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Thursday 18 April 2013

Jeudi 18 avril 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Thursday 18 April 2013

Jeudi 18 avril 2013

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. John Gerretsen: Good morning, Speaker, and good morning to everyone here in the House on this beautiful spring day. It is the government's pleasure to call government order G36, the Local Food Act.

LOCAL FOOD ACT, 2013
LOI DE 2013 SUR
LES ALIMENTS LOCAUX

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 17, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member from Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I just wanted to say that our prayers are with people in West, Texas, as reports continue to come in with respect to casualties concerning a fertilizer plant explosion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for his point of order to bring our attention to this issue. I suspect we'll be dealing with this a little bit later on.

Further debate?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to stand in my place and speak on the Local Food Act. I think it was Vincent Van Gogh who once said that great things are not done by impulse but by a series of small things brought together. I think that's true.

Interjection.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Well, all things work together for good, if one wanted to get theological about it, I suppose. You need to not be so quick—

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

Hon. Ted McMeekin: —and try to do something that you may not have any idea what you're doing and fail to take the time to do the things you ought to have done.

I think the Local Food Act is a good example of taking the time to get things right. I'm someone who might be called the optimistic gardener. I believe that things that

go down eventually have to grow if you pray enough and care enough: What goes down must come up.

Our farmers, who work so very, very hard facing all the challenges that nature and others can present, use all their skill and hard work and dedication to provide the best-tasting, most nutritious and safest food in the world, and they deserve our praise and our thanks. Farmers do indeed feed cities. But you know what? They also need cities and the consumers who consume the food that's produced.

I don't know if every member of this House would know it or not—talk about small things coming together and making a bigger package—but about 64% of all the produce that is produced in this wonderful province of ours is sold to food processors who then take that bounty and shape it so that the consumers the farmers grow food to feed can, in fact, eat that best-tasting and most nutritious food.

Much of that food, as you would realize, Mr. Speaker, would be exported. We're the envy of the world—the food basket of the world, in many respects. There are nations all around the world that would trade places with us in a wink. In fact, I often say to people when I'm out speaking, “Would you change the challenges and opportunities of Ontario, Canada, for the challenges and opportunities of anywhere else in the world?” Invariably, the answer comes back, “No, I wouldn't,” and no wonder; we are so incredibly blessed here.

Those who labour in the field and produce our food are so integral a part of why we have such a good quality of life that we have. As I say, it's their skill, hard work and dedication that make that so. In fact, the agri-food industry, as some people won't know—or may know—is an industry that's the single largest contributor to the Ontario economy.

Interjection.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I know everybody wants to be paying good attention to this, because it's so important.

Some \$35 billion is contributed annually to the gross domestic product, and the agri-food industry directly employs some 710,000 people. These are folk who keep food on our shelves and stock our food markets and make us able to enjoy the standard of living that we have.

Foodland Ontario—you may not know this, either—is the second most recognized brand in Ontario. You know, Mr. Speaker and everybody, it's a catchy tune: “Good things grow in Ontario.” We should do it all together. That should be a part of our—maybe we can even incorporate that as an ending to prayer time. “Good things grow—

Mr. John Vanthof: Point of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: I seek unanimous consent that we not allow the Minister of Community and Social Services to ever sing again in this House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): That's not a point of order.

Minister.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: We had a great time up in the member's riding singing that song with his agricultural leaders. By the way, I really enjoyed that trip. I really enjoyed that trip. You've got some great folk up there who taught me a lot about the north and you, sir, about some of the potential—agricultural potential—and how different the agricultural and agri-food system is in the north. I'll be forever indebted to the honourable member opposite for the invitation and the good time we had there.

Mr. Speaker, we're interested in making every week and every day food day in Ontario. There were some who were speaking the other day about the importance of agricultural literacy—food literacy. We couldn't agree more with that. In fact, that's a big part of our hope in this bill that we will be able to work together to ascertain the best way to move forward in terms of sharing the wonder that is the agri-food industry.

I've become convinced in my 23-odd—and some not-so-odd—years in public service that people would much rather arrive together than be driven anywhere. Folk who think that agricultural policy or any kind of act relating to affirming the agricultural sector can be written at somebody's desk or back office at Queen's Park are naive in the extreme. We have so much to learn from our agri-food sector folk, and anyone who is prepared to take the time to do that can learn enough to work in ways together that can make a real difference in Ontario.

0910

I think it was Aristotle who once said, "If you want to know if the shoe fits, ask the person who wears it, not the person who made it." I was very pleased, during my all-too-brief time as Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, to have a chance to tour Ontario and to look at some of the challenges and to work with folk. I stress "with folk" because farmers and food processors and the entire ag food industry have been forced in a number of challenges, and they know what they're doing. In addition to that, my experience is that farmers, producers, have built-in crap detectors. They can spot a phony a mile away. I have to tell you, if you want to know what's going on, you just need to take the time.

When I was minister, we didn't have a lot of policy people on the political staff because we felt it was more important to engage in the process with our leaders, secure in the knowledge that there were 710,000 professors all across Ontario who were prepared to give their agriculture, food and rural affairs minister, and anyone else who would care to hear, a lecture on the topic of their choice any day of the week. The trick, Mr. Speaker, is to learn to listen carefully, as we did in the north around some of the challenges there, around the research insti-

tute and some other issues right across this great province of ours.

Local efforts, focused local efforts worked out in consultation with the ag food industry, bear a lot of fruit, both literally and symbolically. I think, for example, of the corn-fed beef industry and the work that's been done with some of the supermarket chains, notably the Loblaws chain, which, based on a lot of good work and some government support, got us to the point where that food chain decided that they would supplant the imported beef that they were selling on their shelves with good Ontario corn-fed beef. That industry is growing very quickly. We had suggestions from the corn-fed beef folk of the need for some support by way of a ledger account, which our government—and I was pleased to be part of that—was able to foster, and that makes a huge difference.

The establishment of farm markets to showcase the produce that is grown throughout Ontario has been very helpful in spreading the good news. We know from some anecdotal polling that has been done that over 90% of Ontarians go to their local market with the intent of identifying and purchasing Ontario-grown food. There are some difficulties sometimes locating it in the supermarket, and I think we've got some work to do in that regard. That's why our government, through the ministry, has been working closely with the independent supermarket chains and others to identify some of those opportunities and to make sure that we're taking some steps to in fact highlight Ontario produce and to ensure that those who go to the market with a desire to purchase Ontario food are, in fact, assisted. We do the same with our legendary Ontario wine industry, one of the finest in the world, Mr. Speaker, by ensuring that sufficient LCBO shelf space is made available. We're looking at a number of different options to further support the wine industry, not the least of which would be additional promotion of the agri-tourism industry, which has great potential for our producers, the industry and the jobs that can be produced by them.

There has been some predictable criticism of the bill, and it's leaning towards being us having a series of aspirational goals. I just want to speak to that directly. There's nothing wrong with aspiring—inspiring or aspiring—to greater things. It's my firm belief, and I think our government's firm belief, that it's better to aspire together and to arrive together than to be driven prematurely to a situation that may not be in the best interest of all concerned. It's our government's intent to continue to work in a very focused and intentional way with the agri-food industry to learn together what needs to happen, what sort of targets need to be in place, how we can better work to serve the interest of Ontarians. We are moving in that direction.

That has been very well received, frankly, by the various agricultural groups. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has been very complimentary with respect to the goals that we've set and the willingness to work together. And no wonder. They worked with our government through our agri-food Open for Business initiative where, over the last couple of years, we've managed together—I

stress this, “together”—to remove some 28% of the regulatory burden faced by the agri-food industry. That Open for Business group, which is co-chaired by the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and now the Minister of Agriculture and Food, continues to work together, to strive together, to identify improvements.

So when people talk about the importance of red tape and being sensitive to our farmers, we get it; we agree. In fact, that’s why, when I was the then minister, I wrote to my critic of ag, food and rural affairs, and invited him to send me a list of all the regulations that were being identified to him for change.

Interjection.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: One day soon it will come, I’m sure. It’s important that we do that. Because regulations come at all different levels. Many of them are federal regulations.

You might, on the other side of the House, want to be aware that there are some moves right now at the federal level to trade off on some of the cheese tariffs—very, very significant. The critic from the third party, who I know well, a former dairy farmer, will know all too well the arguments around supply management and the importance of that and the potential for some real difficulty in the dairy sector if this were to happen. Sometimes, a phone call from a colleague with a philosophy maybe a little bit different than ours to somebody in a position of power federally helps.

There are all kinds of federal regulations, CFIA and a whole lot of other things. There are also a number of municipal regulations around zoning and planning and what have you. We need to be working not in isolation from each other but together to see if there are better ways to make life easier for those who have the enormous respect and the important task of putting the best-tasting, most nutritious and safest food in the world on our tables.

0920

I’ll give you a good example of working together: The greenhouse growers had some real concerns about waste water and some of the requirements around that. They were in conflict with our Ministry of the Environment for a whole lot of reasons, many of which were legitimate; they would acknowledge that. By pulling together the groups to look at some alternative ways of addressing that, we have, for all intents and purposes, resolved that.

On Growing Forward 2 situation, when it was clear that another level of government had a different set of priorities than our stakeholders in the agri-food sector, we were able to pull together the leaders of the commodity groups. It took us about six weeks to share information that wasn’t being as effectively shared as it should have been—not just in Ontario but elsewhere—and to build a coalition in advance of the federal-provincial-territorial conference around the importance of the suite of risk management programs, and eventually to find ways to work with our federal cousins to ensure that the protections our farmers wanted to see in place were, to as large an extent as possible, kept in place.

I look at industries like Fiera Foods, who have won national awards for the work that they’ve done, and some of the support that government has been able to bring to their efforts.

On the risk management issue, we worked with local commodity groups to in fact invite them to lift up their ideas around how that could be more appropriately offered. They in fact did that: They suggested a scheme where they would actually control and distribute and work out problem-solving mechanisms for funding in the Ontario risk-based management program, and we as a government had the courage to not only listen and say thanks but to embrace their scheme. It was a wonderful example of working together.

We’ve had a number of round tables on this act. What we heard as we went around was, “Let’s work together to move the industry forward.” It’s an important industry; we all acknowledge that. It will stand us in good stead if we continue to reflect the attitude of being able to work together and grow together in this great province of Ontario, and to continue to believe that the agri-food industry has not only a place but perhaps the most important place in our growing Ontario economy. Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I’m pleased to stand here and comment on the member’s statement. It’s interesting how I heard the words “co-operate” and “work with” and whatever was in these past comments. It’s something that I’m sure the horse racing industry wouldn’t agree on, when we see how they clobbered it. Red tape has been an issue with the farming industry for many, many years, and they keep getting more and more regulation, and this government certainly hasn’t listened to that.

Also, I don’t know why they would put this in the Agriculture Week that we’ve had since 1998, in the week leading up to Thanksgiving; they put it on the same week. Did they not even know that that was Agriculture Week? Again, it’s window dressing.

They claim to be helping the agriculture industry out, and yet they nailed them with a tire tax a couple of weeks ago. We don’t know what else this government is going to do with the farming industry that’s going to hinder them. The industry has been driven out of this province. Mr. Speaker, for your information, in Perth county we have no small abattoirs left. They got tired of the red tape and the fooling around that this government has put on them.

We are all for promoting local food. If you care to read our white paper, you’d see in our white paper that this is what we want to do. But it is getting rid of red tape; it’s taking some regulations from different ministries that overlap each other that farmers get tired of fooling around with. They spend four to five weeks a year doing paperwork. So I’m rather cynical at what this government intends to do with their Local Food Act.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to join the debate this morning on the Local Food Act and to follow comments from the Minister of Community and Social Services. This is a member that I feel I share some similarities with. We both worked as social workers before and during Parliament and, in fact, our friend used to work with the NDP as well. So I feel—

Interjection.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Oh, sorry. I feel like there are some similarities—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He was a New Democrat.

Mr. Jonah Schein: He was a New Democrat.

So as I've said in my comments on this bill before, the bill as it stands right now is pretty empty. It does give us a week in October to talk about local food. I think there's far more that we can do when it comes to local food in Ontario. But I think that this is actually an opportunity to talk about food issues in Ontario.

The other thing that I share, I think, in principle with my colleague with the Liberals now is that—in the past, when the Minister of Community and Social Services was a backbench member of the Liberal Party, he introduced a private member's bill that was talking about food in a different sense. That's something I would like to remind him of now, as he is the Minister of Community and Social Services, and that was pointing out the gross inadequacy of our social assistance benefits in Ontario. He asked, at that time, that we look at a system of setting rates that actually measured what it cost to live. I would welcome him, as we go into a budget, at some point to look at that information closely to see if there's any person in this province who can actually access healthy food, nutritious food, in Ontario if they're unemployed, if they're on social assistance. Never mind local food; never mind organic food—any kind of food. How do you access food on \$600 a month in Ontario?

I'm optimistic; I'm hopeful. But I would like to see something in the budget when it comes to food access for every person in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's a pleasure to rise to comment on the remarks made by our colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services. As we all know, he was the Minister of Agriculture and Food when this bill was introduced for the first time and, as has been pointed out by the member of Davenport, is someone who is concerned about food security issues as well as local food. Minister, I think we all applaud the efforts you made to engage stakeholders, the types of round tables and consultations, not only here in Ontario but with the federal government and your provincial colleagues when you were minister.

My riding is a great producer of local food. I have my constituency office where the population is greatest, down in the Markham-Richmond Hill area, but I actually live way up at the north end, which stretches all the way to the Holland Marsh. I think everyone in Ontario should be very, very cognizant of the great food production that

occurs in the Holland Marsh. I was given a tour by the head of the Holland Marsh Growers' Association, Jamie Reaume, and I found it absolutely fascinating to see not only the amount of employment that exists in the Holland Marsh, the type of equipment that is necessary—so, obviously, jobs and employment is a key component in the agricultural sector. The more that we promote our local food, the more we are promoting those jobs and that employment.

I travel back to my home from my constituency office every week along the concession roads. We have the most amazing farms, and some very entrepreneurial young farmers who are making their farm really a destination, not only to purchase local food, but to view farm animals and so on. I'm all in favour of this bill. I hope everyone supports it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I also want to show deference to the minister who spoke and who was, at one time, Minister of Agriculture. But I won't comment on his terrible rendition of the musical interlude on agriculture.

