome the conversation—"conversation" is the word of the month, I have to say.

We have to have some strategic conversations about the Great Lakes. But we also need to be very clear: If this piece of legislation gets to committee, New Democrats are going to be focused on some concrete funding levels that are specific, that are public, that are transparent. We're going to be honest about the concrete targets that need to be part of the plan going forward, because without targets, you can't measure your success, and we need to be able to measure the success.

Certainly, there's a need for greater clarity. There are communities across this province that rely on the Great Lakes. There are future generations that are depending on us to do the responsible thing, to make sure that this legislation actually follows through on the goals that many of us share. Moving forward, when this does get to committee, we will be vigilant in that regard.

I look forward to listening to the speakers today.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member from Northumberland-Quinte West has two minutes.

**Mr. Rob E. Milligan:** I think that there have been some very good points made here from, obviously, our caucus. The member from Kitchener-Conestoga, our critic on the environment, has done an exemplary job of pointing out some of the major concerns that we have here moving forward, as has the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, who touched on duplication and, again, the short-sightedness that this Liberal government has had these many years that they've been in power.

It's interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that the new Premier has said that she is looking to change and work together with the opposition. But what we're seeing is the same old government; it's the deck that has just been shuffled. Sure, it's a new face as Premier, but again, one of the things we learned—and how we learn is through repetition. We learn from our mistakes. But apparently, this government hasn't learned from their past mistakes. They keep taking us down the wrong path.

Bill 6 is just another example of how this province has been run into the ground with joblessness and strapping future generations with a heavy burden of debt. I can't stress enough, Mr. Speaker, when we spend \$10 billion a year annually on interest alone on our provincial debt, that's \$10 billion that can go into so many more great things like front-line health care at Trenton Memorial Hospital or education.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Further debate?

**Ms. Cindy Forster:** I'm pleased to rise to talk a bit about the Great Lakes Protection Act, which is really kind of a framework bill. It purports to protect and restore the ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin and to create opportunities for individuals and communities to become involved in protection, restoration and the ecological health of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence basin.

I want to thank the Minister of the Environment for bringing this bill back so quickly. It was Bill 100 that had come forward sometime in October last year. Since the House resumed on February 19, a couple of weeks have

passed, and I think it's important to move this forward and have some discussion on it. I also want to thank the member—

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Conversation.

**Ms. Cindy Forster:** No, “conversation” is not one of my words.

I want to thank Jonah Schein, our member from Davenport, who did his one-hour lead on this yesterday. He's our critic for the environment and for urban transportation. I think he hit a lot of very important points about the strengths and the weaknesses and the challenges in this bill.

Unfortunately, the Liberal government prorogued this Legislature for a period of just over four months. There were many bills, Speaker, more than 100 bills, that we debated and discussed in our last two sessions. Those were very important bills for the people who live in this province. They were discarded by this Liberal government when they made the decision to prorogue.

That prorogation was really all about trying to get a majority government. It was all about the Kitchener–Waterloo by-election. Unfortunately, they didn't win because the win is actually beside me today. It's sad that in fact a government would prorogue for those purposes—

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Political purposes.

**Ms. Cindy Forster:** —for political purposes, for political gain, and really put all of the business of the Legislature on the back burner.

There were a number of NDP bills that would have made life more affordable for Ontarians, would have improved the quality of life for Ontarians. One of them was even supported by our PC friends here sitting beside us, removing the HST from the home heating bills. That would have actually given Ontarians \$100 or \$200 back on their heating bill. They could have used it for daycare, they could have used it for their kids' sports, or they could have used it for going out and having a little fun in their lives, right? Or maybe they would have used it for groceries; a lot of them are hard-pressed to make ends meet at the end of the month.

Or the member from Hamilton Mountain's bill on Ombudsman oversight for family and children's services, to enhance and protect the lives of children and rebuild relationships within family units: That was what that bill was all about. But unfortunately, the government failed to bring that forward, so now we are going to be back here debating that bill once again, along with 97 others.

Or, Speaker, there's your bill, as the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, on retrofitting retirement homes with sprinkler systems. That was a very important bill for seniors in this province. But unfortunately, because of prorogation, that also didn't get dealt with. Hopefully, that bill will be coming forward again this session so that we can move forward on that important safety issue for seniors in this province.

These are the kinds of bills that get results for Ontarians. These are the reasons why prolonged prorogation

for partisan politics negatively impacts the people who live in this province, the taxpayers of this province.

**1620**

In my own riding of Welland, 20,000 people signed a petition over the spring, fall and winter of this year. That petition was to stop the transfers. I talked about it—I actually read it into the record today, my petition—but it's a move by the Liberal government to try and offset a \$13-million deficit by consolidating services from south Niagara to a new north Niagara hospital that's about to open in March. It means that the southern part of the Niagara Peninsula will not have equal or fair access to care for women and children, maternal programs, pediatrics and women's surgery.

I spent much of May, June and July doing town hall meetings and a survey in my riding. The Minister of Health said that she wanted to listen to the people of my riding and to the people of south Niagara before she made a decision, but, unfortunately, the House was prorogued, so we never, ever were able to have that discussion. She wasn't able to listen to them. She has never been down to Welland—to my riding—to listen to the people of Welland and what they want in their health services.

Cutting hospital budgets in Niagara and in the province to fund home care is the goal, and our party believes that, instead of doing that, we should actually be cutting CEO salaries.

**Ms. Soo Wong:** What does it have to do with the bill?

**Ms. Cindy Forster:** It has a lot to do with the bill, because—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Point of order, the member from Richmond Hill.

**Hon. Reza Moridi:** Mr. Speaker, would you ask the speaker to talk about the bill rather than about health issues?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** If the member would try to keep to the parameters of the bill and try not to wander too much. We'll keep an eye on it to see that you are staying within the guidelines. Thanks.

**Ms. Cindy Forster:** This bill, the Great Lakes Protection Act, is very important to my riding and to the Niagara region because of where we are geographically located: the Welland Canal, which is part of the St. Lawrence Seaway system, a channel of canals and locks that move oceangoing ships from the Atlantic Ocean through the Great Lakes. We sit right around Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, and the Great Lakes are actually located in four of the five municipalities in my riding.

The fourth Welland Canal is now the Welland Recreational Canal. I think it was back in the late 1960s that they actually rerouted the Welland Canal, which ran directly through my city, into a rural part of my community. The recreational canal is now used for recreational activities; it's used for rowing, kayaking and triathlons, and it will be one of the home sites to the Pan Am Games in 2015 and an international rowing competition this summer.

The bill is important to the rural part of my riding as well, the township of Wainfleet. Wainfleet: A great part

of it is along the Lake Erie shoreline, and there have been a lot of sewer/septic issues in recent years which have impacted the integrity of Lake Erie. Part of that problem was planning processes back in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s that actually allowed people to build numerous cottages on small parcels of land. Over the years when I sat on regional councils and when I was actually the mayor of my city, the issue of Wainfleet and boil-waters on a fairly regular basis along the shoreline—

**Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:** Now they're dealing with turbines.

**Ms. Cindy Forster:** Yes, they are. Now they're dealing with turbines, and the integrity of the beaches as well. There are many days in the southern part of Niagara that people can't use our beaches because of the number of impacts to the water.

We called it the "Big Pipe" issue. There was a plan to actually try and develop a sewer treatment facility and sewer lines throughout the shoreline of Wainfleet and into Port Colborne. Wainfleet was opposed to it for two reasons.

They like the tranquil, relaxing atmosphere of their township. They were concerned that if the sewer lines were actually installed, and the sewage treatment plant, that there would be a lot of major development along the shoreline. So in, I think it was, the 2010 election, they actually passed a motion not to continue to participate in that project. The cost was going to be prohibitive as well. At that time I think it was \$60 million, and there was no funding forthcoming from the federal government or the provincial government during those discussions. So they opted out.

They now have kind of a find-and-fix program. They have inspections of their septic systems, and when they're found to be deficient, the homeowners are actually required to go in and fix them.

While I was mayor of Welland and on regional council, I also had the opportunity to attend a number of meetings around Great Lakes issues. There is a group called the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative; they have annual meetings. It's a bi-national group of mayors and local officials who actively work with federal and provincial governments in both the United States and Canada to advance the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.

Brian McMullan, the mayor of St. Catharines—St. Catharines is part of my riding; I actually share it with the Minister of the Environment—was actually the chair of that committee for 2011-12, and they produced many really good recommendations for action to protect these channels of waterways and the Great Lakes. One of those recommendations is actually the bill that was tabled by the Minister of the Environment. I understand, having read a number of regional reports over the last couple of days, that the region of Niagara was involved and has had really good consultation on the bill as well.