However, I do think that he did say something that's important, and I'm going to attribute this to my good friend the member from Oshawa. A vision, as you talked about—but vision without action is simply a dream. Vision with action can indeed change the world. So there is something missing there.

0930

Yesterday I sat and listened to the debate on it. I think it's quite rude, the fact that they're doing this bill—the member from Perth–Wellington, Randy, spoke here just in response to the minister's remarks; he's the parliamentary assistant. Now, he's also in the same riding once occupied by Bert Johnson. Bert Johnson was the person who actually brought in the legislation for celebrating agriculture week. I pay great respect to the member now serving Perth–Wellington.

There was an interlude there for a person that didn't really get agriculture, but they just recently assigned him to do the study on the equine industry. I don't think he did a very good job there, either.

The decimation in rural Ontario is the footprint of the Liberal policies in agriculture. What they've done to the equine industry in my riding is unacceptable and rude. The way it was implemented in a sort of backroom deal reminds me of what they did in Ornge. The disrespect for agriculture is their vision of rural Ontario.

Yesterday I listened to our member from Oxford, who has been the Minister of Agriculture. His heart, his soul and his every action are committed to agriculture.

In fact we almost demonize agriculture. These are the very families that feed Ontario. I think there should be more respect and integrity in our remarks.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister, you've got two minutes for a response.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I hardly know where to start. It's such a paradoxical mix of affirmation and critique that would tend to leave one with less excitement about

the ag food industry speechless. But let me give it the best shot I can.

I believe vision without action isn't vision at all; it becomes a nightmare. I think we need to be moving forward.

Interjection.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: That's not what the agri-food sector folk say. If you speak to the Christian Farmers or the OFA about our government's steps to work with them—it's very, very positive.

They understand the importance of food sovereignty, as do we. I never, ever want to see my province or my country in a position where we are having to have food sent to us in return for our water or our oil or something else. There are places in the world where we see that happening, sadly, and that will never be here in Ontario.

There are lots of other things that we need to be looking at from an educational perspective and from an infrastructure perspective. There are those who say that we're a petrol-based economy, and in some respects they're right. But there are alternatives to fossil fuels; there aren't any alternatives to water. We're really a water-based economy, and it's particularly true of the agri-food sector. It is very, very important that we conserve our most precious resource, water, and make sure that we're stewarding that well. I know the agri-food sector is keen to do that, as is our government. This bill will help us to move forward in that regard as well.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I wish to inform you that I want to share my time with my colleague and friend the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. I'm glad to have this chance this morning to speak about Bill 36, the government's Local Food Act, here at the second reading.

Last week, I achieved the dubious distinction of reaching the age of 50. I must confess that the older I get, the more I think about food. I was glad to celebrate the occasion with my family, who surprised and delighted me by coming down to Toronto last Monday night. What did we do? Of course, we went out for dinner and we ate our meal together.

As families and as communities, food is almost always part of our special celebrations. But even more than that, food is a basic human need. We need to nourish and sustain ourselves with nutritious food. If we don't, we perish.

This is why our farm families are so important in our society. This is why we should acknowledge and recognize their importance. It is their labour and effort, their ingenuity and knowledge, indeed, it is their passion for a life in agriculture that ultimately feeds us all. There's an old saying in rural Ontario, and it's as simple as it is true: If you ate today, thank a farmer.

The local food movement has really taken off in the province. We now have restaurants that proudly identify the origins of the food that they serve, farmers' markets in many communities selling local produce and specialty

independent grocery stores that have opened—all to cater to the consumer who wants to eat food that's been grown or produced within a 160-kilometre radius of their home, or as it's sometimes called, the 100-mile diet.

We appreciate the idea of local food; the idea that it's fresher, safer and more flavourful; the idea that eating local food has environmental benefits because transportation costs are reduced. But it's more than just a successful marketing strategy. The local food movement has contributed greatly to an enhanced understanding of the importance of our farm families. We know that by buying local food, we support our local farmers and local food processors.

My colleague in the Legislature the member for Perth–Wellington is doing a super job in this House. He's our deputy critic for the Minister of Agriculture and Food, and together, we represent the residents of Wellington county. Mr. Pettapiece spoke on this Bill 36 on Tuesday, and he made a number of very important points. He said that in order to have local food, you need to have local farmers—a simple declaration but a profound statement that we need to reflect upon because agriculture policy needs to spring upon that idea. He's absolutely right, and this is why we need to broaden the scope of this debate to some of the other important issues facing our farm families and our agri-food sector.

I agree with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. We need a continuation of the Ontario Risk Management Program as a fully funded program, which means we need to look at how we can move beyond the \$100-million program cap. Through finding efficiencies and eliminating waste in other programs, I'd like to see us make a concerted effort to try to find a way to do this.

We need research funding to strengthen the long-term competitiveness of Ontario's agricultural sector, and we need to strengthen our partnership with the University of Guelph. We need to give financial incentives to encourage them to adopt new technologies. We need to encourage innovation in energy generation through bi-digestion of manure, crop residue or purpose-grown energy crops. We need to support environmental stewardship practices, food safety and traceability to show how safe Ontario food really is. We need an effective program to promote Ontario-grown food to Ontario consumers.

In other words, we need a Local Food Act and accompanying policies which achieve what the government actually says it wants to achieve. We need to invest in infrastructure. I think of our hospitals, schools, roads and bridges which need to be prioritized. We need to extend natural gas distribution into rural Ontario and deal with the concerns of local rural municipalities. Those are some of the issues we face in rural Ontario, and we need leadership and support from the provincial government to overcome them.

But we have other challenges too. In my riding of Wellington–Halton Hills, some farmers today are facing astronomical increases in the assessed value of their farmland. I've been told that the average increase in

assessment on vacant farmland based on farmer-to-farmer sales is 93.8% over and above the previous assessment. Farmers are rightly questioning this, and those who are angry about it had every right to be.

Meetings have been held. The town of Halton Hills as well as the region of Halton have become involved. Our regional chair, Gary Carr, is pushing hard for our farmers, and I know our local and regional councils would support fairness for our farm families. But many of our farmers have valid outstanding questions that MPAC has yet to satisfactorily answer. I've spoken with my friend Bert Andrews of Andrews' Scenic Acres in the town of Halton Hills. Mr. Andrews is part of the Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee and he's a member of the Halton Region Federation of Agriculture. He has done a great deal of research and analysis on this issue. In a recent summary of it, Mr. Andrews concluded that the property tax assessment system is presently broken in Halton.

Here's what needs to happen in response: We need the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Agriculture and Food and the Minister of Rural Affairs to work together and instruct MPAC to review their methodology and come back with a more realistic, fair and accurate assessment of current values in farmland and Halton Hills. Mr. Speaker, the Premier wants farmers to believe their interests and issues are a high priority for her. She wants us to believe that by appointing herself Minister of Agriculture and Food, the concerns of farmers will be given greater weight than otherwise might be the case. She has a chance to prove that by taking immediate action on this farmland assessment issue in Wellington-Halton Hills.

But if she chooses to take no action, farmers will conclude that having a part-time Minister of Agriculture and Food is really no advantage at all and may actually be a disadvantage for farmers in Ontario.

0940

Again, as Randy Pettapiece observed, in order to have local food, you need to have local farmers. Local farmers in Wellington-Halton Hills are dealing with a myriad of problems created during the last 10 years of Liberal government: excessive regulation and red tape which is irritating, time-consuming, costly and does little to make our farms more competitive or profitable; skyrocketing hydro rates—and we know that much of the upward pressure on the hydro bills has been caused by deliberate and misguided policy decisions of this Liberal government; abattoirs closing because of overzealous and excessive regulation; uncertainty in the horse racing industry, caused by their decision to cancel the Slots at Racetracks Program, even though a proper economic analysis has not been done; and the list goes on and on. What does this Bill 36 do to address these problems? Objectively, Mr. Speaker, the answer is, nothing.

In order to have local food, you need to have local farmers. Local farmers in my area were proud in 1998 when the Legislature passed a bill proclaiming Ontario Agriculture Week during the week leading up to Thanks-

giving. Our friend Bert Johnson, then the MPP for Perth, had introduced the bill and he had fought hard for its passage, and was supported unanimously in the House. On this side of the House we ask, how is Bill 36, with its provision to delete the idea of Ontario Agriculture Week implicitly and replace it with Local Food Week, a step forward? Did they even think of this when they were drafting the bill? Why would they want to take away Mr. Johnson's significant and signature achievement in getting the agriculture industry the recognition that it deserves? Why are they taking such a partisan approach to this bill, in contrast to their constant rhetoric about wanting to work with the opposition parties in a spirit of co-operation?

If you want to have local food, you need to have local farmers. The local farmers in Wellington-Halton Hills have been astonished to learn of the Ontario Tire Stewardship fee increases on tractor tires and other agriculture equipment tires. In one case, the fee apparently goes from just over \$15 a tire to \$353 a tire, a 2,200% increase. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture say that they were not informed of these changes in advance, and there was no opportunity for public input or comment. My colleague the member for Oxford has pointed out that no other province has tire taxes even close to the level of this new fee schedule just launched in Ontario. Mr. Hardeman has launched a petition calling upon the government to stop the increases. He deserves credit for helping farmers protest this continued nonsense, which the Liberal government can't blame on anyone but themselves—this same tired, recycled Liberal government that introduces the same Local Food Act as was introduced by the McGuinty government before they prorogued in the House last fall; this same tired, recycled Liberal government who want us to think that they've changed, even though the policy agenda remains largely the same; this same tired, recycled Liberal government propped up on so many key votes by the New Democrats in this House.

I say to the government, listen to the OFA's suggestion that we need to raise the basic food literacy of all Ontarians. We need food awareness programs, including nutrition and food preparation programming and a food literacy component in our schools. And listen to our agriculture critic and deputy critic for agriculture, and take a look at the ideas in our caucus, that our caucus expressed in our white paper on agriculture, where we outline some of our ideas for a better future for farm families, the promise of the future under an Ontario Progressive Conservative government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's a privilege to follow my colleague from Wellington-Halton Hills and some of his very informed discussions on rural Ontario and how it's being impacted by this government.

Speaker, Ontario PCs support local food, but unlike this government, we have a long record to prove it. It was a PC government that introduced Foodland Ontario, a symbol that's recognized by over 90% of grocery shoppers.

It's nice to see this part-time agriculture minister forget entirely about taking on her job, then resurrecting the food act without any meaningful changes from the original version, simply a name change. We don't see anything in this act of any substance, other than the promise to consult, the promise to look into things. The people of Ontario, I believe, are getting tired of the promises of this tired government.

We have our white paper on agriculture. We went around the province, consulting with stakeholders. We have the stakeholders themselves, who are very much available to be heard and listened to and available to help this government come up with a meaningful strategy. Sadly, this government once again failed to listen to rural Ontario and seems only to borrow when it carries interest and delivers no outcome.

Speaker, I was born and raised on a farm. I was used to getting up every morning to milk cows and feed them, 365 days a year. Many days, I didn't feel like getting up, but we really had no choice. That was our livelihood. There were long days, especially in the spring and the fall, when you were constantly fighting the weather to get your crops in and then to be placed at the mercy of the commodity prices.

Local food does not come out of thin air. It is grown with love and care by our local farmers. Before local food is eaten by Ontarians, it must be planted, grown, harvested, packed and distributed. If this legislation is called the Local Food Act, then when do we expect to see concrete steps to facilitate each and every one of the processes to make healthy, tasty, nutritional local food available in Ontario? This part-time ag minister presented us with a dime-sized portion of legislation and served it on a large platter.

Let me tell you what the Ontario PCs would do to further the cause of local food. We would cut red tape for farmers, who would then have more time to spend tending their land rather than doing wasteful and wasted paperwork. We see an average here of farmers spending up to four weeks on paperwork—really very unproductive. It's something that we see in many industries across this province. We see business owners screaming for help: "Get rid of the regulations." But only what we see are more and more regulations.

Easing access to local food by building on the success of the Toronto market—we would open up at least one additional regional food terminal to minimize the distance, to get food to the market, and also to allow our retailers to pick up markets.

I had the opportunity to talk to a local grocery store that is in my riding, in my riding to the north. He talked about his inability to carry local food produce because of the fact that he had to go to the terminal to get the choice, to get the quality that people wanted. There are no options locally, so it makes buying local food almost impossible for the larger chains, because people expect a consistent quality.

This government has tried in so many ways to make a difference, but nothing seems to work. They drove up

hydro costs. They want to micromanage agriculture with red tape. They want to be seen as supporting local food, yet they haven't taken any steps necessary to make this meaningful. We all are left with targets to aspire to, and this minister is asking for information about how local food is used in the government's cafeteria.

Although it is produced locally, Liberal hot air is not a food group, and "eating it up" is just a new phrase. You can't feed Ontarians targets, and farmers can't feed Ontarians unless government gets out of the way.

Minister, just some of the experiences I've had: As a warden back in 2006—at that time, this government had come out with legislation that killed the farmers' markets. I remember leading the charge, and it was only because this government was embarrassed about what they had done that they actually went back on that. It's just an example of not listening to local farmers and the rural community. This was not a farmer issue; this was a rural community, and it actually impacts the larger municipalities that have farmers' markets.

The Minister of Community and Social Services is still waiting—it's interesting—for his list of red tape issues from the current minister. They've had 10 years to put this in place, and it's interesting that he talked about something that goes back that far.

But this is a government that has been killing rural Ontario. It's making it very difficult for our small businesses to continue to service the communities. We have to understand that we are different in rural Ontario. We don't have access to water and sewer up and down all our concessions, nor should we; we're not asking for that. But we need regulations that realize that.

0950

I go back to one of my early days when this government first took over and listening to a councillor in a small town talking about how they had a sports field and had a Johnny-on-the-spot. They tried to aspire to something more, where they actually put in a small washroom, flush toilets and sinks, and they were being told they had to close it down. She stood up with the new regulations and said to the then Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, "Minister, I can't understand this being what your intent was." I remember very clearly the minister jumping up and saying, "That's exactly what we mean. Nobody will die on my watch," and I guess that's a great way of looking at things. The whole point was, "Shut down your toilet. Put the Johnny-on-the spot back. And as long as you don't have to wash your hands, you can't blame it on me." I think that's a very failed philosophy and that's something we've seen around this government for years. They don't think things through.

In rural Ontario we've survived, as has the rest of the province, very well. We may need some help, but we don't need regulations that are actually closing down our businesses. This past summer, I listened to the LCBO at hearings in the communities, and the small wineries talked about how they were being impacted by legislation that doesn't allow them to realistically sell their products.

Later on, I travelled through Prince Edward county just to hear from these large wineries that I was hearing

about. These wineries are five and 10 acres, with people having to sit in a small building on the site in case somebody showed up to buy wine. Imagine the economics of that, and that's the only access they have to the market. It's really sad in this day and age when we have a climate that would really sponsor and encourage wineries. But it's something that this government has failed to see and still, today, ignores. We listened to a cider company come in that has won international awards throughout the world, unable to compete, actually discriminated against. Foreign cider makers that come in are allowed to discount their product, but he is not given the same options.

I really don't see how this government is looking at what's happening outside of the circle of Toronto. The racetrack industry: Could we see a much worse example? They killed an industry without any consultation. You know, we're making this out to be a rural issue, 60,000 rural jobs, but really, this is an example of how this government has no concern about jobs: 60,000 jobs in this province should be of keen interest to support. We saw 58,000 jobs lost just last month, just another sad record of an unemployment rate that's been higher than the national average for years.

The Green Energy Act is another example. Yes, it had an impact on rural Ontario. It split communities; health effects from these wind turbines. But really, you've got to look at the big picture. The economics alone are screaming to cancel this project. We're driving up electricity prices to the highest in North America, and I guess this is one thing they can aspire to being maybe the highest in the world in if they keep going. They're so embarrassed with these prices, they even borrow money to offset the cost of electricity with the green energy benefit, to give us a 10% break. But it's time to quit borrowing money. It's time to actually start paying down our debt and put this province back in order.

I'm proud to have on my vehicle, "If you ate today, thank a farmer," because I think we have to get back and look at our good rural roots and some of the principles that came from there.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to speak about agriculture and food in this House, and I'd like to comment on the shared comments of the members from Wellington-Halton Hills and Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

Once in a while, a speaker comes up with a phrase that really catches my attention, and the one from the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry really did, that it was a dime-sized portion on a banquet-sized platter. We all want to make local food more accessible. Everyone in this House wants to do that, and in this province, we have the luxury, most of us—certainly everyone in this House has the luxury of talking about good local food and being able to go out and access it. Not everyone in this province has that luxury, and that's something we have to be very mindful of in this House.

Getting back to their comments and to the comments from a lot of people on this side, it seems with this act—

and I heard it one time on a food show—it's not really what's on the plate; it's all about the presentation. If you listen to a lot of the speeches on the government side, if you read the act, it's all about the presentation, not so much about the substance. I think the one thing that is coming through from this side of the House is you have to have substance. I'd like to repeat: We keep hearing about all the consultation we've had, which we don't see any evidence of, and we'd like to see, on our side of the House, in this corner, that the consultation process is enshrined in the act so that we actually know who people are talking to and that they're consulted before decisions are made.

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

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to congratulate and thank the member from Wellington-Halton Hills and also the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry for their comments, although they're always negative comments. It's not surprising that they're coming from a party that pretends to be the actual champions of the agricultural community.

I was a mayor, in fact, when Mike Harris was Premier. I'd like to read from Wikipedia. Wikipedia provides a historical account of what happened. At that time, a former friend of mine who's well respected in the community, Noble Villeneuve, was Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs: "Villeneuve was appointed Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and minister responsible for francophone affairs on June 26, 1995. He held these positions until" 1999, "and generally avoided the controversies which affected other ministries. Villeneuve was not regarded as one of the more right-wing figures in the Harris cabinet, though his government presided over considerable funding cutbacks in the agriculture department and the elimination of local representatives." And I've brought to the attention of this House that 42 OMAFRA offices across the province were cut during the Harris years, one of them in my community.

I'd like to quote the member from Oxford on February 17 out of the Ontario Farmer. It's Mr. Hardeman on the Drummond report: "We all agree changes have to be made (and) we have to get our spending under control. I don't think even the agriculture ministry should be exempt from that." Well, Mr. Speaker, they pretend to be champions but, in fact, we know what's going to happen if they were unfortunately ever to serve in government again.

We've done our homework. We've listened to farmers. We've put forward a Local Food Act that respects our farming community, and I expect the other side to support it.

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

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak about Bill 36. When you talk about the bill—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: —the purposes of the bill, in the first section: number 1 is to develop local food economies; number 2 is including the diversity of local food; and number 3 is the development of new markets.

The one aspect that I brought forward that hasn't been developed is—and the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane would certainly know. Drive around Ontario, particularly rural Ontario, in, say, about August. What do you see in August everywhere? Blueberry stands like crazy. They're up there and there are huge opportunities. You want to talk about diversity of food and new markets and things like that? Well, I spoke about the fiddleheads that go on out there and I started to get some responses from individuals.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Fiddleheads?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Yes, fiddleheads. The fiddleheads I see in the grocery stores are labeled coming in from New Brunswick.

Hon. John Gerretsen: You talked about those fiddleheads yesterday.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Yes I did. But since yesterday, I've had a number of calls and inquiries that were brought up about blueberries. Then I got a call—it came to my attention—about the Malloys and how the Ministry of Natural Resources effectively have shut down their maple syrup operation because the Ministry of Natural Resources has made that determination.

But there were so many other things that have now come forward that haven't been mentioned. What about wild rice and the harvesting of wild rice that takes place in the province of Ontario? There's a huge demand for these things that aren't being mentioned, and we're talking about new markets, new opportunities.

I mentioned the fiddleheads and the wild leeks coming forward. Wild leeks are a great opportunity. If you look at some of the things that are out there—the other one that was brought up was wild ginseng. Now what's happening is wild ginseng is completely destroying the Ontario market because it's being harvested without controls. It has a high demand, and there's a market out there for it.

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There's a lot of others things, such as—probably the members have never even heard of spruce tip honey. Effectively, what you do is you take the light-covered spruce tips, you boil them down, you mix them with certain aspects and you'll develop honey. There are markets out there, and if you go on websites, you'll see that there are opportunities.

I think we need to ensure that all these opportunities representing all the diversities in Ontario come forward.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm happy to stand here today to talk about this bill that's been presented, the Local Food Act.

I want to say that one of the recent debates that we had here the other day that really impressed me was by the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. Everyone in this

House listened very intently, and the reason for that was because this member was actually passionate about the issue. He expressed his feelings and reasons for why the bill wasn't really effective. We all listened, on all sides of the House, very intently.

One of the things the member talked about was milk. I had recently gone to the London District Science and Technology Fair of 2013, in my riding. I was looking at all the projects that were displayed by students from grade 4 to grade 12. I ended up accidentally walking into a stand where one of the presentations was on milk. These two young girls did a presentation on milk. What they did, their scientific experiment, was they left milk out, and they wanted to find out how long until the milk would spoil. They compared chocolate milk to white milk.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane also talked about regulation. When I looked at the results—they had their final experiment out—the chocolate milk was very oily and it was really disgusting. The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane had mentioned that—

Mr. John Vanthof: It's wasn't chocolate milk.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: —it's really not milk. It's a lot of sugar. The actual milk product didn't look as bad. I certainly wouldn't drink it after the results were in, but if I had to choose, I would pick the white milk.

But the whole point was, he also talked about regulation and how important it is to food. We have to make sure the food that we have has the proper regulations, so we know what's going into our bodies. I'd like to see that discussed a little bit more in the House so that we can understand that food is that important that we need to know what's going into our bodies as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I appreciate the comments from the members from Timiskaming–Cochrane, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, Oshawa and London–Fanshawe.

It's interesting to talk about the member opposite, and the negative comments on this side. It's hard not to be negative sometimes, Minister. Our job is to point out the missteps of this government, and I think, as all of Ontario is starting to agree, there's no shortage of those missteps.

The latest, I mean, even in presentation—I know that rural Ontario has rallied against this government. They've had no strategy to look after their issues. This latest ploy to become Minister of Agriculture was rushed through, and forgot the Minister of Food—embarrassed about this, they quietly have another swearing-in.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: That's a cheap shot, and you know it.

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's not a big thing; you're right. But it's just another example of how this government cannot deliver, and they're not delivering to rural Ontario. You've heard for years now about the issues.

The Ministry of the Environment has a big impact on rural Ontario. We've had the Green Energy Act that we've been rallying against. It seems like as long as it's

outside of the CN Tower view, it's an opportunity to take advantage—but some of their impacts, they're going far and wide outside of rural Ontario. I bring up that green energy benefit. Rates are so high that they've decided to borrow billions of dollars just to offset it. Is that an indication that you're embarrassed about your own energy policies?

We look at the tire eco tax—again, I mean, have some respect for the people of Ontario—rural Ontario as well, but the people of Ontario—and quit trying a sham that's just there to fool them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I'm now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and one half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Good morning, Speaker. At the request of the member from Durham, I'd like to keep the debate going, and it should continue at this time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate? The member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to speak on this bill, Bill 36, the Local Food Act. It's unfortunate, by the time on the clock; I will have to get the people who are viewing this on TV to tune in the next time to get the remainder of my notes and my comments that I'll be making today, but I'll try and be as quick as possible in order to give them as much information as I can.

You may remember that just last week I made a statement regarding an organization referred to as RAIN—Rural Agri-Innovation Network—which is promoting local food sources through innovation and information-sharing. I was as delighted to hear about the Local Food Act as they were.

My delight turned to dismay as I finished reading the bill and was left unsatisfied. I was hoping the Local Food Act would be a good plan to promote local food.

In northern Ontario, and in particular Algoma-Manitoulin, we have many local farmers who do good work and provide healthy local options for many communities. These local farmers help ensure healthy communities and food security in our region. They deserve a well-thought-out, polished piece of legislation to support their efforts. This is not that well-thought-out piece of legislation. Once again, another opportunity is missed which would support hard-working Ontario farmers.

If the government was serious—really serious—and interested in promoting awareness of locally produced food, it would have not designated Local Food Week to coincide with Agriculture Week. These two weeks are not the same and there is no reason why proper attention could not be given to both. Here is a perfect example of just wanting to rush through this bill without giving farmers and community members the proper attention they rightfully deserve.

Bill 36, the Local Food Act, provides for the development of voluntary local food goals and targets in consultation with stakeholders. This government loves to go around the block to just cross the street. This is just another plan to make a plan. Let's just address the issues as they come with actual solutions. The government can decide to make a plan without making a bill.

Make a solution and put it in the bill. This is real action. This bill, as it stands, does not establish local food goals or targets. It only creates room to develop those targets. Basically, we are just in the same situation we were in without this bill.

Subsection 5(1) of the bill states, "The minister may direct a public sector organization to provide the minister with specified information in order to assist the minister in," then it goes into describing it in (a), (b), (c) and (d). It goes on to say, under "Public sector organization to provide information ... If the minister directs a public sector organization to provide information, the public sector organization shall provide the information on or before the deadline specified by the minister in the direction."

So my concern—this raises a few concerns with me, Mr. Speaker—is who exactly will appoint the stakeholders to be consulted? How exactly are they going to be consulted? How exactly are they going to be chosen? Who will choose them? Why does this bill not bother to set out any of those parameters?

At this point, it's up to the complete discretion of the minister to involve themselves in the stakeholder process without any guarantees. The Local Food Act should include provisions to ensure local stakeholders are getting the attention they need. The minister should not be given complete discretion in making these appointments.

We have seen this government be called out again and again for lack of transparency. Why do we have just another bill which intentionally ignores transparency? This bill can certainly not be applauded without any mention of transparency processes and measures.

Reading this bill, some serious questions come to mind. Have any stakeholders been consulted before the act was put together? I know in Algoma-Manitoulin alone we have many groups that are concerned about food security, local farming and promoting local foods. This legislation could have been strengthened by taking the time to consult with those who could have benefited by such legislation.

1010

I am also curious to know if these stakeholders across the province are satisfied with the plan to make a plan, to set goals and targets, or if they too were left unsatisfied.

I can't help but feel, when reading this bill, that it is full of holes. We should be having these discussions with stakeholders right now. We should be enacting a plan, but instead, ministries have put real discussion on the back burner.

In the region of Algoma-Manitoulin alone, there are over 40 local producers who supply our communities with fresh, healthy, local food. These local producers

supply fruits, vegetables, preserves, maple syrup, beef, pork, poultry, eggs, ham, honey, bison, turkey and fish. Northern Ontario not only has a great opportunity to cultivate meat, vegetables and fruit crops, but it also has a thriving aquaculture industry. The Northern Ontario Aquaculture Association provides fresh and local foods for our communities while conducting research and ensuring the stability of our fish stocks.

This is just a diverse sampling of the local suppliers in Algoma–Manitoulin who are creating healthier communities and contributing to a healthy, diverse economy. Promoting fresh, local products is good for the environment and the local economy.

Many stakeholders have not been consulted with. Even the largest local food organizations have expressed dissatisfaction with this bill.

Sustain Ontario, the Alliance for Healthy Food and Farming, which is a province-wide, cross-sectoral alliance that promotes healthy food and farming, had many good policy suggestions that did not make it into this bill. Although this large, province-wide stakeholder was happy with the bill when it was reintroduced so that steps could be taken to ensure an equitable and prosperous food system, they expressed changes they would like to see.

Some of the points they made—I will read out from their letter that they actually presented to the government.

“A well-crafted Local Food Act will help strengthen Ontario’s food and agricultural sector, resulting in social and economic benefits for communities all across Ontario. By recognizing the diversity and potential that Ontario’s various regions hold, we are certain that we can further enhance the economic viability and resilience of Ontario’s regional food and farming sectors.”

It ends by saying: “Premier, we believe the province of Ontario can be a world leader in developing a sustainable local food system that provides nutritious food to healthy Ontarians. There is much to be gained through an aggressive collective effort to make our food system a model for all to follow.”