Now, in my riding, of course, because there is the Welland Canal, which stretches for many miles, there are a lot of bridges in Welland, Thorold, Port Colborne and

Port Robinson, and there's a need for sustainable infrastructure money from the federal and provincial governments, because we have so many bridges to maintain or replace.

At the Ontario Good Roads Association and ROMA conference two weeks ago, I heard from many mayors from small municipalities with similar bridge issues who cannot even afford to take advantage of the funding program—the one-third split between the feds and the province—because the cost to maintain or repair these bridges is just prohibitive. It's so expensive to do those repairs.

I'll give you the example in my riding of the Main Street bridge in Welland, the city in which I live. We had an estimate—this was probably two years ago. It was going to cost \$10 million just to scrape the paint off and repaint it—a lot of that because of the toxicity in the paints they used years ago. The need to do that restoration really makes it prohibitive for small municipalities to do any of this stuff.

We heard from them that they need help. In fact, some of them suggested that we need to have a different formula for funding bridges and roads and those kinds of things in their communities. They can't afford to do the work. It's another download from the provincial and federal governments to cash-strapped municipalities and their taxpayers.

There are many other environmental issues that need attention, in addition to this Great Lakes bill. My riding and other ridings across this province historically were heavy in manufacturing, and they're often left with cleanup costs or forced to let properties sit idle because of heavy industrial contamination. In my riding, and I know elsewhere in this province, there have been tens of thousands of jobs lost in this sector. Companies have closed their doors, corporations have walked away, or they leave the property sitting. They take down as many buildings as they can possibly so that they pay the least amount of taxes to the municipalities. So now, in addition to people losing their jobs, they're often left with those cleanup costs as well.

#### 1630

Examples of those were the John Deere Welland Works: 1,000 plus. These are people who got grants from the provincial and federal governments to the tune of \$10 million to put a new paint shop in.

Henniges: 1,500 workers, at its peak. They close their doors, they walk away, and we're left with the cleanup. There are many environmental issues that need to be dealt with, and as I said, this is only one of them.

In Port Colborne, residents launched a class action suit against Vale. It was upheld to the tune of I think \$36 million for 7,000 residents in Port Colborne, but it was overturned at the Supreme Court, and Vale was off the hook.

Along our shoreline, we have a number of conservation areas. We have Long Beach conservation park and Morgan's Point conservation area. These areas are impacted, particularly in the summer, with E. coli and

other issues. Some of these campgrounds have even had to close because they just don't have the money to actually fix their septic systems.

In summary, I just want to talk a little bit about the bill and some of our concerns.

I think our biggest concern is that this is a framework bill but it's missing those five Ws—who, what, where, when and why—and how much is it going to cost, and how are the committees going to be established, and how are the people going to be appointed to this council?

The threats to the Great Lakes, though, are immediate and pressing. I think that although people will embrace this kind of legislative framework for the Great Lakes, they want to see real action and change. This bill has to have some more meat to it.

I look forward to the bill getting into committee and, hopefully, we can make some amendments to it and actually put some teeth into it to make it work for the people who live in this province.

There are other actions that we need to look at as well, like a declaration that safe drinking water and sanitation are basic human rights of all people living around the St. Lawrence basin; and a process for citizens and communities living on the St. Lawrence basin to sue corporations and governments who knowingly are polluting local water sources, for violation of the human right to clean water.

I think we also need to declare that water and waste water services are public services, to be equitably and affordably provided by governments. I can tell you, when I was on regional council, there was a move to lease out our water and waste water systems to foreign investors so that they could get a tax writeoff. I don't think that that's somewhere we want to go, unless we want to perhaps have things happen like happened in Walkerton.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** And there's no accountability.

**Ms. Cindy Forster:** Yes, there's no accountability.

There are some other issues about consultation with First Nations. We often hear in the House, on any number of issues, that First Nations haven't been consulted. Many of these channels and waterways, they have treaty rights to, so I think it's very important to be consulting with our First Nation chiefs and making sure that they're onside and that they're part of the councils that will be participating as we put the meat to this bill.

The Great Lakes provide drinking water for 80% of Ontarians. In my riding, our water actually comes from the Welland Canal, which is a very important part of the St. Lawrence Seaway system. People in my community and across this province are concerned about our water quality and a lack of enough infrastructure dollars to upgrade sewer systems and water systems in municipalities all across this province.

I look forward to some more discussion in committee. I thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to be part of this debate.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Phil McNeely:** I'm pleased to be able to respond to the debate we've just heard.

The purpose of the act is, I think, to explain some of the questions that were raised: to protect and restore the ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin and to create the opportunities for individuals and communities to become involved in the protection and restoration of the ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin. It's acknowledged that there are a lot of difficulties, a lot of problems, and so this is needed.

Contacting the individuals and getting them involved, the communities around—I was surprised, as I said in the follow-up to the minister's speech the other day, that Ottawa and Orléans are included in this. This is great, because we have a significant problem in Orléans with pollution of one of the beautiful beaches, Petrie Island, and it's because of the old combined sewers in the city of Ottawa. When there's a major storm, you get the sewage flushed into the river, and our beaches are closed. So that is a big problem.

What the Great Lakes Guardians Council—I hope we have a member on it from the Ottawa area. I'll have to look into that and get some—Ecology Ottawa is very much involved in that.

“—identify priorities for actions to achieve the purpose of the act”—that's what the Great Lakes Guardians Council will be doing;

“—identify, in respect of projects to achieve the purposes of this act, potential funding measures and partnerships;

“—facilitate information sharing to achieve the purposes of this act; and

“—give the Minister of the Environment an opportunity to obtain input from individuals participating in meetings of the council through discussion of any matters relating to the purposes of this act,” and to establish the targets.

I think it's very important. This act is needed, and this community involvement is needed, if we're going to be able to get the public pressure that's needed to make our Great Lakes even better.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Rick Nicholls:** Again, I'm pleased to stand and address Bill 6 this afternoon.

Speaker, what I can say is this: more boards, more duplication, more red tape. The government's proposal under Bill 6 to create a third regulator for Ontario's shorelines is yet another classic example of Liberal regulatory duplication, overlap and conflict.

The Conservation Authorities Act already gives the Ministry of Natural Resources the power to regulate shorelines for watershed management. The Planning Act gives municipalities the authority to prohibit development on shorelines. And now the Minister of the Environment wants in on the action, along with the power to collect fees for violations.

There's also the potential that regulations made under Bill 6 could conflict with Ontario's existing water legis-

lation, including the Clean Water Act, for one; the Environmental Protection Act, two; the Nutrient Management Act, three; let's talk about the Safe Drinking Water Act, four; and, of course, the Water Opportunities Act and the Ontario Water Resources Act, five and six. It just goes on and on.

Bill 6 is, in fact, open-ended. It has no specifics, and leaves all decision-making and priority-setting to the environment minister and yet another unaccountable board—yes, the guardians' council.

The irony of Bill 6 is that the Liberals claim they need new legal tools to deal with emerging new priorities.

In closing, Speaker, I'd like to say this: We cannot and we will not support this bill. As the wallet-watchers of Ontario taxpayers—this bill only creates greater bureaucracy and means greater costs. This government is facing a \$12-billion deficit. Let's stop the spending madness now.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** It's once again an honour to rise and speak on Bill 6 and comment on my esteemed colleague from Welland, who has much more experience with the Great Lakes than I ever will, having the Great Lakes in her riding and being a past mayor of Welland. I think she brings a very good perspective to this debate today.

In my last two minutes, I talked about how, in this act, there isn't really accountability. It mentions accountability in the strategy, but it doesn't mention accountability in the act.

While we hope, on this side, in this corner of the House, that this is a true attempt to improve the Great Lakes, there are some questions. Because although the opposition call themselves wallet-watchers and we have our debates—part of the problem with this bill is there's no real money attached.

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*Interjection.*

**Mr. John Vanthof:** But if there's no real money attached to a bill, then is it really a bill that has a real purpose, or is it just feel-good legislation, which we here sincerely hope it isn't? I think others in this House believe that it certainly is; we hope it isn't. But the fact that there's no money attached—because even in these times of fiscal restraint, if you're going to propose legislation—if you propose something, there's always a cost. To propose something without including the cost—from my business background, that's just not a direction that we're going to go.

You can't propose something open-ended. If I went to my bank and said, "Well, this is an overarching loan. There's no real purpose for this loan," I wouldn't get very far, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Hon. Reza Moridi:** It's a great pleasure to rise in this House and to speak to Bill 6, the Great Lakes Protection Act.