Mr. Speaker, here are some great suggestions of ways this bill can be strengthened to actually achieve goals of ensuring an equitable, ecological, sustainable food system and ensuring healthy communities. There is no reason why this bill couldn’t take the course—and really take action. No doubt, if more consultation was done and the government wanted to actually create some action, they would have been in this bill.

We know that improving food literacy through nutrition and food preparation programming is a good idea, and addressing the issue of food access, and including regional economic development opportunities, and encouraging environmentally sustainable practices.

It’s a mystery to me why these important points were not included.

Let’s discuss these issues proactively, instead of making easy promises that don’t motivate actual action.

Under the Local Food Act as it stands, the bill permits the gathering of information to assist in creating goals

and targets and celebrating success and progress. It is obvious that you cannot set goals and targets without information. It is good that this bill is allowing the ministry to gather this information, but there are still many holes in this bill—that just don’t make the bill.

We have no answers as to how this information could be gathered, and many of us are left scratching our heads as to why this information was not gathered before the introduction of this bill. Groups like Sustain Ontario have gathered information. Is this government going to consult this information when setting goals and targets?

We also do not know what portion of the ministry resources is currently being devoted to research into fields that will improve and facilitate farm production. If organizations such as Sustain Ontario can do research on local farming, there is no reason why this ministry cannot.

I will end there and start off next week for our great viewers of Algoma–Manitoulin.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much. This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Todd Smith: It’s an honour to welcome a good friend of mine and a councillor from the beautiful county of Prince Edward, Robert Quaiff, to the Legislature today.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It’s my pleasure, and all of our pleasures, to welcome faith leaders from ISARC here in the House today, so give them a welcome and a round of applause, please.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I’d like to welcome the family of page Glory Samouel in the east members’ gallery: her mother, Randa Barsoum Samouel, and brother Emmanuel. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I’d like to introduce Cathy Dobben. She is the mother of Jarrod Dobben, who is a page with us for the next couple of weeks.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I’m delighted to introduce some guests from Italy here to our Legislature: renowned Italian film director and scriptwriter Marco Tullio Giordana, who is here for the screening of his latest movie here in Toronto, film producer Gianluca Bertogna from Lotus Productions, and their lawyer Francesco Caroleo. They’re accompanied by Cristiano de Florentiis, who is one of the founders of the Italian Contemporary Film Festival held here in Toronto every year. Welcome to Queen’s Park. Benvenuti.

Mr. Rod Jackson: I’d like to give a very warm welcome to Tracy Wiersema, the mother of Addison Arone, in the west members’ gallery. Addison is a page here in the Legislature.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It’s my great pleasure today to introduce the mayor of Enniskillen township, a good friend, Kevin Marriott, down here to support Lisa Thompson’s private member’s bill.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I am absolutely thrilled to introduce today the mayor of Kincardine, Larry Kraemer—one of the most beautiful municipalities in Ontario.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to introduce a couple of guests from my riding of Durham: Keith Seaboyer, as well as Phil Coulter. They're here to speak to us about jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? The member for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: How easily they forget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It came to me.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would ask the indulgence of the House to allow me to make the following: A long-time member of staff of ours, Norm MacAskill, unfortunately found his wife dead last night when he arrived at home. I would ask the members of this assembly to take a few seconds just to ponder on that, just how precious life can be. We grieve for the loss to Mr. MacAskill, his family and those that knew her. Linda was a great person.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is the member asking for unanimous consent?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just announcing? I appreciate that, and I am sure all members grieve with the family.

Further introductions?

We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from the republic of Uzbekistan, led by the Speaker of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis, the Honourable Diloram G. Tashmukhamedova. Welcome to our delegation today. Thank you very much. We appreciate you being here.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday I was in Niagara, at Stanpac manufacturing. They make world-leading packaging for food products. They have a plant in Ontario, and they have a plant in Texas. They tell me, Premier, that the costs of energy for the plant in Texas are 69% lower than here in the province of Ontario. Then they tell me they hear from the auditor's report about the Mississauga gas plant cancellation—a tale of corruption and abject mismanagement.

What kind of signal do your energy policies send to employers like Stanpac? Doesn't that tell them to send the jobs down to Texas, when we in the PC Party have a better plan to have those jobs right here in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm proud to live in Ontario and I'm very proud that we have put in place a long-term energy plan that will be—

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When you look at the overall conditions for industry, employment and quality of life in Ontario, whether we talk about our excellent health care system, our world-class education system, our infrastructure and the reality that we have a 20-year, long-term energy plan that we began to put in place when we came in office in 2003 because the energy sector was in such disarray after the previous government had been in office, I believe that we have all the fundamentals to bring industry to Ontario, and that's what's happening.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: I'm disappointed the Premier took that answer—

Interjection: We all are.

Mr. Tim Hudak: We all are. Of course the folks at Stanpac are proud of our province of Ontario. They've built a company here. They've got a strong, competitive team that works at Stanpac, but they're not proud of what the Auditor General came up with when it came to that Mississauga gas plant scandal—a story of corruption, a story of extraordinary mismanagement. I would have expected the Premier to stand on her feet today and say that was wrong and say who was going to be held accountable and say we're going to turn things around.

Some 69% higher, Premier. They want to buy new machines, injection molding machines; hire 40 new people. I want to see those jobs here in Ontario. I want to see those jobs in Niagara and Hamilton, not down in Texas.

When they see the scandals of the gas plant and your green energy policies that are going to drive prices 40% to 60% higher, I stand with Lisa Thompson, the member from Huron—Bruce, and support her bill to turn off the taps and get our hydro prices under control. Premier, will you?

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the Leader of the Opposition's passion on this, but my understanding is that a leading source of farm revenue in Texas is wind power. So, in fact, the jobs that we have brought to Ontario, the fact that we have jump-started a green energy sector, I think, speaks highly of our understanding of the future.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Part of what we have done in this province is we have created green energy jobs. We jump-started an industry that really didn't exist in Ontario. I understand that we need to move forward in a thoughtful and collaborative way, but it was our responsibility to put some stability into the energy sector. That's what we've been doing. That's why we have a long-term plan.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's disappointing that the Premier doesn't seem to have a grasp of some of the basic impacts of energy policy on our competitiveness as a province. Do wind turbines exist in other parts of the world? Of course they do, but what don't exist are the exorbitant subsidies—that they pay up to 60% more for power—that are driving jobs out of our province. What doesn't exist in other states and provinces is the kind of scandal and corruption behind their deals in the Mississauga gas plant and Oakville.

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We have a choice to make, Premier. Do we want those jobs in Ontario, or are you going to chase those jobs south to Texas and other jurisdictions? Are you going to slam on the brakes and go in the opposite direction and invest instead in reliable, affordable energy and bring these expensive experiments to the room? You said, Premier, that you were going to change the direction when it comes to these feed-in tariff programs, the expensive wind turbine projects, but you're sounding a lot like Dalton McGuinty all over again. Will you stand up and support Lisa Thompson's bill and bring jobs back to our province?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just be clear. What the Leader of the Opposition is talking about is killing clean energy jobs. That's what he's talking about. The other thing that the member opposite is talking about is turning the clock back on the reduction of air pollution. The underlying reason for getting into this—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock for a second. As it is a whole just mammoth voice coming out of here, I'm going to pick individuals. I'm starting with the member from Prince Edward–Hastings. Then, if I pick you off, regrettably, you're going to feel the wrath of my dissatisfaction with not being able to hear any of the answer and hearing the entire question.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There is an economic imperative and there is a social imperative, a health imperative, to having green energy and shutting down the coal-fired plants. You talk to families of children who have asthma and they will tell you that they want the air to be cleaner because they want their children to be able to participate. We know that the actions that we've taken are making a difference, and we're going to continue to keep that plan in place.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is for the Premier. Through the media clippings today, we're seeing that finally they're getting it. Mainstream media is

citing the fact that you cannot be trusted any longer. I can tell you that no one trusts your long-term energy plan, either. I hesitate to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please stop the clock. I'm sorry, I did not hear who the question was directed to.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To the Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean–Carleton can discuss it all she wants. If it wasn't said, it has to be directed. Please.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is for the Premier. Today in mainstream media clippings we're seeing that people are finally getting it. People just don't trust you any longer, and honestly, we can't trust your long-term energy plan either, which, I'm afraid to say, I even hesitate to call a plan. The only thing that you are doing is driving up energy rates. The expansion of wind energy under your plan is not cost-efficient. It will raise energy costs to families and businesses another 40% to 50%—60% even. Municipalities, families and businesses want relief now. You just don't understand the magnitude. Will you—

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

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The whole issue of wind generation is a very controversial issue. There are people on all sides of the issue. I would like to show the side of the issue that my official critic, the member from Nipissing, is on. We've had a very successful green energy program, but don't take my word for it. Let's ask the member for Nipissing about the value of local green energy.

While mayor, he said this: "Taking advantage of locally available green power resources is a good fit with the long-range development strategy we have for this community"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, come to order. The member from Dufferin–Caledon, come to order—

Hon. Bob Chiarelli:—"I am particularly pleased with the relationship we have struck with West Wind Development Inc. for the first half of the project. I am confident that the company's reputation as a responsible wind power developer can put North Bay on the map as a showcase for the sensitive and responsible development"—

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Quite frankly, I liked his answer yesterday when he forgot the question.

My question goes back to the Premier. Premier, the laughter and the mocking on your side of the House is disrespectful. I know that people at home and here in the gallery and the people who are watching today aren't laughing when they open their electricity bills every month. Ontario now has the highest rates in North America, and we're looking at increases of 40% to 60%.

You have to face the fact, Premier, that your green energy scheme is nothing but a job killer. The Fraser Institute report last week reported that the manufacturing sector has become the hardest hit by your green energy scheme. Premier, will you finally stand up for manufacturing and stand up for Ontario?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, I'm pleased that she raised the question of the Fraser Institute report. The Fraser Institute report recommends that we go back to coal. They claim that coal is clean, and they're recommending we go back to coal. Mr. Speaker—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland—Quinte West is warned.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, our emissions record has been recognized across North America. Not only that, but our emissions record, because of the reduction of coal-burning generation, has been commented on by the federal minister of external affairs, Mr. John Baird, who is a former Minister of Energy here. He took unbelievable credit for Canada's and Ontario's record in reducing emissions by eliminating dirty coal.

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Premier, I'm going to give you one last chance. It's too late for the 600,000 who have already lost their jobs here in Ontario, but it's not too late to work together to move forward with a solid, reliable, affordable energy plan.

Premier, you say you like to listen, so with all due respect, listen up. Municipalities want change. Families need change. The manufacturing and business sector needs change. Premier, you keep saying you are open to meaningful conversation. Well, Premier, let's have some meaningful conversation in committee with the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act.

Last chance, Premier: Will you support Ontario families, municipalities and businesses today and send the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act to committee?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We have stated that we have a number of ministries presently working on new rules to give more control to municipalities. But the opposition has become obsessed with one issue. They've lost their way on energy. They think transmission is what's under the hood of a car. They think microFIT is a Speedo. They think generation is a period of 25 years.

They don't talk about their own white paper on energy, which will privatize Hydro One and all the transmission across the province. They will privatize Ontario Power Generation and all the nuclear fleet. It is irresponsible. They never talk about it because they're embarrassed by their own policy.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, Ontario's Auditor General testified that, as of last July—that's nine months ago—the OPA had already spent \$245 million on the cancellation of the Mississauga gas plant. The member for Mississauga—Streetsville this morning compared the cancellation to the moon shot. Well, by July, the Eagle had landed and the costs were known. But for nine months, the Liberal government has been telling Ontarians the cost was something otherwise. The minister claims he's relying on the OPA for his financial numbers.

Why did the Liberal government spend nearly a year claiming that it cost \$190 million to cancel Mississauga when the OPA had already spent \$245 million?

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The Auditor General spent over half a year—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —working on a very complex, technical file. He worked—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Durham, come to order—second time. One more and you'll be warned.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —with the Ontario Power Authority. The auditor has admitted that he has had access to all the information, all the files. He has produced a report. We have accepted the report.

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We have acknowledged that we need to do better in siting our energy infrastructure. The Premier has expanded the mandate of the committee to enable the committee to make those determinations. They apparently are not happy to start working on expanding the areas and the knowledge and the rules around siting infrastructure in cities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Ontario's Auditor General said that the OPA gave him almost all the numbers that he produced. We asked if the minister could call up the OPA and get those numbers themselves.

Will the Premier tell her Minister of Energy to contact the OPA today and find out how much they estimate it cost to transfer that plant from Oakville to Napanee?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Over a period of over half a year, the OPA was working side by side with the auditor, going over documents. All documents, all information, was provided to the auditor, working with the OPA—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —so I can't understand the question. Now that the auditor has reported independently, he wants us to go back and review the auditor's work. How ridiculous.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Premier, the public service is filled with qualified and talented people. The Auditor General said he was confident that the public service would have the ability to come up with a pretty good estimate of how much it cost to cancel the Oakville gas plant.

You have all the tools you need to bring forward that Oakville price, and you probably have all the numbers at the end of a phone line.

Premier, how much will Ontarians be paying in their taxes and electricity rates for the Liberal decision to cancel the Oakville plant?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The part that is yet to be allocated—part of it has been allocated to the fiscal plan. The balance that has not been allocated is going to be calculated in the rate base over a period of 20 years. It is going to be calculated, along with the Niagara tunnel, the Matagami hydro plant that's being created, and all the other infrastructure. Billions of dollars of infrastructure are being invested in our system, a lot more than the opposition party ever thought of investing in the system, and it deteriorated under them.

The rates will be determined out of all of those infrastructure projects, and the impact of the Mississauga plant will have a small impact in the scale of all those investments that we're making.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, people are looking for some sign from this government that playing politics with private power deals has hurt this province. Instead, they're seeing more of the same old politics: the need of the Liberal Party coming ahead of the needs of the people, and doubling down on the same strategy of evasion and stonewalling.

Why can't the Premier, at the very least, admit that this strategy was wrong and apologize?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I said, when I came into this office, that we were going to fully co-operate with any of the requests and any of the questions that the members of the opposition wanted to have answered. In fact, we went beyond that. I said, "Let's expand the mandate of the committee looking into this issue. Let's make sure that the committee can look at all of the information and can ask any questions that they want." I have done everything I can to make sure that where there are questions, we will provide the answers. That's why I said I'd appear before committee. That's why I asked the Auditor General to look at the Oakville plant decision.

The Auditor General will look at the numbers that are available to him, and we will make sure he has access, as he did with his Mississauga report, and he will make his report as the professional accountant that he is.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, here are the facts: The government signed private power deals without any real

consultation. When it became politically inconvenient, they cancelled the deals and did everything they could to hide the real costs from the people who would be paying the bill. Even now, as witness after witness comes forward, the government says they knew nothing of the costs all along.

The Premier keeps doubling down on the same strategy of evasion and stonewalling. Does the Premier think that this is the sort of positive change a new government should be offering?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the government House leader is going to want to comment on some of the committee proceedings, but I really need to take issue with the accusation that we are not providing all the information that should be provided.

I need to say that when I came into this office, I was very clear that there were questions that needed to be answered. I was very clear that we would put in place a process that would allow those questions to be answered, and that everybody to whom there was a question would be available and would appear before the committee. That's what we've done, Mr. Speaker.

It's the accusation about evasion that I really need to challenge. That is not what we're doing. We're providing all the information that is being asked for. We have opened up the process. That's what I said I was going to do and that's what I've done.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If you haven't read my determination, I'll get even tougher.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: For people feeling the squeeze in tough times, the Premier's answer is hard to take. When it comes to their priorities, the government says that nothing is possible. They have to accept cuts at hospitals and chaos in the classrooms, and they're being asked to pay more. When they see their government find billions for corporate tax giveaways and handing millions to private power companies and US hedge funds to make their problems go away, they're obviously concerned. When they look to their government for some explanation, they get more of the same evasion and excuses.

When is this Premier going to say, "This was wrong, our priorities are out of whack," and finally apologize to the people of this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: You know—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the crocodile tears over there.

There are two points I think we need to put on the record. First of all, the New Democratic Party was in favour of cancelling both plants and actively campaigned

for it. The second thing that I find quite shocking is that they stand up now, wringing their hands, talking about costs, yet last summer, when the former Minister of Energy communicated with the committee that was asking for documents that those documents could jeopardize the commercial negotiations that were going on and drive up the cost for taxpayers, they said they didn't give a damn and they wanted all the documents. They forced the matter through the committee with no regard for the taxpayers or the ratepayers of Ontario.

They're a little late coming to the party here with their crocodile tears.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Today we heard more testimony at the justice policy committee that puts your words at odds with reality. Former Deputy Energy Minister David Livingston, under oath—

Interjection: David Lindsay.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: David Lindsay—there are so many who have been there—told us that the Premier's office and the minister's office knew there would be more costs than just sunk costs tied to the Oakville gas plant cancellation. He also told us that it was normal practice for him to brief the minister on costing updates he had received from the Ontario Power Authority.

Premier, we know you were in the July 29 cabinet meeting where the cancellation costs were discussed. Will you tell us why you keep putting the interests of the Liberal Party ahead of those of the taxpayers?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: We have a process in place where the Auditor General has, first of all, looked into the situation in Mississauga. He's now looking into the situation at Oakville. I think we should wait for the Auditor General to come forward.

This game that the opposition is playing of standing up and demanding costs—you know what? The member who just asked the question had this to say yesterday to the press: He said, "We don't believe any of the government's numbers. We can't believe any numbers whatsoever."

Just like the budget, Mr. Speaker. They haven't read it; they're going to vote against it. When they ask us for numbers, they say they won't believe anything we say anyway.

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We have a process with the Auditor General, but the more important question is the same one I asked the New Democratic Party: Why did he and his colleagues, last summer, insist upon jeopardizing sensitive commercial negotiations that would have seen an increase in the cost of cancelling the plant? Why did they say they didn't care about the taxpayers last summer?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Mr. Lindsay didn't stop there, Premier. There is a November 2011 document that I'll quote:

"Idea is that Bentley needs to refer to taxpayer versus ratepayer."

I asked Mr. Lindsay if he knew what this document meant, and his answer was simple. He said, "Unfortunately, I do." He backed up what the auditor had said to us about how you changed the wording from "total cost" to "cost to taxpayer." A month after your cancellation—only a month after the cancellation—you had already decided to hide the fact that costs were more than admitted to.

Premier, you're not open, you're not transparent, and it's clear you'll always put the needs of the Liberal government ahead of the needs of the taxpayers. Why should Ontarians trust you with their hard-earned tax dollars any—

Interjections.

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

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The member cannot ignore the question I put to him and the New Democratic Party. Why, last summer, did they show total disregard for the Ontario taxpayer in demanding those documents?

Interjection.

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

Hon. John Milloy: You want to talk about the auditor's testimony? Here's what he had to say about—

Interjection.

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

Hon. John Milloy: —sensitivity yesterday in front of the committee, and I quote the auditor.

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: You'll want to hear this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know I'd want to hear it. The member from Oxford is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: You'll want to hear this. This is what the Auditor General had to say about commercial sensitivity: "To put it in layman's language, it's like in poker: You don't show the people around the table your cards," and yet, Mr. Speaker, they showed absolute disregard.

This is what Shelly Jamieson, the former secretary to cabinet, had to say about commercial sensitivity: "Well, it would have harmed the negotiations for sure. Nobody likes to ... have all their paper about what they're talking about out before the conclusion of the deal."

The crocodile tears are a little much today.

CANCER TREATMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre. Two weeks after the first news stories told us that over 1,000 patients in Ontario received the wrong dosage of chemotherapy drugs, immense confusion remains. Today, Ontarians still have no reassurance that what occurred in those four hospitals could not hap-

pen again or is not happening right now, because while the minister has dealt with one of the unregulated facilities supplying chemotherapy drugs to our hospitals, she cannot even name the others and they continue to operate without oversight.

My question is simple, Premier: After all we've learned this week about how the health minister failed Ontarians, does the Premier think that her health minister is doing a good job?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yes, I do. I do think the Minister of Health is doing a good job. I think the Minister of Health is doing an excellent job. The Minister of Health—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's right. The Minister of Health responded as soon as she knew that there was an issue. She is working to make sure that the expert panel looks at the situation—

Interjections.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: Withdraw.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —put in place an expert panel to review the situation. Dr. Jake Thiessen is in place to make sure that we find out what the issue was, where the systemic issue was, if there is one. It is absolutely clear to me that every patient—there has been an attempt and I think every patient who has been affected has been contacted so they can see their oncologist.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: While we are hearing some excuses as to what this government and her minister did, it has become obvious that her minister failed to provide even the most basic oversight of private, for-profit chemo drug suppliers. We are hearing that everyone else is to blame, but not her ministry.

Ontarians are tired of hearing excuses, and they expect the Minister of Health to do her job, to take her responsibility to oversee and her responsibility to safeguard our health care system seriously. Will the Premier demand that her minister stop passing the buck and admit that what happened was because of the lack of her minister's oversight of those facilities?

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The first thing I need to do is point out a very unfortunate lack of accuracy in the first question. All of the hospitals that deliver chemotherapy have reviewed their protocols. We know that the 77 hospitals in Ontario that provide chemotherapy have a safe and secure supply of that. So let's not frighten patients, and let's get to the root of the problem.

Later this morning, I will be speaking to the federal health minister because this is a national issue. We are taking responsibility for what's happening in Ontario, but Health Canada has the power to go into these facilities. They can go in today, Speaker.

SPORTS FUNDING

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. In my riding of Scarborough–Rouge River, my constituents appreciate the value of staying active and keeping fit in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle. They certainly know that participation in sporting activities for Ontarians, whether recreational or professional, is crucial to improving their quality of life.

That is why support for coaches is equally essential in fostering healthy, friendly competition and good sportsmanship, something I know a lot about as a former soccer coach myself. We need to recognize their dedicated efforts, which allow our athletes to develop the capacity to reach their full potential.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please update us on how our government is supporting Ontario coaches?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Scarborough–Rouge River for asking the question. I'm proud to say that this week is Ontario Coaches Week, and we are recognizing the province's coaches who dedicate themselves to our athletes, both amateur and professional. This past weekend, the Ontario Coaching Excellence Awards also honoured our coaches at every level, including school sports and high performance.

Since 2007, we have invested over \$6 million in the National Coaching Certification Program, the enhanced coaching program and the Sport for More Program. In addition to our coaches, we have also invested about \$10 million in Ontario's athletes through the Quest for Gold program.

Our investment will help Ontarians to maintain a healthy lifestyle well into the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm confident in knowing that with the government's support of Ontario's coaches and athletes, we are on the right track to success.

As we all know, sports and recreation are essential in ensuring the health and well-being of Ontarians. Investment in sport and recreation also creates jobs, improves sports facilities and increases our daily active routines.

Ontario's support for sport and recreational programs is reflected across the province through essential funds delivered by key service partners. Ontario athletes are directly benefiting from the province's investments that allow them to achieve even greater success.

Can the minister elaborate on how else this government is supporting the sports and recreation sector across our great province?

Hon. Michael Chan: Today, I will be welcoming to Ontario Mario Vázquez Raña, president of the Pan American Sports Organization. He is visiting from Mexico to review ongoing progress of our 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games, a "People's Games" that will be affordable, accessible and an exceptional experience for athletes and visitors to our great province.

Since 2003, our government has provided \$720 million in funding to sport and recreation programs—\$23 million this year alone. Since 2006, over \$634 million has been invested in more than 1,100 infrastructure projects.

I'm also proud to inform that tonight I will be attending the Ontario Sport Awards to recognize top athletes and coaches.

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POWER PLANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. There's an old saying, "Oh what a tangled web we weave, when first we practise to deceive."

Interjections.

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

Interjection: It's unparliamentary.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw? I didn't direct it at anybody, but I will withdraw it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Don't make any comments. The member will withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: In committee this morning, David Lindsay, the former Deputy Minister of Energy, made it clear. He testified that he knew that there were costs in addition to the so-called sunk costs figure being used by your government. He knew and you knew. This applied to both Mississauga and Oakville.

Premier, you've been caught on Mississauga. Why will you not stand in your place and do the right thing? Will you not end this disastrous charade you've been playing and, today, reveal all of the costs—not just what you get asked for specifically, but all of the costs related to the Oakville power plant cancellation and relocation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I was unaware that at US Republican media training you were supposed to begin with a poem, but I congratulate him on his Tea Party influences.

Again, there are a couple of facts we have to put on the record here. The first is that the Auditor General is looking into both matters and has reported on the Mississauga plant. He will be reporting on the Oakville plant. The member's colleague said it doesn't matter what numbers the government produces—just like the budget—they want to have nothing to do with it.

The second thing, as I said, is that last summer I wish that we had had this passion and concern about costs and about the impact that certain decisions would have when the committee was demanding that the government release certain documents which would have put at commercial risk very, very sensitive negotiations that were going on. That concern was quite absent last summer, and it's a little rich that it has come here so late.

At the end of the day, we have a process in place. It involves the Auditor General, and we look forward to his report.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the Premier. It's unfortunate the Premier has resorted to the same tactics as her predecessor: refuse to answer the question and pass it to the House leader—shame.

It was made pretty clear in the previous question and by Mr. Lindsay this morning that he knew well the costs borne by the taxpayers are still costs. Costs are costs no matter who pays them, taxpayers or ratepayers, there's no difference. Surely you must know that, Premier, too. So the conclusion is clear: When we talk about costs related to the cancellation of these plants, we mean all costs—those paid by the taxpayer and the ratepayer.

Premier, the people are getting impatient. They're waiting for the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It's your move, Premier.

Interjections.

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

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Let's review the facts. The Progressive Conservative Party opposed the building of both the Oakville and the Mississauga gas plants. They campaigned on it. The leader of the party made a YouTube video where he proclaims to his adoring candidates and the six other people who were there to view it that if he is elected as Premier it will be "Done, done, done."

The fact of the matter is they wanted to get to the bottom of it. We offered them a select committee. They said no; they wanted to go on a witch hunt. What we've done is we've brought in the Auditor General. He has issued one report and he will issue another report on the Oakville situation. Again, that does not take away from their responsibility last summer, when they put very sensitive negotiations at risk by demanding documents of the former Minister of Energy and basically said that they could care less about the taxpayers of this province.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Paul Miller: To the Premier: In Hamilton tonight there is a forum with major stakeholders to discuss precarious employment. Landmark studies by Ontario's law commission, McMaster University and the United Way of Toronto suggest that 40% of GTA and Hamilton workers exist in a kind of job hell, with low wages, no job security and no benefits. Will this government act on the many constructive recommendations coming from these landmark studies, or will it once again side with its banker friends and do nothing to improve the lives of Ontario workers?

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the honourable member for asking a very important question. I'm very much aware of the Law Commission of Ontario report that was released on April 3, and I thank the law commission for doing very good work. In fact, the Ministry of Labour was a member of the advisory panel, a group in the Law

Commission of Ontario, throughout the whole consultation.

We're happy to receive the recommendations. We're reviewing the recommendations. We look forward to more conversations to ensure we continue to fight poverty, that we continue to fight precarious employment.

We know that when one of us succeeds, the whole community succeeds, and we're going to continue to build on our record of ensuring that vulnerable workers, those who are the working poor in our communities, have the resources available to grow in their communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Hamilton and manufacturing centres across Ontario have lost 300,000 good-paying jobs since 2005, and in their place we have the kind of temporary, low-paying, no-benefit jobs that these recent studies suggest make up almost half of the so-called new jobs. Will this government listen to the millions of Ontarians who are desperate for good jobs, or will it continue to support the labour practices of companies like the Royal Bank and ignore the recommendations of these landmark studies?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm happy to take the aspect of this question that deals with manufacturing, including in Hamilton, but I have to admit I'm a little bit confused, because the fact is that Hamilton, over the past couple of years, has done extraordinarily well. When you look at the facts again, Site Selection magazine has indicated—here are the facts, folks: Hamilton attracted more industrial and commercial development than any other city in Canada over the past year, according to Site Selection magazine.