As someone who has grown up in another continent, thousands and thousands of kilometres away from Toronto—studying geography in my elementary school, I was very much impressed by the majesty of the Great Lakes, even as a small child.

The lakes are vitally important to our lives in Ontario and everywhere where people live around these Great Lakes. Just as an example, 80% of our drinking water comes from the Great Lakes. Some 95% of agricultural land in Ontario is in the Great Lakes basin. Our climate is heavily dependent upon the Great Lakes. And, of course, the Great Lakes is one of the major shipping routes in a major industrialized area of the world. The area around the Great Lakes is one of the major industrial areas of the world.

Mr. Speaker, the scientists tell us that the Great Lakes are in decline, so it is our duty as government to protect the Great Lakes for us and for our future generations. That's why we have brought forward Bill 6, the Great Lakes Protection Act.

This act establishes a Great Lakes Guardians Council. It also proposes—it requires, actually, the minister to maintain Ontario's Great Lakes Strategy, the first Ontario road map which lays out provincial priorities in order to protect the Great Lakes for us and for future generations.

It also enables the minister to set Great Lakes science-based targets. Whatever happens in the Great Lakes has to be done based on the scientific findings. That's why this bill proposes Great Lakes science-based targets.

That's why I fully support this bill, and I hope everyone in this House supports this bill as well.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member from Welland has two minutes to respond.

**Ms. Cindy Forster:** Thank you to the members from the government and from the official opposition and from my own party for their comments.

You know, this is a very interesting bill. It has some strengths, but it's only a framework. It has a lot of weaknesses. I think one of the biggest weaknesses is probably the targets and perhaps some costing of what that's going to look like.

We know, when we talk about homelessness and housing targets, that in fact over a 10-year period, although the Liberal government had a target of I think 10,000 units—and that would have been in a four-year period—it has only reached 16,000 units, plus maybe 1,000 that they talked about today, in a 10-year period. So if you don't have targets, it's hard to actually meet the goals of what the bill is intended for, right?

There's no kind of discussion in the bill—I talked a bit about Wainfleet and beach pollution and E. coli in our water and all of those kinds of things. It really does fail to address causes of pollution and discharges, and conservation groups have certainly said that the bill needs to be strengthened about the pollutants that are allowed to be discharged into our lakes and to find ways to actually eliminate toxic substances in our Great Lakes and in the St. Lawrence River basin.

There's lots of work to be done on this bill, and our party certainly looks forward to having that debate.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Thank you. Before we move to the next speaker, I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Ms. Thompson assumes ballot item number 18 and Mr. Nicholls assumes ballot item number 44.

Further debate?

**Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** It's a pleasure to join the debate today on Bill 6, the Great Lakes Protection Act. I listened carefully to some of the previous speakers. It sounds like there's some support and some opposition to the bill. Some people seem to feel the bill could be improved upon through the committee process, and as I said yesterday, I think that is a valid point and that's what the committee process is for.

I come from a community that was built on the shores of Lake Ontario. People started arriving there to found the town of Oakville in the late 1700s and the 1800s. The community that I live in is Bronte, which is a part of Oakville. For the past 28 years, I've lived in the same neighbourhood. I can see the Great Lakes from my house. If I look down the street a little bit, 50 or 75 yards, I'm looking at Lake Ontario. I live in a community that was founded on the shores of Sixteen Mile Creek and Twelve Mile Creek, and it was founded for a very specific reason, and that is that at that point in time the Great Lakes were seen as a method of transportation; it was a good way to move goods.

The founder of Oakville, George Chisholm, used to be in the lumber business. He would float the logs down Sixteen Mile Creek to the harbour that he founded in Oakville and then they'd be shipped off, sometimes all over the world, to supply the needs of lumber around the world; and from those humble beginnings and industrial beginnings the town of Oakville grew.

The town of Oakville has actually grown into a pretty good community over the years. Lumber is not a big industry in Oakville anymore, obviously, but the harbours still play a huge role in the fabric of our society and the fabric of our community in Oakville. We have two harbours in Oakville, Oakville harbour and Bronte harbour. Boating is a huge tourism attraction and also just part of the lifestyle. People like to move close to the lake. They like to sail; they like to own boats. When we watch the Olympics every four years, and we share the pride of all Canadians when we come home with a gold medal or somebody comes home with a silver or a bronze medal, a lot of that we'll see from the Burloak Canoe Club. Burloak Canoe Club is right in the harbour in Oakville and is responsible, I think, for a lot of the sports achievements that we've been able to achieve. When you think of people like the Oldershaws and people like Adam van Koeverden and others who have really done this country proud in sports, we forget that those people were able to practise those sports and develop themselves, become the athletes they are because they lived in

proximity to water. They lived in proximity to a place where they could go and they could practise their sculling, their rowing or their canoeing.

Also, Oakville has some industrial components to it, and that is in the west end of town, where I live. There used to be a number of oil refineries there. At one point, during the OPEC problems, crude oil was shipped into the refinery. It came down the St. Lawrence River. It came from places like Venezuela, came into the refinery and was turned into the products we use in our cars. We use jet fuel, things like that. Nowadays, there's still a pier attached. It's only a terminal now. There's no refining that takes place in the community, but we still have an industrial pier in Oakville that is used by the Great Lakes shipping traffic on a pretty regular basis.

I've lived in this area for 28 years now. I see the people who are attracted to this amenity. I know how they feel about the Great Lakes. I think, by and large, people feel that all three political parties that we've had in Ontario in government over the past years could have done a better job of protecting this asset. I think we all need to own up to that. I think we all need to admit that. I think it's self-evident.

**1650**

I live close to Lake Ontario, as I said. We're not very far from the shores of Lake Ontario right now as we sit. That used to be a lake you could eat the fish from. That used to be a lake you wouldn't be afraid for your kids to go and swim in. I live not very far from Bronte Beach. Bronte Beach used to be a place where kids would go and run in and out of Lake Ontario. You wouldn't want that happening these days, unfortunately. The lake oftentimes is posted as being unfit to swim in. And the fish—the Star had a salmon derby there. I'm not sure how much of the fish you would want to eat from Lake Ontario these days. Things, I think by anybody's measurement, have deteriorated over the years. I think we simply could do a better job of that.

About 10 or 15 years ago, perhaps, we started to have a problem with algae in Lake Ontario. We started to see that algae blooms were forming in the lake. When the winds changed the right way, the algae would wash ashore and would stay on shore. It would start to decompose, and it would start to impact pretty heavily on the lifestyle that people were enjoying in the area because it simply smelled horrible. People couldn't stand it.

I was on regional council at the time. Because of the impact on my community, we set up a committee called the algae action committee. We found out that the province of Ontario at that time—I think that would have been under the Conservative government—didn't know a whole lot about what was happening in Lake Ontario, simply really didn't have an answer as to what it was going to do about the algae problem. When we had things like Walkerton happening, for example, we started to realize we needed to do something within our own community because we couldn't look to the higher levels of government to assist us in this.

So we set out on our own, basically. A number of interested citizens, a lot of citizens with scientific back-

grounds from a number of disciplines, sat on the committee and started to do a lot of research on the issue. They came up with some solutions, actually. They came up with some solutions like harvesting, came up with some like changing the design of shoreline protection so it didn't trap the algae when it washed ashore.

What we were starting to find out also was that the zebra mussels had clarified the water in the nearshore of Lake Ontario to the point that sunlight was penetrating to places it would never penetrate to in the past. What that was starting to do was, obviously, provide the sunlight that is necessary for the algae to bloom. We also found that, despite the best intentions of previous governments to limit the amount of phosphorus going into Lake Ontario, despite the fact that we had moved to either low- or non-phosphate detergents, phosphorus was still getting into the lake. We were still seeing that there was a lot of runoff coming off, sometimes from the urban areas during storm incidents and sometimes from the agricultural communities that bordered on the creeks.

We were able to get all people working together on this issue. I have to say that, despite some reservations at the start that a local community could have any sort of impact on a problem that was this big, we actually made a lot of progress over the years. I'm very, very proud of the work of the citizens on this committee.

We also realized in Lake Ontario—some scientists describe it as having two lakes; you've got the nearshore and you've got the middle of the lake. In the nearshore, sometimes the currents are going the opposite way to the way you think they should be going. We all assume that the Great Lakes are flowing north to south or from west to east. There are places in Oakville, certainly, where the current actually goes from east to west. This is something that we hadn't taken into account as lay people, primarily. We realized there was a lot we had to learn, but we also realized that we needed some tools to assist us in this.

You don't have to live right on the shores of Lake Ontario. There's a number of members whose ridings would border any one of the Great Lakes in the chamber; they're represented by all three parties.

I look at a town like Milton, for example, just to the north of us. Milton was a community that had the same sort of rich history as Oakville. Over the years, due to its proximity to the region of Peel, to the city of Mississauga, to the city of Hamilton and to the city of Toronto, Oakville grew. It started to develop, and as it grew, it was able to go to lake-based resources to provide the drinking water that people needed to survive, basically.

Milton didn't have that same advantage, unfortunately, at the time. Milton was on a well-based system. Those systems had a defined capacity and a limited capacity, which meant that the ability of the town of Milton to grow to that level that it wanted to grow to was constrained simply because of a lack of water.

There was a huge debate in the region of Halton at the time as to whether we should extend the Big Pipe from the shores of Lake Ontario up to the town of Milton.

After much deliberation, it was decided that would be a good idea. We were able to put some expense parameters around it so that the costs were shared by the right people. But what that has allowed us to do is to use that asset that we have down there, one of the Great Lakes, Lake Ontario, to bring that drinking water and that processed water and the water for whatever use the people in the town of Milton have for it—to be able to bring that up out of the lake into the town of Milton. Milton, from time to time, is noted as being one of the fastest-growing communities in the world and certainly in all of North America.

I'm just illustrating the value and the necessity of water as one of those primary things that, first, allows us to live—you can't live without water—but allows us to do some of the things that make up the lifestyle that we enjoy in the province of Ontario, from recreational uses to industrial uses to just being able to rely on clean drinking water in your house.

Now, I referred to the algae action committee that was active in the region of Halton as an example of a local group of citizens that had a concern and wanted to do something about it, that went to all three levels of government and didn't really receive the support they expected to receive. They expected their governments to act much more proactively in the obvious protection of an asset that was so important to the economy of a province like Ontario and a country like Canada, and had to kind of set out on their own. But it shows that a group of local citizens are able to stimulate change by working in a local community and by just bringing a determined attitude to the table.

What this piece of legislation calls for is the establishment of what's known as the Great Lakes Guardians Council, which allows groups such as the algae action committee—and I am sure there are others around the province of Ontario—to have a forum to bring those ideas forward, to collaborate with other groups, to learn from each other and to establish a list of priorities if we are going to deal with something as large an issue as the Great Lakes, which are known around the world and which I think are deserving of protection.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** Now, obviously others in the House don't believe that the lakes should be protected. They think everything is in place, that it can be done: "We've got the legislation in place. We don't need more legislation. Don't worry; be happy. Everything will be good. The water will clean itself up." I just don't think that's the approach that the people of Ontario are looking to.

We know that three of the four lakes are in decline. I don't think that is unique to any political philosophy; that's simply the scientific facts today, that the lakes are in decline, and we need to do more than we are doing today to ensure that the lakes turn around and become the sort of lakes—kids should be able to swim in Lake Ontario. We should be able to eat the fish from Lake Ontario and simply—

**Mr. Rob E. Milligan:** We do. Come on down to Quinte West-Cobourg.

**Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** I think I'm going to invite this member over to my house. I'll bring him some fish, and I would love to see him eat them. Perhaps, Speaker, you could bring some from Hamilton harbour. We could have a fish fry. That would be something to see, Speaker, and I think that would be worth the price of admission.

But certainly I think we need to approach this in a strategic manner. I understand the member is trying to say that there is a sports fishery and there is a commercial fishery still present in the Great Lakes. I agree with that. I want to see that flourish. I'm not sure it is flourishing today; I would think that it's under some stress today. If that sports fishery or commercial fishery is going to have a future, we need to do better than we've been able to do with the Great Lakes in the past. It's that simple.

1700

There's nobody who likes to go down to Port Dover and have some perch more than me. I like being in Port Dover—it's a wonderful community—and I like being able to eat something that's been caught by a local fisher. It's something that I think Ontarians would like to do more of. The fact of the matter is, in my community the fish that are being caught by people are not something you would want to eat. It's that simple. I'd like to have the same sport fishery and the same commercial fishery as the gentleman across the way.

**Mr. Rob E. Milligan:** You have to move to Northumberland—Quinte West.

**Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** He wants me to go to his community and eat fish, Speaker. I'd love to be able to invite him to come back to my place and eat fish, but he simply can't.

There definitely need to be some science-based targets put in place on this. When you look at the Great Lakes basin, it's simply too important, too large a natural asset, too valuable a natural asset to ignore the way, perhaps, we have in the past. It's a huge economic engine, a huge economic driver for this area.

In the Great Lakes basin, there are approximately 56 million jobs that are at stake. Some people would think, "Oh, that's small potatoes." I don't. A lot of people rely on the Great Lakes basin. A lot of people in other parts of the country rely on what comes out of the Great Lakes basin in terms of output. When you look at the planet, 20% of the fresh water on this planet is contained right on our doorstep. Instead of protecting that asset, instead of ensuring that that supply goes on into the future, what I think all three levels of government have done is neglect their duty. I simply think it's too important a global resource for us to take that approach much into the future.

They tell me—I don't know how they figured this out—it takes 300 years for a drop of water to make its way through the system. They say it takes 300 years for a drop of water that starts off, I'm assuming, in Lake Superior to make its way to the St. Lawrence River. When you start to think of it in those terms, you start to

think of the responsibility that's placed upon us as legislators to ensure that that resource is protected and that we're not just protecting it for ourselves, as much as we like to use it—we like to swim in it, we like to boat on it, we like to ensure that manufactured goods and natural resources are moved on it, from a shipping perspective. It's also something we've inherited from the people who came before us, and I think it behooves all of us as legislators to think we're going to pass that asset on in better shape than we received it.

To be honest, Speaker, it's fairly evident that what we've done is allowed the deterioration of this asset. The idea behind the Great Lakes Protection Act is simply that other groups, other governments in the past with the best of intentions—the Conservatives, the NDP and the Liberal Party—have brought forward pieces of legislation along the way, realizing that there's an asset out there that needs to be protected, and at that point in time, they thought this was the appropriate thing to do.

I think that most of us in this House, anyway, would agree that maybe all the answers aren't in this act—I'm sure there will be other acts in the future that will speak to water quality in the province of Ontario—but that at this given point in time, this is a good step forward. Perhaps the third party is saying some changes may be necessary along the way at the committee stage, or should at least be discussed, that would make this a better act than it is today, and I certainly have no problem with that.

But what we're aiming to do is try to do our part as a generation to restore the ecological integrity of something we've taken for granted for far too long. There are other parts of the world you can be born in that simply don't have this type of resource, that would actually—I don't want to use the word "kill" for this resource, but certainly are very envious of what we have here. Yet we just treat it as the lake at the bottom of the street.

For some reason, we used to decide we would put our garbage dumps close to rivers so they would flow into Lake Ontario. I can go to the town of Oakville, and the old dump is right on the banks of the creek, and that's not unique. It was quite common to a number of communities that often we treated the Great Lakes as a place where we could throw our waste, where we could dump stuff, that somehow it would go away. Who knows where it went to, but as long as it went away, that was okay.

I think that short-sighted approach is something we've learned over the years is simply not good enough, that what we need to do is we need to take stewardship of these Great Lakes. We need to work with our American partners. We need to work with our interprovincial partners as well. We need to ensure that the asset that we inherited from the people who came before us is one that we're going to pass on to generations that come after us.

That, I think, is the hallmark of a good piece of legislation that makes something better. I think it's something that we should all be proud of supporting in this House. Those members who are going to support this, I thank you for that; those who aren't, it's shameful.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** It's a pleasure for me to rise and comment on what was said by the member from Oakville.

I was raised about five or six miles inshore from Lake Erie near a little town called Kingsville. In fact, as an aside, I took swimming lessons in Lake Erie at Leamington and I was taught by a future Miss Canada. It certainly wasn't my swimming ability that helped her along; however, she—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** This is quite a while ago, but women have played a big part in my life, and she certainly was one of them.

**Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:** You'll be celebrating women's day on March 8.

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** I'll be celebrating that.

Anyways, just a little aside for you, Speaker, about where I came from and what I did. That was in Lake Erie.

The lake has gone up and down in cleanliness over the years. In fact, I can remember stepping over fish just to get to the water, and that certainly has cleaned up quite a bit. There's quite a fishery in the lakes—a good fishery in the lakes—right now.

The worrisome part about this bill is it's open-ended. It has no specifics and leaves all decision-making and priority-setting to the environment minister and another unaccountable board, the Guardians' Council, which gives me pause.