The facts are that Hamilton had 20 new construction or expansion projects, each with at least \$1 million invested, at least 50 new jobs created in each one of those projects, or at least 20,000 new square feet, between June 2011 and June 2012. Hamilton has an unemployment rate which is lower than the provincial average. In fact, it's a city that I'm very proud of, and I know the member—

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

New question.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Steven Del Duca: My question today is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I understand that the Minister of Health and also the minister responsible for seniors earlier today announced a very important expansion of access to physiotherapy, exercise and falls-prevention classes for both seniors and other patients in need across our province of Ontario. These services are especially important to the seniors of my riding. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you please inform this House of what this expansion entails for Ontarians?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: First, I'd like to thank the hard-working member from Vaughan for this very important question.

We know how important physiotherapy can be for people who are getting back on their feet after a stroke or surgery or some other condition. In his recent report, Dr. Samir Sinha recommended that we expand access to physiotherapy services for our seniors, so this morning I was delighted to be joined by the Ontario Physiotherapy Association to announce that more one-on-one physiotherapy, more group exercise classes and more falls-prevention programs will be offered in long-term-care homes and in community settings right across the province. By changing how we deliver physiotherapy services, Speaker, more than 200,000 more seniors will benefit from additional services, including clinic-based physiotherapy services, in-home physiotherapy and exercise and falls-prevention in the community. Indeed, we expect that with this change, we'll be able to eliminate the wait-list.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I thank the minister for her response. This is definitely great news for Ontarians, and especially for seniors. It's great to know that our government is taking action to ensure a more even distribution of these very crucial services while providing better access for patients and more sustainable care.

1120

Can the minister please inform this House of how these services will continue to benefit seniors across Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the minister responsible for seniors.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I'm delighted with the question from the member from Vaughan, the fastest-growing city in Canada.

I'm proud to say that our government is taking direct action to ensure that over 200,000 additional seniors and patients will enjoy increased access to these important services. More seniors will receive physiotherapy services in the comfort of their homes, allowing them to live longer and more independently. These changes will provide exercise and falls-prevention classes for some 68,000 more seniors across the province, benefiting over 130,000 seniors in total.

Our government is committed to consulting with patients, health care partners and service providers to ensure that our seniors benefit on an ongoing basis from these improvements.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Education. Tonight, OSSTF will ratify the \$100-million secret deal with your government after a year of creating turmoil in our schools. While you continue to defy logic and suggest the deal won't cause parents and boards any money, your own Liberal leader did say that you were moving money around the education budget.

If there really are savings in the education budget, why is the Toronto District School Board considering cutting music programs? Why is the Ottawa-Carleton District

School Board facing a \$900,000 shortfall for renovating one school? Why did the Toronto Star, even today, suggest that you're not actually adequately funding full-day kindergarten? Your government is moving money around all right, but you're just moving it to the unions from the kids.

My question to you, Minister, is this: Why not admit today that your \$100-million deal is going to be funded off the backs of students in this province?

Hon. Liz Sandals: There is so much misinformation there, I'm not quite sure where to begin. Let's start with the funding of music programs, not just in Toronto, but in every school board around the province. We provide funding for every program that is required in the curriculum. Music is required in the curriculum, both elementary and secondary. We in fact fund, through the base funding for students, the music curriculum. In Toronto, that happens to be \$1.2 billion per year, and we haven't changed that. But interestingly, because we recognize that elementary teachers are useful—there are some—

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, she makes no sense at all. I've asked her several times for verification of the \$100-million deal. She won't say it. We know that they are going to ratify this \$100-million deal tonight. We know ETFO is going to have close to a \$100-million deal soon, and we know that there are going to be me-too clauses for OECTA, as well as for AEFO. That tells me that this is going to run up a pretty steep tab of maybe \$300 million when it's all said and done, and that money will be taken from student programming, make no mistake about that.

Earlier today, trustee Caroline Smith of the Simcoe County District School Board tweeted that a whopping 85% of their operating budget is on staff salary and perks. Given the backroom deals with teachers' unions, it seems the minister will only be happy when 100% of that budget is salaries and perks.

So I want to know: Why are you putting students in the middle of this? Why are you taking from our kids in our classrooms when we need to fund FDK? We need to fund class sizes. That is what your previous government said. You're putting rural schools at risk—

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will remind the member—stop the clock, please—that when I stand, you sit, and when I asked everyone else to be seated, you were still talking. So I'm asking you to pay attention to the Speaker, please.

Answer.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Actually, the member is correct that about 85% of the budget of school boards goes towards compensation; 85% of the budget went toward compensation for decades. This is not new news. In fact, we have saved, as I've said many times here, \$1.8 billion.

We will continue to save \$1.8 billion, and because we have controlled the compensation, that means we can keep putting money into the classroom.

In concluding, in full-day kindergarten, which those folks over there think we should cancel, because we have made savings in the compensation budget, we are able to continue the roll-in of full-day kindergarten. We are not taking money from any program.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm pleased, as I said before, to welcome faith leaders today from the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition, ISARC, to Queen's Park.

To the Premier, we support ISARC's call for government action to address the unacceptable levels of poverty and inequality in Ontario. One action ISARC urges is an end to the punitive clawback of employment earnings from people on social assistance. The NDP has called for an end to the clawback of the first \$200 of monthly earnings by OW and ODSP recipients.

Will the Premier, at the very least, commit to make this change and help over 50,000 social assistance recipients maintain their dignity and get back to work?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I will be visiting with the ISARC folks later on today.

This is one of the issues that has been raised by the third party. It's something that I have said quite clearly is a priority for us. It's something that we want to work on with the third party.

The Brighter Prospects report that was written by Frances Lankin and Munir Sheikh is something that we have talked about. I talked about it during my leadership run. I said that, for me, it was the starting point for the next phase of our Poverty Reduction Strategy, remembering that we do have a Poverty Reduction Strategy in this province because we brought that into the Legislature. There's legislation in place.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the member opposite is raising this question. It is something that we are concerned about and it's something that we want to move on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Sadly, it's a particular affront to low-income families that it is this government, your government, that's cut programs that help the very poorest Ontarians, like the community start-up benefit, which helps people avoid homelessness, like the Special Diet Allowance, while wasting hundreds of millions of dollars on gas plant cancellations and still planning more than a billion new dollars in tax cuts to the biggest corporations.

Will the Premier just say yes to helping social assistance recipients who are being kept in poverty because of the punitive rules, and just say yes to ending the clawback on the first \$200 they earn each month?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have said that this is an area that we very much are interested in working on. I think that there are a number of issues that are raised by

the Brighter Prospects report, the Lankin-Sheikh report, that we need to move on. I've said that to the leader of the third party; it's very much a concern of ours.

I agree with the member opposite that the tangle of rules and the restrictions that are in place that keep people from getting into employment, that keep them from staying in employment, those are the things that need to be straightened out, absolutely. We need to make sure that everything we're doing as a government is supporting people getting into the workplace and allowing them to stay there, not holding them back and deterring them from having employment.

We're going to work on this. We want to move on it. We want to move on implementing the Brighter Prospects report. I've said that to the leader of the third party.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craitor: My question is directed to the Attorney General. A divorce is a very difficult thing for a family to experience, and especially difficult for the children. Children are the innocent bystanders of marriage breakdowns; they may feel like they are losing everything. Grandparents may be a stabilizing, supportive and loving influence for their grandchildren.

1130

I've recently introduced a private member's bill into the House, co-sponsored by the members from Whitby-Oshawa and Parkdale-High Park, to help ensure grandparents can be there for grandkids during these difficult times when a marriage breakdown occurs. This is a topic I know grandparents and families across this province are deeply concerned about.

Mr. Speaker, can the Attorney General please tell this House what the government has done to support children, parents and grandparents in the courts?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, I want to congratulate this member for his tireless and passionate advocacy on behalf of children and on behalf of the relationship that children have with their grandparents. He's well-known in this House to be especially concerned about the relationship they have with their grandparents.

Our government is absolutely committed to support families through the divorce and family law process, and the important part that grandparents play in that whole situation. We recognize the role that grandparents play in the lives of their grandchildren. Every grandparent has the ability to obtain an order of access to their grandchild under Ontario law if it's found by the court to be in the best interest of the child.

We look forward to the discussions on this private member's bill. I can assure him that my ministry will be taking a very close look at it and doing whatever we can in order to bring grandparents closer and more involved in these very difficult situations. We will take a look at the bill and be very positive about the relationships—

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

Mr. Kim Craitor: My supplementary question is directed to the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

First of all, Minister, thanks for the answer.

I'm interested in, also, the well-being of children in protective custody. I have been through the children's aid society myself and was raised through them. Very fortunately, I was looked after by some very caring and special people in my life.

Living in a new environment and separated from loved ones is extremely difficult and daunting for any young person. Having positive relationships and access to the right supports is extremely important.

My question is, how is our government ensuring that we are doing our best to improve the experience of young people in their care?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you, and thank you as well to the member for his question and for his advocacy on this issue, one that really speaks to the importance of that relationship that we each have with our grandparents and that every child should have with their grandparents. I know that he's brought it up a number of times, so thank you.

As I've stated a number of times, we're committed to providing a child protection system where children and youth are given the best possible environment to grow and learn. We now have fewer children and youth being placed in group homes or foster care, and more are being placed in permanent homes. We have also listened to the youth, through the Youth Leaving Care group last year, but we also know that these kids need personal relationships which are positive for their development and, in a lot of cases, their grandparents play a role.

That's why, under the Building Families and Supporting Youth to be Successful Act, we removed barriers to allow children to stay connected with their grandparents while moving towards permanency and adoption. We remain committed to—

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

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, it's no secret that our mining sector is facing increasing challenges. Your government's recent changes to the Mining Act that came into effect April 1 have already made life harder for our prospectors and junior miners. By piling on red tape, you've threatened to grind the early exploration activity in Ontario to a halt.

Minister, raising taxes is a surefire way to drive even more jobs out of our province, so my question: Are you planning on increasing mining taxes in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I think what's very clear is that we remain very committed to promoting mineral

exploration and development in the province of Ontario, a sector that has grown from \$3 billion to \$5.7 billion to about \$11 billion in the last year. The number of jobs that are created—27,000, plus 55,000 other jobs that are created as a result—is very exciting. We are very committed to working very closely with the mineral sector, with our First Nation community, with the aboriginal communities, leading our way towards the Ring of Fire development.

The fact is, in terms of our Mining Act modernization, this is something that I think we worked on with the co-operation of all three members of the House and all sectors. We are committed to finding a way to find a balance, a balance towards maintaining a positive investment climate in the province of Ontario while at the same time we modernize the act.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Norm Miller: That wasn't the question. The question was: Are they raising they mining tax? Minister, you might understand why I am concerned, given your government's track record for increasing taxes and spending. The so-called health tax after your first election and the infamous diamond tax just as the first diamond mine in Ontario was about to start production are prime examples.

Minister, last Thursday a member of your government went on record in finance committee asking for an increase in the mining tax. The member for Scarborough–Agincourt, in response to my question, “So you want to raise the mining tax?”, responded, “Absolutely.” That's pretty black and white.

Minister, it is clear that increasing the mining tax will hurt mining in Ontario and slow the development of the Ring of Fire that you've been talking about so much. To set the record straight, is it your intention to bury a mining tax hike in the upcoming budget?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Minister of Finance.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question and I also appreciate the concern for us to continue to invest in our mining sector and in the north. We have tremendous potential in the north, which is going to provide a ripple effect throughout all of Ontario, and we are so much in support of doing everything we—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will not have hesitation, even at the last question, to name anybody.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex is warned.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Our government has been a strong supporter. We've been advocating for more investments in the north. In fact, it was our efforts that provided all of the incentives to provide more investments into Ontario than any other part of North America when it comes to mining.

We agree that more needs to be done. We've made reviews and we've made assessments and we'll continue

to advocate on behalf of the industry, and will support that industry and that investment because it's going to be beneficial to all of Ontario.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Since cabinet ministers outnumber backbenchers, I think cabinet ministers should be allowed to ask each other questions on that side of the House. I'd like unanimous consent on that, sir, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I suspect that I might be challenged if I don't, because the member has asked for legitimate unanimous consent, even though I'm not enamoured with what he has done. Unanimous consent has been sought to ask members personally, so—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No.

VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Sarnia–Lambton on a point of order.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, I'd like to take this moment to introduce some guests of mine who arrived late: Larry Smale, Donna Smale, Lee Slaght, Jim Forbes, Larry O'Neill, Mrs. Maureen O'Neill and David Braet, who are guests here today to support Lisa Thompson's bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees: It's my pleasure to welcome to the Legislature today, from Newmarket, Councillors Chris Emanuel and Jane Twinney; and Carol Cologna, Anne Leroux, Lureen Locke and Andre Sadono. Please help me welcome them.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's my pleasure to welcome to the Ontario Legislative Assembly Robert and Sylvia McNutt, representing Parkinson Society Ontario, who are here for a member's statement I will make shortly. Please welcome them.

Mr. Frank Klees: A special welcome to Ms. Lois Mac Donnell, who is representing the Glenway Preservation Association here today. Please help me welcome Lois.

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

Further introductions? The member from Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I don't know if she has come into the gallery yet, but Zita Devan from Lindsay, who participates in many community boards and organizations—and I'm not sure exactly why she's here today, but we welcome her to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you very much. Welcome.

I forgot Haliburton, but that's still part of your riding, so Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. My apologies.

The member from Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to welcome here today, from my riding of Sarnia–Lambton, Mr. and Mrs. Larry and Donna Smale, Lee Slaght, Jim Forbes and David Braet, and the mayor of Enniskillen township, Kevin Marriott, who join us for Bill 39 today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today to bring attention to the fact that in addition to the numerous petitions I have submitted, and most recently my question to Premier Kathleen Wynne in the House on March 7, I have still not seen any action from the Premier or her government concerning the dangerous proposal to build eight 500-foot-tall wind turbines on a flight path of the Collingwood Regional Airport and another airport in Clearview township.