There are no dollars affixed to this bill. We don't know what it's going to cost—another scary thought when dealing with this current government. They have wasted so much money on Ornge, gas plants, whatever, that it's a scary thought there's no price tag on this thing. I think we should all be concerned about that.

The GFI: In electrical terms, that would be a ground fault interrupter—that's the thing you can plug your radio into when you're sitting in the bathtub and not get shocked. They give it another name; they're calling it a geographically-focused initiative. Unfortunately, they've got another acronym here which is going to cost us a lot of money—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Thank you. Questions and comments?

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** It's a privilege to get up to speak to Bill 6, the Great Lakes Protection Act. I heard some of the comments that the member for Oakville mentioned. I too have keen interest not only in one of the lakes but in all of them, two of which actually border Algoma-Manitoulin—great fish in all of those two lakes which I eat very regularly.

As a matter of fact, I would invite you to a couple of the fish derbies in Algoma-Manitoulin. There is one in Wawa which has a wonderful salmon derby in the summertime, and in the wintertime they have the wonderful lake trout. On Manitoulin Island there's a few of them as well. You're all invited to have some good tasty fish in Algoma-Manitoulin.

Who would disagree with this type of a bill? It says, "to protect and restore the ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin; and ... to create opportunities for individuals and communities to become involved in the protection and restoration of the ecological health of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin." Who is going to disagree with that?

Encore une autre fois, on voit un extrêmement beau projet de loi où on va avoir des belles nouvelles et ça va être extrêmement beau, mais on est encore en train de développer un plan pour avoir un plan pour développer une action. C'est de l'action dont on a besoin immédiatement avec les lacs; ce n'est pas de regarder à faire un nouveau comité pour implémenter quoi que—ça devrait être fait automatiquement, en fait. Il faudrait qu'on regarde à vraiment prendre une action, apporter une résolution, et non seulement regarder à prendre un endroit—en général, il faudrait qu'on regarde à tous les lacs et puis qu'on prenne des actions immédiatement.

Là, quand je parle en français, mes amis, vous êtes bien tranquilles, mais c'est ce qu'il faut vraiment faire immédiatement, tout de suite, et puis qu'on prenne de l'action concrète pour résoudre le problème des Grands Lacs.

Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Président.

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**Le Président suppléant (M. Paul Miller):** Merci beaucoup.

The member for Scarborough Southwest.

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** I was going to speak for two minutes, but I thought maybe the House leader was going to stand up on a point of order.

**Hon. John Milloy:** No, no.

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** Okay. I appreciate that.

My riding of Scarborough Southwest's entire southern border is on Lake Ontario, and in the riding of Scarborough Southwest, at the very southwest end, there is Toronto's major water plant, which actually brings in water from Lake Ontario. It's a two-mile-long tunnel which was built in the 1930s, and this water is brought in. I've had a tour of this amazing facility which was built in the 1930s, and back then, they had the foresight to build it large enough to be able to sustain almost all of present-day Toronto. Now, we have a plant at both the east and west of us, but this one is by far the largest one, and I've been in it.

The importance of water and protecting water cannot be overstated. This bill is also very important. I've been hearing parts of the debate, and this act works on making sure that we preserve these lakes, not for our generation and the future generation, but for many, many generations to come, when we're long gone from this planet and other people are on the planet here living their lives. It's the foresight, doing something beforehand, like what was done before, which makes a difference.

I know the member from Oakville spoke about this and how important the lake is and that it was also used for transportation, for many reasons. It's still being used for transportation. I went to law school in Windsor and saw those huge barges pass by, just along the Detroit

River, either heading towards Thunder Bay or the other way.

So it's important to support the bill, and thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak for two minutes.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Jack MacLaren:** Mr. Speaker, this bill is a duplication, it's redundant, and that's been said many times. We are almost repeating ourselves. Because of all the other legislations that look after the water and look after the shorelines and look after the land, there is no need for this bill. Everything is protected and looked after by all the other green legislations that are out there doing supposedly doing their job—and I would question a lot of those.

So then one would wonder, what would be the interest, the initiative or the reason for this bill to be created?

There's a group of people called the Great Lakes alliance, which is six NGO environmental groups whose idea it was to draft this up and present it to the Liberal government and ask them to try to create a bill. We've become very suspicious of their motives as landowners and their lack of consideration of the rights of landowners.

Landowners have an inalienable property right to their land. That can't be taken away without respect for that right. If it's in the public interest to place a designation on land to supposedly protect something which is already protected, then the public should pay. There should be full, fair and timely compensation incorporated into this bill if it's to go ahead and restrictions are to be placed on private land that's in the public interest.

It's also disrespectful of private property owners that they're not regarded as stewards of their land, as responsible people, which most of them are. It's in nobody's interest to hurt the environment, to hurt the water, because we leave that, as stewards of the land, for our children and the rest of society. That's missing too—not only the value of the land but the respect for people and their inalienable rights for property rights.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member from Oakville has two minutes.

**Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to reply, and thanks to the members from Perth–Wellington, Carleton–Mississippi Mills, Scarborough Southwest and Algoma–Manitoulin for their comments about this very, very important issue.

I would tell the member from Algoma–Manitoulin that I have been at a fish fry in his riding, and I enjoyed it very much. I have toured much of his riding by snowmobile. Certainly those members who are rightfully proud of the sports fishery that they have in their own ridings I'm sure would like to see that extended to other portions of the Great Lakes and would like to see other members in this House be able to stand and say exactly the same thing.

The fact of the matter is, I can't. I think anybody with a riding in Toronto—the member from Scarborough

Southwest—simply couldn't stand up and say the same thing. Perhaps you can go out and catch the fish, but you wouldn't want to put them anywhere near your plate. So, certainly we need to work towards those ends.

Somebody was asking, "Well, what are the priorities? What do we have to do? What do we have to fix?" One member was suggesting, "Don't worry. Everything's okay. We've got everything we need." But the fact of the matter remains that we're dealing with excessive phosphorus loadings in our lake that we need to do something about. The wildlife habitat is on the decline as well, especially our wetlands. We've got invasive species. The zebra mussels are still with us, causing a lot of damage. The Asian carp: I don't think we've seen that peak yet to the point and the potential for the damage that it could do to the ecosystem here. And we're seeing our lake levels certainly in the Great Lakes—anybody who lives around Georgian Bay, anybody who maybe has another property in Georgian Bay can see the impact of lake levels on the ecosystems in those areas.

Certainly climate change is with us and is having a huge impact on the Great Lakes. My suggestion is that we support this and allow it to go forward to the committee process if any improvements or amendments are needed along the way, but to suggest that this isn't necessary I think is just hiding your head in the sand.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Thank you. Further debate?

**Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:** I'm pleased to stand today to speak about Bill 6, the Great Lakes Protection Act, as it is called, on behalf of the PC caucus.

Last week, I had a chance to listen to the MPP from Kitchener–Conestoga, the PC environmental critic, do his leadoff speech, and I want to commend him for all the work he has done on this issue. We have an informal Great Lakes caucus, and during ROMA last week as well, my colleague hosted a round-table meeting with MPPs and municipal leaders who bring Great Lakes issues to the forefront with us. He's just taken an outstanding leadership role on this issue. Again, I'd like to commend him, and I appreciate all the work he has done.

But when I reflect upon the Great Lakes Protection Act, I have to reflect on the fact that I am very proud to come from the amazing riding of Huron–Bruce. The entire west coast is lined by the beautiful waters of Lake Huron. That's why my riding is known as Ontario's west coast.

Growing up, I've been very, very fortunate to share with you that when my siblings and I participated in exchanges, we would travel to Goderich and Bayfield and we'd always take the exchange students to these towns and ports because we were very proud of the industry they represented and the tourism and just the scenic value that our beaches offered. We were always very proud of that, but sadly, the lakes have evolved, water levels have dropped and things are changing on the fly.

I'm also proud to share with you that growing up, I had family members who owned cottages along Bruce

Beach just south of Kincardine. Honestly, there's no better place in this province to be to watch the sunsets and see the lakers cross that horizon as they carry their cargo from Goderich to Owen Sound to Sault Ste. Marie, and the industry that that represents cannot be taken lightly. We need to address that, which I will further in my comments.

Lastly, as I introduce why I'm really interested in speaking to the Great Lakes Protection Act—I'm also very proud to say that I grew up on a farm, and I don't think there are any better people in this province than farmers who act as stewards of the land. When I think about this, I can't help but think of my 4-H beef club leader—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Could I ask the photographer to do something about the clicking—if he could take individual shots, please? It's very distracting. Thank you.