On March 7, the Minister of Energy responded that the Premier would honour the commitment she made and do something, yet I've heard nothing. Meanwhile, wpd Canada is moving full speed ahead with their application to construct turbines beside the Collingwood airport and elsewhere in the township, fully ignoring the vast concerns expressed by citizens over safety and the economic impact to our community. I demand that the Premier follow through with what she said when she visited my riding during her leadership campaign and stop this dangerous proposal from going ahead.

The Green Energy Act is costing Ontario taxpayers billions of dollars, and it does absolutely nothing to benefit the environment or jobs. This afternoon, my colleague from Huron–Bruce, Lisa Thompson, will be debating Bill 39, the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act, that will ensure that these projects are only built in communities where they are welcomed and wanted and at prices ratepayers can afford. I hope the Premier will be listening to the important debate this afternoon.

I congratulate Lisa Thompson for bringing this important piece of legislation forward, and I encourage all members to please support Bill 39.

MOOSE TAGS

Mr. John Vanthof: Today is the first day of the Ontario big game draw process. The fall moose hunt is a long-standing tradition in the north, a proud part of our heritage, and as a result, the moose tag lottery is one of the most hotly debated issues at local coffee shops.

When the news broke last year that the Liberal government had outsourced the processing of hunting and fishing licences to a company in Tennessee, hunters

across the province were shocked—rightfully so. It goes against the basic common-sense principle that Ontario licences should be processed in Ontario by people who live and pay taxes here.

The Minister of Natural Resources has just announced that they have changed the big game draw process. Hunters will no longer be able to apply with a paper application. Not only is the overall access more limited, but there is a design flaw in the electronic application. Payment is not the last step of the process. So hunters can get payment receipts, but they will not be included in the moose tag draw if they don't realize that they have to click another box.

The problem is, the issuance of a receipt of payment is the natural end of an online transaction, so many people could make this mistake. In fact, many have. Because of the way the lottery works, people will be penalized for two years.

I have made the Minister of Natural Resources aware of this problem several times over the last year, but nothing was done to fix the program. So I would advise hunters to be very careful when applications are filled in. Tennessee, we have a problem.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Phil McNeely: My statement is, “Wind Energy Is a Good Deal for Ontario.” In 2009, the Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance raised the province of Ontario's energy efficiency report card grade to A plus. It's a remarkable improvement from the C grade the province had received when our government was first elected. This improved grade can be attributed in no small part to our government's sound conservation initiatives. They both reduce greenhouse gas emissions and will save money for my constituents in Ottawa–Orléans and indeed for all Ontarians in the future.

That's why, when the critical yet over-simplistic Fraser Institute report on Ontario's Green Energy Act was released last week, the Canadian Wind Energy Association—CanWEA—properly set the record straight. Thanks to Ontario's Green Energy Act, “wind energy has proven that it can deliver major benefits at a minimal cost to ratepayers here in Ontario,” said Chris Forrest, CanWEA vice-president.

Allowing the province to move away from harmful coal as a source of electricity, Ontario now has over 2,000 megawatts of wind energy capacity. This means that the province has the capacity to drive \$5 billion in investments, creating 21,000 person-years of employment and providing enough clean energy to power over 600,000 homes.

Ontarians have seen how renewable energy has helped clean Ontario's electrical system and create jobs. In just three years, the Green Energy Act and FIT program have together created 30,000 jobs province-wide. When it comes to wind energy, our government has it right. Ontario is on the right path to an economically efficient delivery of cleaner electricity.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Laurie Scott: Two weeks ago, the Ministry of Energy posted the wpd Canada Sumac Ridge industrial wind project on the environmental registry. Even though for years there has been loud and consistent local opposition to not only this project but all the industrial wind projects in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, across the province, communities like mine have cried out for the government to hear their voices.

The McGuinty-Wynne government has consistently defended these projects as being necessary to protect the environment. They have used this rationale to dismiss legitimate health concerns, reductions in property values, and spiraling energy costs, which have forced many people to give up their homes and driven hundreds of companies and thousands of jobs out of the province. Yet at Sumac Ridge, we have a wind project that would see the construction of two industrial wind turbines directly on the Oak Ridges moraine, one of the most environmentally sensitive areas in Ontario.

I know that the Minister of Energy has kept the Oak Ridges moraine file with him through his many cabinet portfolios. He knows the importance of this area. I would ask him to accept the clear fact that this is not a willing host community. I would ask him to recognize the hypocrisy and risk of permitting the project on the Oak Ridges moraine. I would ask him to do the right thing and deny this project the approval to proceed, and I would ask him to support the member from Huron–Bruce’s bill, An Act to provide for control by local municipalities over renewable and affordable energy undertakings, this afternoon.

LONDON DISTRICT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FAIR

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I am happy to share with the members of the Legislature the amazing knowledge and hard work and dedication exhibited by students taking part in the London District Science and Technology Fair this year. On Saturday, April 6, and Sunday, April 7, 154 students in grades 4 to 12 across the Thames Valley District School Board participated in the science fair held at Althouse College. Students presented projects on a variety of topics to be judged by local scientific, industry and educational figures from the community, and science projects were available for public viewing for much of the day.

On Sunday, at the awards ceremony, the best projects were selected and the winning students were awarded trips to represent London at the Canada-Wide Science Fair in Lethbridge, Alberta, later this year, as well as additional awards being given for excellence in technology, social science, and imagination. These projects ranged from energy conservation to the use of mustard seed oil as a treatment for malaria.

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Innovation and research such as the type being done by these students greatly benefit both our economy as

well as our community. Many of these students will go on to attend post-secondary education in London, and will graduate in their fields with knowledge and skills they need to further the development of science and research in this city. It is amazing to think that the next Banting or Bell might have been present at the fair this year.

Speaker, if I could bring these students present today to show you their research, I am sure they would be very proud, and we as Londoners are very proud of the efforts they have made in London.

PARKINSON’S AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Bob Delaney: April is Parkinson’s Awareness Month in Canada. Parkinson’s is a chronic degenerative neurological disease. More than 40,000 Ontarians and their families live with Parkinson’s disease—Speaker, I understand this includes your brother. There is no cure. The average age of onset is 60, but Parkinson’s can affect people as young as 30 or 40.

In 2013, the Parkinson Society Ontario is celebrating caregivers this year by making their April awareness theme, “Managing Parkinson’s Disease Is a Family Affair.” Parkinson’s is a disease that families fight together. When a person is diagnosed with Parkinson’s, every family member is affected. The Parkinson’s community knows that managing the disease does not solely rest with the person living with it. Daily care and quality of life are possible thanks to a cohesive team including doctors, health care professionals and families.

From diagnosis to discovery, the Parkinson Society Ontario is the voice of Ontarians living with Parkinson’s, providing education, advocacy and support services for individuals and health care professionals. Every family dealing with Parkinson’s relies on all of us in government to be a part of that support team, helping Ontarians live with Parkinson’s disease.

Again, I’d like to welcome my guests the McNutts to the assembly to hear this statement.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Todd Smith: What’s going on in Prince Edward county really has to stop. The government’s Environmental Review Tribunal has been revealed to be a kangaroo court. Government lawyers, rather than standing up for the interests of the community, regularly take the side of the power company. Community concerns have been disregarded or ignored, and recent documents reveal that the Ministry of the Environment believes that the appeals process is little more than a rubber stamp of the developer’s proposals.

This is all going on in order to develop a wind power project in what the Environmental Commissioner recognizes to be an internationally significant, important bird area. Internationally, only Spain and Bulgaria allow for such environmentally harmful development, while Great Britain and many other states have put such development

off-limits. The Environmental Commissioner joins Nature Canada, the National Audubon Society, the Sierra Club and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in calling for an end to this project.

The people of the county have had enough: enough of the kangaroo courts, enough of the fancy promises from an intellectually bankrupt government, enough of having their community torn up to install wind turbines that are anything but green, and enough of expensive power whose chief accomplishment is the closure of manufacturing facilities all over this province. I'm firmly behind Lisa Thompson's Bill 39, the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act, and encourage the other parties to follow suit.

CARMELO FIGLIANO

Mr. Mike Colle: I rise today to pay honour to Carmelo Figliano, who just passed away at the age of 98. Carmelo worked here at the Legislature as a custodian for over 28 years. As you know too well, Mr. Speaker, and as our Sergeant-at-Arms, Dennis Clark, knows too well, we've got to appreciate the people who work here, the little people who work here and work throughout our province.

Carmelo was a daily fixture on College Street, where he walked every day; in fact, you would see him walking up College to Dufferin—all the way to Woodbridge and back—into his 90s. He was on College with his fedora cap, his little cigar and his corduroy suit, and he was proud to say in Italian, “[*remarks in Italian*]”—he'd never been to a doctor in 98 years. His son Anthony confirmed that basically he'd never been sick, never missed a day of work and worked right up until his 80s.

Filmmaker Frank Nardi mentions that he did get Carmelo to make an appearance in the Jerry Ciccoritti film *The Resurrection of Tony Gitone*, so you'll see him in that film when it comes out. It's a great film.

I think Mr. Figliano represents so many people who sacrificed, worked so hard and loved work. They loved work. They loved working here at Queen's Park and they loved Canada, coming here with nothing and helping to build this country.

I say to Zio Carmelo that he's now walking with Saint Peter.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O'Toole: This government's Green Energy Act means that Ontario has some of the highest electricity rates in North America.

In my riding of Durham there are at least two unwanted wind turbine projects. For the minister—it's driving jobs out of Ontario and seniors out of their homes.

Provincial efforts to protect or shield these industries through their FIT program subsidies are simply transferring the costs onto the taxpayers in another pocket. I urge members to reduce the damage that this government

has inflicted on Ontario's economy under its expensive Green Energy Act.

Organizations in my riding such as Clarington Wind Concerns in Durham should be commended for giving citizens a voice in wind turbine developments. I fully support citizens like Heather Rutherford, Eugene Stone, Don Katsumi, Gerry Mahoney and Kulpreet Khurana, who understand the importance of a local voice in the decision-making process.

I also thank Michael Patrick, owner and founder of the Bowmanville Foundry, who knows the expense of the Green Energy Act through the global adjustment.

The member from Huron-Bruce will let local municipalities control wind turbine development and its costs.

The tired McGuinty-Wynne government has an opportunity to stand up for citizens who not only face skyrocketing hydro bills but also live next door to industrial wind developments that they don't want.

I want to personally thank Lisa Thompson, MPP for Huron-Bruce, for her stand and her leadership on this important initiative.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

STRONGER PROTECTION FOR ONTARIO CONSUMERS ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 RENFORÇANT LA PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR ONTARIEN

Ms. MacCharles moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to amend the Collection Agencies Act, the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 and the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 55, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les agences de recouvrement, la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur et la Loi de 2002 sur le courtage commercial et immobilier et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

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.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Mr. Speaker, I'll make my statement during ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: In the throne speech, our government committed to provide stronger consumer protection for the people of Ontario. I rise with pleasure

in the House today to announce that we are following through on that commitment.

We are introducing the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act. This bill addresses four key areas to make Ontario's marketplace fairer and to boost consumer confidence. The bill proposes to curb aggressive, high-pressure door-to-door sales tactics, especially for the sale of water heaters. It will also protect vulnerable indebted consumers against the misleading and abusive practices of some companies that offer debt settlement services, provide stronger safeguards to strengthen the integrity of real estate bidding practices, and give home sellers more power to negotiate flexible, lower-cost arrangements when using real estate professional services.

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Mr. Speaker, I'd like to provide a few details of these reforms and explain how our plan will strengthen and protect consumer rights for all of the people of Ontario.

In terms of door-to-door sales, to curb aggressive door-to-door sales tactics and help homeowners make informed choices, a proposed new rule would, if passed:

- double the existing 10-day cooling-off period to 20 days for water heaters, providing consumers more time to consider their decision;

- ban delivery and installation of water heaters during the new 20-day cooling-off period;

- allow rules requiring companies to confirm sales by making scripted and recorded telephone calls to the customer and that key contract terms are disclosed in clear, easy-to-understand language; and

- provide new customer protections when the rules are not followed, such as requiring the supplier to pay all cancellation fees when the 20-day cooling-off period is not observed.

In terms of debt settlement, we are aware that some companies that provide debt settlement services offer to dramatically reduce a person's debt by negotiating with their creditors, provided the consumer pays a hefty upfront fee. However, for some consumers in financial difficulty, this upfront fee can force them into more debt. And some companies offering debt settlement services include high administrative fees and may not deliver on their promises, while hidden contract clauses often reduce or eliminate the value of the original service offered.

To protect consumers against misleading practices related to some of these services, the bill proposes to prohibit the payment of upfront fees before the services are provided and to limit the amount of the fees charged overall. Both of these limits would be set by regulation. It would also allow debtors to cancel their agreement without reason within a 10-day period after receiving a copy of the agreement, and it would prohibit misleading sales practices and advertising. If companies fail to follow these rules, our new legislation would enable the revocation of their mandatory licences, further protecting consumers from false or misleading claims.

When it comes to real estate reforms, Mr. Speaker, Ontario's real estate professionals are among the very,

very best, and this government has confidence in the effective role of the Real Estate Council of Ontario and the role it plays in regulating this sector.

To maintain that public confidence in real estate transactions, when multiple bids on the same property are involved, this bill would require real estate salespersons and brokers acting on behalf of a buyer to only present an offer that is in writing. Salespersons and brokers would also be prohibited from suggesting or claiming that a written offer exists when one does not exist. The legislation would, if passed, also require brokerages acting for the seller to retain copies of all written offers related to the sale or purchase of the property. Any person who's made a written offer to purchase a particular home may ask the registrar at the Real Estate Council of Ontario to work with the seller's brokerage to determine the actual number of written offers that were received, and to report that number.

As well, a separate amendment would give homebuyers and sellers more power to negotiate lower-cost services by removing the ban in Ontario on charging both fees and commissions. Allowing real estate agents to charge a combination of a percentage and a fixed amount when pricing their services will better serve consumers, and has the potential to unleash innovation and creativity in the sector. This change will make Ontario's real estate marketplace consistent with other provinces in our country while responding to a previous recommendation of the Competition Bureau.