Go ahead.

**Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just referencing the fact that farmers are some of the best stewards in this province, and we take the ownership and responsibility of our lands and waters very, very seriously. I can't help but reflect on Murray and Wilma Scott—Murray was my 4-H beef club leader—and the work that they have done on their farms to be good stewards and to improve water quality. It just proves how people can lead by example. Unfortunately, the efforts that have gone into Bill 6, the Great Lakes Protection Act, simply do not lead by example because there are so many organizations, so many alliances and so much regulation that have gone before it. That's what I want to talk about because, getting to the crux of this bill and what it means to Ontario shorelines, I have a number of concerns.

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The first concern I have is the common theme within this government. Over the last couple of weeks, we've heard this Liberal government go on about how they've overachieved. The reality is just this: They're over—they're over-regulators. It really has to come to an end.

You can ask any stakeholder, farmer or small business owner what the toughest hurdle they face day to day is, and they would tell you that it is the government regulating them to death. We are adding regulations to things that are already regulated, creating yet another layer of bureaucracy that people of the province have said loud and clear they don't want.

The proposal under Bill 6 will create a third—yes, a third—regulator for Ontario shorelines. That means more overlap, more duplication and more bodies to conflict with each other instead of working on what matters most: the viability and the sustainability of one of our most precious resources, the Great Lakes.

It's interesting when we talk about this over-regulation and overlap and potential conflict. I want to revisit the issue at hand. The government's proposal under Bill 6 to create this third regulator is yet another classic example of Liberal regulatory duplication, overlap and conflict.

As has been mentioned before, we have the Conservation Authorities Act, and we have the Planning Act. Now the Ministry of the Environment wants in on the action along with additional powers to collect fees for violations.

We've also heard over this debate that Bill 6 would conflict with Ontario's existing water legislation, including the Clean Water Act, Environmental Protection Act, Nutrient Management Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, Water Opportunities Act and the Ontario Water Resources Act. This is just ridiculous, and we have to rein it in because, honestly, too many rules will just lead to confusion and insufficient action on the resource that we need to value most.

I also would like to draw attention to the fact that, in addition to those acts, we have bodies that are in place already. We don't need this guardians' council, for goodness' sake. As my colleague from Kitchener-Conestoga mentioned last week, we have the Great Lakes alliance. We also have the United States and Canada in an agreement whereby they signed the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement in 1972.

That begs the point that the honourable member from Halton made just earlier today in talking about the Canada-Russia summit from 1972. I'd be remiss if I didn't say, when we reflect on the year 1972, that when this government was prorogued, Paul Henderson received the Order of Canada for the outstanding performance he had in that 1972 summit, yet he's still not in the Hockey Hall of Fame. I hope someday we see that corrected.

But I digress because I'm talking about an amazing champion, and we have to pull back to the issue at hand: Bill 6 and the champions that are already in place doing their job. As I mentioned before, there's a lot of redundancy that this Bill 6 introduces. In terms of champions, there's already an organization called the Great Lakes water initiative. I have people, municipal leaders, who are champions about this cause already working collaboratively with the lake shore states and provinces in Canada. Deb Shewfelt from Goderich and Mitch Twolan from Huron-Kinloss are doing a great job. We do not—I repeat, do not—need another layer of bureaucracy confusing the issue with the establishment of the guardians' council. Bill 6 is redundant—simply.

But another concern I have is that Bill 6 has striking similarities to another Liberal bill that was passed in 2009, a bill that I have come to know quite well. Anybody hazard to take a guess? It's the Green Energy Act. The Green Energy Act is similar in that Bill 6, just like the Green Energy Act, is very open-ended. We have heard about this. It has no specifics, and it leaves many things to regulation, and to another unelected, unaccountable board—in this case, the so-called guardians' council—that we don't need. As I mentioned before, we already have in place champions representing us very well in that regard.

Like the Green Energy Act, I fear important decisions regarding our shorelines will be left to regulation behind the closed doors of cabinet. We saw what happened behind the closed prorogation doors. So many regulations

and approvals were made without proper oversight and accountability through this House. In terms of what happens behind closed doors, I'd like to share an example whereby setbacks with the Green Energy Act were left to cabinet instead of being debated in this House and at committee—totally unacceptable.

I have to agree with and support my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga when he asked, “Why did this bill have to be rushed through?” The Great Lakes had not been mentioned in the throne speech whatsoever. Typically, the throne speech sets the government's agenda for the upcoming session. The Great Lakes Protection Act wasn't mentioned, but then I dare say that agriculture and food—other priorities that should be at the top of the Liberal agenda—weren't really mentioned either. I agree with the member from Kitchener–Conestoga that we need to be focusing on priorities that matter to Ontarians: focusing on jobs, getting our economy turned around and ensuring that ratepayers here in Ontario have affordable, reliable energy.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** I would ask the member from Huron–Bruce to stick to the bill. She's wandering again. Thank you.

**Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:** Very good, Mr. Speaker. With that said, I have to share with you that—you know what?—in the last three weeks, this government has had ample opportunity to table meaningful legislation to turn this province around. But no, they haven't chosen to do that—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** I don't believe the member got my message. Last warning: Stick to the script. Thank you.

**Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:** I'll stick to the script. Yes, sir. There are so many examples of how this government has missed priorities. But you know what? Unfortunately, one of their priorities is not talking about what makes sense. Instead, this government is choosing to add additional red tape and regulation. It's an absolute shame.

The Great Lakes play a major role in providing drinking water, shipping routes, recreational activities, swimming, fishing and boating. We've heard all the examples through this debate. Even spending a simple day on the beach, something I know many of us like to do, is going to be threatened with all this over-regulation.

I will agree that the Great Lakes and the preservation of them are very, very important. As we've heard our members say in this debate, it's an important source of drinking water for millions of Canadians, and it's also important to our agricultural and transportation sectors. In fact, if I look back to Hansard last week, our member from Kitchener–Conestoga shared some very great examples that I'd like to revisit.

“The Great Lakes also support 25% of Canada's agricultural capacity,” which is incredibly important, recognizing the importance of this sector, even though it wasn't really mentioned in the throne speech. Some 45% of Canada's industrial capacity is recognized through the Great Lakes, and \$12 billion is injected into Ontario's tourism industry annually. The Great Lakes have such an

amazing impact throughout a variety of sectors. “Every year, more than 160 million metric tonnes of raw materials for manufacturing products and agricultural commodities are moved on the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence Seaway.” There are so many things that are important with regard to our Great Lakes. We have to be careful that we don't handcuff our industries and overburden them with regulations that we do not need.

When we talk about burdens and issues associated with unnecessary regulation, I have to share with you that this past weekend I met up with a constituent. He was concerned about the future of the province. Specifically, he told me that he couldn't sleep at night, and he was going to do something he had never done before. David Keith from Teeswater wanted to write the Premier. I encouraged him to do so. I see it as part of my job as MPP for Huron–Bruce to make sure that my voices from Huron–Bruce are heard.

I just want to share a little piece from the letter that he wrote the Premier and I delivered to her on Monday. His letter read like this: “Please let your cabinet know of a great deal of growing frustration in rural Ontario regarding the dictatorship of the previous Liberal government.

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“The Clean Water Act will require many farms within ‘capture zones’ of municipal wells to completely change their methods of farming at considerable cost, maintain a record of everything they do, and suffer severe devaluation of their property without any compensation.

“Because of laws passed in Toronto, municipalities all over rural Ontario have been denied the right to protect the health of their own and those families within the communities....

“Unresolved frustration leads to anger, and an angry community leads to revolution.”

This gentleman is 82 years old. He closes by saying, “We were hoping to live out our years, the few that remain, in a quiet and peaceful rural area, but every new law passed in Toronto takes away the rights of rural residents to protect themselves and their property and makes that dream less likely.”

He's reflecting on the Clean Water Act, which already does recognize how we have to manage our valuable resources that ultimately stem from the Great Lakes. We don't need more bureaucracy clouding the issue.

I'd also like to draw attention to the fact that the Bruce County Federation of Agriculture also had concerns about the draft source water protection rules, specifically for the municipality of South Bruce and the Brockton area. The federation president, John Gillespie, went on to say that the Bruce County Federation of Agriculture feels that the nitrate issue in that area is being made out to be a bigger issue than what it really is.

As I said before, farmers are proud stewards of the land, and over-regulation is a costly burden that no one wants. This is unfortunately exactly what Bill 6 represents.

In my riding of Huron–Bruce, people are also concerned about invasive species along the shoreline. In

particular, phragmites have become a really huge concern. For those of you who don't know, phragmites are a perennial grass that has caused severe damage to wetlands and beaches in Ontario for several decades. In 2005, it was identified as the nation's worst invasive plant species by researchers at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

The Great Lakes are home to 130 endangered species. We also can't turn a blind eye to the issue associated with Asian carp. We could go on and on about the threats that face our Great Lakes system. Local municipalities are passing resolutions to try and make a difference.

What we need, Speaker, is action. We don't need more bureaucracy; we don't need more regulation. We need to be enabling our folks to do the job they want to do on behalf of the people who enjoy the lakes and recognize success through their industries.

I have so much that could be said with regard to the redundancy of Bill 6 and how another layer of unnecessary regulation and the introduction of another unneeded board or agency could just play havoc with what we need to be accomplishing.

A real issue that should be addressed, which interferes with and is a concern to our tourism industry as well as our industries that use the lakes for transportation and the moving of manufacturing raw materials and commodities, is the water level. It was interesting; a couple of weeks ago I had the honour of attending the Huron County Federation of Agriculture MP and MPP day. Agricultural organizations during that meeting warned that water levels are going to be down approximately two feet this year over last year. This is going to wreak havoc on beach communities like Bayfield, Goderich, Kincardine and Port Elgin. It's going to wreak havoc for tourism and for the marinas.

Do you know, actually, during our meeting, during the ROMA convention, which my colleague from Kitchener-Conestoga hosted, there was a very real concern, as well as frustration, that was expressed with regard to how a blind eye and deaf ear are being turned to the concerns of marinas? Marinas have a very short window to get ready to open up for the season. They've been seeking dredging applications. Our honourable member from Simcoe is concerned that some of his marinas may not even get open, because the real issues are not being addressed. That's why Bill 6 is so redundant and unnecessary. We're not addressing the issues that really need to be addressed and that are priorities for our constituents and our business people.

As I wrap up, Speaker, I'm very concerned that this bill will continue to place layers of red tape in front of those doing good work along the shorelines. The Great Lakes governance framework between the US and Canada, and, in turn, the co-operation between the federal and provincial governments that has been in place and has worked for more than 40 years, is going to be ignored. Why, after a decade in power, do the Liberals suddenly believe that Ontario needs more legislation to protect the Great Lakes? It just doesn't make any sense whatsoever.

Bill 6 gives public bodies, including municipalities and conservation authorities, the token—token—role of requesting a new regulatory area. But the real power, unfortunately, ultimately will rest with cabinet. It just is not acceptable.

And what about the so-called guardians' council? I want to revisit that for a second. A big concern that we have is, how much will this cost? No one seems to know the answer to this. And when does this government plan on releasing this information? The astute member from Timiskaming-Cochrane mentioned just moments ago that when you propose something, there is usually always a cost associated with it. Unfortunately, the way this Liberal government has operated causes me to worry. We could think about the Green Energy Act; we could think about the cancelled gas plants. Everything they do has cost the Ontario taxpayer dollars and more strain and burden on their shoulders. Speaker, this is unacceptable. We just can't support this additional Bill 6.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments? The member from Timiskaming-Cochrane.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Thank you, Speaker. It's once again a pleasure to stand here and speak on Bill 6, following my esteemed colleague from Huron-Bruce. I detected in your voice, Mr. Speaker, that you didn't agree with her comments regarding me.

Anyway, as we've already covered here, there are a few things—no one does not want to protect water in Ontario; no one does not want to protect the Great Lakes. We've already covered that this act doesn't have any accountability—yes, in the strategy, but not in the act. There's no cost with the act.

One thing I think is really missing is that we do have many acts that cover water, and there's nothing I see in this act that actually looks for the redundancy, looks to see if this is actually working. This is an overarching piece, an idea piece, but it's not a piece that's actually going to—or it could, but we don't see it in here. Right now, we don't see where this is actually, after it's passed, if it's passed, going to improve the Great Lakes.

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** Is it going to do anything?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** We haven't seen it. It looks almost like a feel-good piece.

I had a short meeting with the new Minister of Rural Affairs. I said that one of the things that really bothers people in the country—a shout-out to farmers; I'm proud to be one. What really bothers people in the country is that there doesn't seem to be a relationship between the level of risk and the level of regulation. People on the ground in the country want to fix, want to protect, but they want practical solutions, not just fuzzy rules from up on high. So far, from this—maybe we'll see more in committee, but so far that's all we have seen with Bill 6.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments? The member from Ajax-Pickering.

**Mr. Joe Dickson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be having the opportunity to speak while you are in the chair, sir.

It's quite interesting; I hear a number of comments, and I should mention that I do have in full support here the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment, from Ottawa–Orléans. He's talking to me about the Ottawa River, and I hear other people, some of my good colleagues across the aisle, talking about various things, talking about Manitoulin Island. I've done that tour, the aggregate tour on the school bus. You can sure lose 10 pounds off your derriere on those runs, once you've looked at 18 or 19 quarries.

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I can tell you also that I was very pleased to hear in the past few days that the member from Davenport was very much in support of the act as it is coming forward.

I also listened to a concern in Simcoe about dredging. I think we had several delegations in that area, particularly at our recent convention across the road. We at MNR were listening to all of these concerns. Of course, what they forgot to say is, part of the land there is First Nations, so you have another entity as we try to resolve the situation. But you're right: That should be done.

I happen to live on the Great Lakes—not quite physically on the Great Lakes, but in the town of Ajax adjacent to the Ajax waterfront. It is just a gorgeous area. I've had the pleasure of being the chair of the Ajax waterfront for 15 years. I commenced a number of other environmental groups in Ajax and Pickering. I can tell you, there is a lot of meat and potatoes here.

Mr. Speaker, I'm out of time, but I'll come back and talk while you're here again, sir.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex.

**Mr. Rick Nicholls:** Thank you very much, Speaker. Again, I want to compliment my colleague from Huron–Bruce and her wonderful, powerful presentation as to why our Progressive Conservative colleagues will not be supporting this particular bill.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Rick Nicholls:** I know; it's heartbreaking.

You're absolutely right: Water levels are down, and we're concerned about the effects that that will have on our beaches and of course also on tourism and so on.

Do you know, the wonderful riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex actually embraces the north shore of Lake Erie? But this Great Lakes Protection Act, Bill 6, which was introduced by the honourable member from—where is he from?

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member from Renfrew, your member is speaking. I can't hear him.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Rick Nicholls:** Thank you—the Minister of the Environment. I appreciate him bringing this forward. But again, as has been pointed out, there's a lot of duplication, and what we don't need is an additional regulatory group. There has been no mention of costs involved with this regulatory group. We believe that a lot of the en-

vironmental groups that are already doing their job are doing it well. There's no need to add yet another regulator.

I look at this—we're all concerned about having clear, clean, crystal water. We all want this, not only for the present but also for the future—for future generations to come. Again, I totally respect the Minister of the Environment, for one of the reasons because of his tenure here but also the fact that I worked with him, and he with me, on the major fish kill in Lake Erie that occurred back on Labour Day weekend. Again, I thank him for that, but we won't be standing in support.

I see my time is up. Thank you, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Questions and comments?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** This is an important piece of legislation. We have some concerns. Our critic Jonah Schein—those concerns are well documented. But if you've ever jumped in one of the Great Lakes; if you've ever had the pleasure—I know that many of you have told people to jump in a lake—

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** It's cold, but a cold, clean, Ontario lake: That's something to fight for. That's something to try to preserve. That's something to try to protect. I think, actually, that we have good evidence that the regulations and the legislation that are in place are not working. In fact, in a recent Toronto Star article, it was found that two out of 21 samples they collected—research collected—contained 600,000 plastic pieces per square kilometre—these are micropieces of plastic—nearly twice as much as the highest plastic count ever recorded in the infamous Great Pacific Garbage Patch. The researchers were surprised by this. They were surprised because, first of all, the levels of plastics in ocean bodies are well documented, but in our lakes—this is actually even more concerning for us. It should be concerning for you. It should be concerning for the government.

I think that there is a genuine question at play here. The integrity of our lakes is definitely in question. You only have personal experience, if you're cottagers, if you have a boat on a marina—these are the day-to-day concerns of people across the province of Ontario.

This is what we also know: The Ministry of Natural Resources doesn't have the resources to protect the lakes, so we need to put something in place. We're committed to making this work. We're committed to staying focused on the fact that regulation and legislation should work, and that's where our energy is going to go.

We disagree with the premise that it's not needed; something is needed. We're committed to making this work.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** The member from Huron–Bruce has two minutes.

**Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:** I'd like to share my appreciation with our member from Timiskaming–Cochrane—it's always a pleasure to give a shout-out to the farmers standing alongside you in that regard.

To our member from Ajax–Pickering: It's interesting how you remembered to reference food, the meat and potatoes, but the fact of the matter is, over-regulation is choking the people who are really trying to make a difference, and we have to bring it to a stop. That's what Ontarians are asking for.

To my colleague from Chatham–Kent–Essex: I couldn't agree with you any more. You're very well spoken and you eloquently caught the issues at hand associated with Bill 6.

To the member from Kitchener–Waterloo: I liked your analogy of telling people to go jump in the lake. That's rather interesting. We all have to enjoy that cold, fresh water.

But the realities are, Mr. Speaker, as I wrap up—I can't help but continue to express my concern that this bill will do nothing but place layers and layers of red tape and burden on the backs of the people who are trying to make Ontario work: the small business owners, the farmers, stakeholders, the tourist sector, the transportation sector, the agricultural sector. We could go on and on and on.

The reality is, we're facing a very tough wall here because, unfortunately, this Liberal government continues with a we-know-best attitude and they're continuing to make decisions without local consultation.

I look forward to listening to the rest of the debate on this issue, but the Great Lakes Protection Act does nothing but add another body we don't need and regulation we cannot afford.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Thank you. Further debate?

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Mr. Speaker, I'm going to ask for your indulgence a little bit because I'm going to start by talking about my dog, but I will tie the discussion of my dog in with G6, the Great Lakes Protection Act. And bear witness, you will see how this happens.

First of all, my dog's name is Victoria. She is an English bull terrier. For those who know the breed, I've mentioned Don Cherry because he has one, too. Also of course, Babe: Pig in the City—a bull terrier there; The Incredible Journey—another bull terrier. They're short-haired dogs. In fact, they have been compared by people who don't appreciate their true beauty as being somewhat pig-like. Their bellies are very pink and almost hairless—very cute, incredibly cute. She's 80 pounds, but she's cute.

She goes to the lake. Lake Ontario is right at the foot of my riding. I take her down there and she loves to race up and down the beach and chase the waves. It's an easy walk for an owner because I don't have to walk her, she walks herself. She gets exercise. We're all good; we go home. She goes for a little swim, and we go back. She developed a rash, Mr. Speaker, a very bad one, a very obvious one. I took her to my veterinarian—and this is how it all ties in, you see? He said, categorically, "Do not let your dog swim in Lake Ontario."

Now, if that's not a criticism of the state of our Great Lakes—"Don't let your dog"—never mind your—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** I'd like to remind the member that we don't have cross-dialogue; we're going through the chair. If you wanted to have a nice little discussion between the three of you after you're finished, you can go outside and talk. Thanks.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** So, my veterinarian said, "Don't let your dog or any dog swim in Lake Ontario." There's no more eloquent statement about the state of our lakes than that. Not even a dog can swim in Lake Ontario. In fact, I was told by a neighbour that if you put undeveloped film in Lake Ontario, it will develop. There's that level of chemicals in some aspects of this beautiful Great Lake. It should be beautiful and it should be clean. So that's how I tied in the dog.

**1750**

What are we doing here? What are we doing with this piece of legislation? For those who are listening and watching and wondering what we are talking about, let me talk about what this bill actually says. It's actually almost laughable. Here's what it does. It establishes a Great Lakes Guardians Council, made up of the Minister of the Environment, other ministers and key stakeholders. It does that. So it's going to set up a council—that's number one.

Number two, it's going to require the minister to maintain and update Ontario's Great Lakes Strategy—already done. They have to keep that up. It's going to allow—notice the language here—it's going to allow the minister to set qualitative or quantitative targets; and it's going to allow—not require—allow the minister to request the development and implementation of initiatives. That's what it's doing. This bill isn't going to do anything. This bill is going to do absolutely nothing concrete—

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** It's not going to clear up my dog's rash.

It's not going to do anything to protect our water. There is absolutely nothing concrete in this act that will affect the quality of water in the Great Lakes basin whatsoever.

The question truly is, why table it? We've seen bills like this come forward before around environmental issues because—you know, I understand that the government wants to be seen as being environmentally friendly. I get that. But there's a term for this kind of bill; it's called greenwashing, because that's what it does. It makes it look like you're doing something to protect the environment when actually you're not. Right? It's greenwashing, pure and simple.

I also listened to some of the comments around the floor about the cost that's not here. It's not written in; it's not anywhere. Presumably these folk who are getting together on this tribunal are travelling from somewhere. Are there costs associated? Are there per diems? No costs attached whatsoever, no standards, no targets, nothing; there's nothing concrete.

It reminds me. We've all had the pleasure of having an audience with Gord Miller, our Environmental Commis-

sioner here, and it's always a pleasure. Every year he brings out a report—and every year is more critical than the last—of what the government isn't doing in terms of protecting our environment, lakes included.

One story that he brought forward that really resonated with me—and I've used it many, many times—is, he said that part of the problem, of course, is not only do we not do anything to protect the environment but we don't have enough enforcement officers to even put in place and act on the regulations that we have. He said there's protected property, of course, in Ontario—property you are not supposed to be able to build on or touch, kept pristine. He said that finally they had the resources to send an inspector up to this property, and they found a landing strip built there—a landing strip. Somebody was building an airport on protected property. Why didn't they know that? Because they don't have the resources in his department to even enforce the regulations that are already in place. Guess what? This is a government that cut back his department and his funding. I wonder why. He turns out critical report after critical report.

Is it good that First Nations are involved in being one of the stakeholders here? Yes, because Lord knows we have seen legislation come forward where that's not the case. So that's a good thing, but, you know, again, we're dealing with a crisis situation. If you ever want to spend a depressing evening, have a glass of wine with an environmentalist, because they will tell you what's really going on. They will tell you how desperate the situation is for our planet and for our environment, for our water, for our soil. It's desperate.

We have the great joy of the member of Timiskaming—Cochrane, our first farmer in this caucus since I've been elected, and he will tell you—it's a famous rock song—we're paving over paradise, we're paving over our farmland, we're polluting our drinking water, we're polluting our environment.

This is the government, Mr. Speaker, that was going to close the coal-firing plants. Remember that? First it was in 2007 that they were going to be closed, then it was in 2011 that they were going to be closed. Guess what? Some seven years later I stand here, now it's in 2014—in 2014 they're going to be closed. Meanwhile, we're the only party, the New Democrats, who are actually standing up and saying no to huge amounts of money being spent on nuclear, which would suck up all the money that would go to things like conservation and other environmental necessities.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Last warning to the member from Northumberland—Quinte West.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** I have very few minutes.

Talking about the nuclear issue, though, there's something very distressing that's happening with the Great

Lakes, and that is that Ontario's nuclear power stations are using once-through cooling systems, which allow the plants to suck in and spew out hundreds of millions of litres of water a day. Now, that should scare people. It scares me. Nothing in this bill will address that.

So we have a bill that sets up a council to talk about strategies and what to do to save the Great Lakes, but there are no targets, there are no requirements—no requirements whatsoever, really—in this bill to do anything about it.

Will New Democrats vote for this so it can go to committee? Absolutely. Why, might our friends to the right ask, why are we supporting it? We're supporting it so we can get it to committee so that we can give it some teeth, so that we can put into this bill, that has a framework, barely—and actually turn it into a piece of legislation that might actually save a litre of our water, because water, Mr. Speaker, is a huge issue. The Council of Canadians—it makes me think of them and their incredible work on water.

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Yes, Maude Barlow—I mean, this is a huge topic that this bill does not address in any way, shape or form. So by voting for it, by giving it assent, we push it forward to committee, where, I hope, everyone here will actually, with this framework, build a house on it, build something on it that will actually protect something.

But it's sad because we see so many bills like this. Look how long it takes in this chamber to discuss this, to do anything with it. We could be discussing something with real teeth. Taxpayers should be very aware of all of the hours of talk and debate that go into a bill that really accomplishes nothing whatsoever. That's sad, because that's wasting money already—that's their money.

I'm just going to conclude. We're running out of time. I want to get home to my dog, the one that doesn't swim in the lake.

**Interjection:** You can go for a skate tonight.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** There we go.

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Her name is Victoria, yes. I want to get home to Victoria.

Hopefully when it gets to committee, we can actually add something that will turn this into a real piece of legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** Thank you to the member. When the debate continues on this bill, the member will have the floor.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):** It is now 6 o'clock or close to it. This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

*The House adjourned at 1758.*

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