These proposed reforms build on steps our government has already taken to strengthen consumer protection for people in Ontario. For example, our review of Ontario's Condominium Act is well under way, with residents and stakeholders engaged in helping us make the marketplace fairer for all involved. Our engagement process is not only about government listening to owners and stakeholders; it's also about members of the condominium community listening to each other. It's about building consensus among different groups who are setting the direction and shaping the proposed changes to the Condominium Act. And it's working, Speaker.

Earlier this year, our government introduced its plan to look at qualifications for home inspectors to ensure that when people make a final key decision about buying a house, they can do so with full confidence that the information about the state of the house is reliable.

The Ministry of Consumer Services is working hard to help consumers better understand their rights and to help businesses understand their responsibilities. These are the first of a series of strong consumer actions we are taking to make our marketplace safe, fair and one where all people in this province can have the confidence in the purchases and the investments they make.

I am confident that these reforms will give the people of Ontario stronger consumer protection while building consumer confidence in the marketplace. This would ultimately help strengthen the economy of this wonderful province.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm happy to rise today on the proposed legislation to deal with a number of issues in consumer protection, legislation that I believe is well overdue.

Water heaters were in the news in 2012 due to Direct Energy's negative-option billing action, so it's upsetting that what should be a simple and straightforward industry in Ontario is instead being marred by so many issues. We have to maintain the focus on what went wrong, the deliberate deception, hiding of costs and the exploitation of customers' vulnerabilities by certain rotten apples in the door-to-door sales sector. The ministry is doubling the cooling-off period for water heater rentals, which is just one aspect of the ministry's responsibility.

Why not other contracts, such as gym memberships or any of the other future contracts that we see out in the field? If the purpose is to protect the consumer from incurring onerous cancellation fees, the problem is the fees rather than the cooling-off period. In this case, the bill is a treatment and not a cure.

Once a new heater is installed following the 20 days, if the consumer hasn't sorted out matters with the original supplier, they will face some severe penalties. Cancellation charges can run into the hundreds of dollars, and moreover, suppliers are free to charge outrageous amounts for damages, such as scratches on a 10-year-old tank that is only going to be recycled anyway.

Aggressive sales tactics are certainly a concern, but let's remember that consumers are being taken advantage of in more than one way. There are no regulations concerning the many, many complaints concerning the cancellation of these contracts, especially when we've already seen excessive and unreasonable charges being billed to customers, and anti-competitive tank return processes designed to frustrate consumers and competitors.

Let's not forget that the two largest players in the industry are currently under federal investigation by the Competition Bureau for allegedly designing ways to trap their clients into sticking to their existing contracts.

For this bill to be worthy of this House, we need to get to the real problem. The fact of the matter is, you can't legislate away deception or vulnerability. We have many laws against undesirable actions, but that does not mean people have stopped doing them. We need to strengthen the ministry's enforcement tools and ensure consumers have recourse beyond the court system, because often the ones who get into trouble are the ones who can least afford a lawyer.

Debt settlement: The vulnerable Ontarian who needs to tackle his or her debts will sometimes resort to a debt settler. They can either be honest or less so, and there's nary a way of knowing. Ideally, the consumer would do his research and read the reviews. Then the consumer would compare the services and be able to pick the most appropriate.

This is not how it happens. Your landlord is calling; your collectors are calling. Your employer is upset that you're getting persistent calls at the office. Your kids are crying, your spouse is grumpy, and you feel pressured and without options.

Well, no settlement is ever painless, and if you've ever had one, then you can kiss your credit rating goodbye. As we wait for this bill to be printed, I hope to see some serious steps in the legislation to ensure that once the consumer has resorted to a settler, he or she can kiss the collectors goodbye in equal measure.

If the bill strengthens the terms of the agreement to settle a debt and bans upfront fees, it will generate an incentive for the settler to genuinely pursue all available avenues for earning his or her commission.

1330

When we go to real estate, we all know that each house and each seller and each buyer are unique. This applies to brokers and realtors as well. Removing the restrictions regarding fees and commissions will allow brokers to compete more transparently as long as the minister provides for a full disclosure of the total cost of the sale. The sellers and buyers deserve to know exactly what they'll pay the broker under any agreement.

I'm interested in tackling the phantom offers, since this type of sales tactic occurs both in real estate purchases and the rental market as well. From the briefing, I took that the Real Estate Council of Ontario will be able to pursue brokers who falsely claim the existence of numerous offers on the property. If and when this act comes into force, I hope the minister and RECO will enact the necessary regulations, keeping in mind the need for a detailed paper trail.

Although the briefing was scheduled this morning when I could not be there, we look forward to seeing just what is in this bill and look forward to something for the consumers of Ontario.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's my privilege and honour to be here today to comment on this bill. This would normally be the responsibility of my colleague the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, as he is the critic, but unfortunately, he was not able to be here at this exact moment to participate in the announcement of this bill and asked me to do so. We look forward to this bill.

Let's start from why this bill is before the House at this point. It's because, last year, there were 3,200 written complaints. People have written in to complain about these vultures at the door, and I call them that. I call them that because that's precisely what they are.

I remember when my own mother, who is now deceased, called me in tears one day because she had signed something at the door. The guy had come to the door selling water heaters. They didn't need a water heater, but they signed anyway because the guy was so persuasive, wouldn't take no for an answer, insisted it had to be done, insisted that the water heater was going to explode, and all these other things that were said at the door.

The reason that they do it, and they target people who are older or want people—and everyone knows they target those communities where there are a lot of older residents. My parents at that time lived in a little town near Bancroft called Cardiff. Cardiff had a number of people who lived there—I think 400 or 500 homes in total—almost all of whom were retired. It was more of a

retirement community, as were many of the old mining communities that were transformed. That was once a uranium mine area. They had been transformed, and the people who went to live there were mostly people of retirement age.

These guys came along frequently, whether they were selling water heaters, whether they were selling natural gas: “Buy the natural gas because it’s going to go up so high in price, you’re never going to be able to heat your home again.” In the last 10 years, that has never happened. It has gone down. They’ve said the same thing about electricity. They say the same thing about everything they sell at the door.

I’m going to support it, and I think we need to support stuff like this. But what we need to do as a government is to advise people not to open the door to these guys in the first place. There needs to be a whole education program that you don’t buy anything at the door. You don’t buy it because if you want it, you can get it from a reputable dealer, a reputable store, someplace that has feet on the ground where you can go and you can make the complaint.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And do it in different languages.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, and in different languages.

I’m appreciative of the fact that the government is now intending to double the existing 10-day cooling-off period, but very often people will be confused. People who sign these forms will be confused and won’t even understand up until the time either that they get a bill or the water heater guy is about to install something. They won’t understand, in some cases, because they don’t speak the language. They won’t understand because they are old and confused, and their families often are not aware of what has been signed. I think we need to do this whole education process.

In the body of this bill, when this is discussed in committee, we need to talk not only about the time limits but also other avenues that consumers may have, such as if a person is older, infirm or incompetent to actually sign that document, that their families can get out of it, even after the time period is up. We need to start doing those kinds of things and start thinking those kinds of ways, particularly as Ontarians age.

I’m mindful as well of the other things that are being said here: the debt settlement and the real estate reforms. These reforms, too, are long overdue. I think anyone who has ever been caught in a bidding war for a house will let you know how unnerving that is and how you get a sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach that you’ve been had when it’s over. The multiple bids that you never see, the other people bidding—it’s not like an auction where you can go see other hands go up; this is all done in secret, and it needs to be transparent. People who are spending and making the biggest purchase of their entire lives, people who are spending in reality hundreds of thousands of dollars, sometimes are bidding up more than hundreds of thousands of dollars to get their dream home, need to know that this is all above board.

I know that real estate agents are in favour of this. I know that debt settlement people who are doing the right thing are in favour of this. I know that Ontarians will be in favour of this. But please, let’s make it as strong as we can and let’s put an education component in here to make sure that people understand that it is not right and that the government of Ontario will protect them when they’re being ripped off.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for petitions. The member from Huron–Bruce.

PETITIONS

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that very much. I stand here today to read the following petition:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we, the people of Wainfleet, Ontario, are requesting changes be made under the Green Energy Act and call for an immediate and complete moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development until such time as a corrective action is taken on the 550-metre setback allowance from family homes together with the results of the federal health study to be released in 2014, we request that a two-kilometre setback allowance be implemented in order to protect the health of all Ontarian citizens;

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

“The turbines projected for Wainfleet, Ontario, are much greater in size than the model used to determine the 550-metre setback. This minimal setback allowance of 550 metres under the Green Energy Act is enabling these wind turbines installations to be put in clusters. There is worldwide evidence that wind turbines that are clustered produce even more ill-health effects on people. We therefore assert our notification that changes must be made under the Green Energy Act in order to comply with the legal right of all Canadian citizens to have their health and welfare protected and that new conditions be resubmitted into the Green Energy Act implementing a two-kilometre setback allowance from family homes on all wind turbine installations.”

I agree with this particular petition and the thousands of signatures that go with it, and I’ll send it to the desk with Bonnie.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present a second petition on this very topic, which is really Bill 39.

“Against Clarington wind farm project.

“Four 2.5-megawatt industrial wind turbines proposed by Leader Resources at Port Granby area.

“Whereas the residents who have signed this petition have concerns regarding the direct and indirect impact on

the well-being of inhabitants and the local environment in the vicinity of industrial wind turbines; and

“Whereas there are concerns regarding setbacks, health issues, the impact on the local environment and property values; and

“Whereas the residents who have signed are certainly in favour of renewable energy but are not reassured by the current level of research on the subject; and

“Whereas the wind turbine proposal is within proximity of the Port Granby crown land low-level radioactive waste site, concerns have been raised about the compatibility of these two” environmentally incompatible “projects adjacent to each another;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to call for a moratorium on industrial wind” turbine development “and for the project in Clarington and other such projects to be halted” immediately.

I’m pleased to sign and support this on behalf of Lisa as well as my constituents.

LONG-TERM CARE

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

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

“Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently don’t complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

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

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

1340

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

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craitor: I’m pleased to introduce the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the people of Ontario deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their grandparents as requested in Bill 48 put forward by” the member from Niagara Falls— that’s me, by the way; and

“Whereas currently, subsection 21(1) of the act provides that a parent of a child or any other person may

apply to a court for certain orders respecting custody of or access to the child. An amendment to that subsection specifies that a grandparent may apply for such an order; and

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

“Whereas relationships between children and grandparents” are truly a very “special bond that should be maintained;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their grandparents.”

I’m extremely proud to sign my name to this petition.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Frank Klees: I have a petition here signed by hundreds of my constituents and people from across the province. It relates to my private member’s bill, the Preserving Existing Communities Act, and reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the town of Newmarket official plan was developed through extensive community consultation and commits the town council to manage growth based on specific principles;

“Whereas section 1.3.3 of the official plan states that growth should occur in a way that not only increases the quality of life for existing residents but also provides a functional environment for the future by protecting and enhancing existing natural features and systems;

“Whereas a key principle set out in section 2.1 of the official plan is a commitment to protect and strengthen existing neighbourhoods;

“Whereas section 3.2.1 states that the objective of the stable residential area policies of the official plan is to sustain and enhance the character and identity of existing residential communities;

“Whereas the town of Newmarket has received an application from Marianneville Development Ltd. that, if approved, would impose an additional 730 housing units into the existing, long-established Glenway community;

“Whereas the Glenway community was not designed to accommodate the water, sewer, traffic and other infrastructure requirements of the proposed development application;

“Whereas the proposed development would not only change the character and identity of the Glenway community, it would have a negative impact on quality of life, would erode property values and would threaten the health and safety of its residents;

“Whereas the Places to Grow Act, 2005 and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006 provide for a significant portion of new growth to take place through intensification of built-up areas;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Preserving Existing Communities Act, 2013 ... that amends the Places to Grow Act, 2005 to provide that a decision made by a municipal council is final and may not be appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board if the following conditions are satisfied:

“The decision is to refuse a request to amend the municipality’s official plan with respect to land that is designated for one or more of the following: stable residential area, and parks and open space.

“The municipal council has passed a resolution stating that the requested official plan ... would not be in the best interests of the municipality” if it is amended.

Speaker, I affix my signature, and as it is my private member’s bill that will be debated later, I encourage all members to support it.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I’m pleased to present a petition on behalf of residents of my riding of Essex.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Avastin is approved for use in the treatment of glioblastoma by Health Canada; and

“Whereas Avastin is currently covered for this treatment by the provincial governments of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia; and

“Whereas in a clinical study Mr. Kevin Graham had a positive response to this medication and his tumour stopped growing; and

“Whereas Mr. Graham and other glioblastoma patients have not had positive responses to other chemotherapy drugs currently covered by the government of Ontario;

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

“We respectfully request that Cancer Care Ontario be directed to reassess the importance of funding Avastin for brain cancer patients in Ontario to ensure equal access for Ontarians to the benefits of this treatment.”

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to sign this petition, and I wish Mr. Graham and his family all the best and strength as he goes about his treatment.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition that’s intended for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from supporters of Guelph Wellington Community Living, and it’s on behalf of those with developmental disabilities and the employees and agencies that provide support.

“With sector funding frozen at 2009 levels, many developmental service agencies provided zero per cent wage increases for 2010 and 2011. The provincial government is demanding we take an additional two

years of wage freezes and the workers cannot afford to do this. A large number of workers were already forced to take second jobs before the wage freeze, and with the increased cost of living, they are no longer able to make ends meet. Waiting lists continue to grow at an alarming rate. There has been little expansion funding available, while the education sector has maintained annual base budget increases despite declining enrolment.

“We, the undersigned, are asking the Legislature to make developmental services funding a priority.”

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I’d ask that you send a page with a good back. This one has 5,520 signatures on it, and it comes from the county of Prince Edward.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the grievance of citizens of Prince Edward county is that our hospital is being moved toward extinction and here, following our history, we outline our request:

“Whereas prior to the forced amalgamation in 1998 of the formerly named Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital, Picton, Ontario, the records show that the hospital was a financially responsible, full-service, 42-bed facility funded and built by county residents, service groups and practitioners;

“Whereas the Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital had for many years been developing an integrated primary health care network based on the partnership model with the consumer as its focus firstly on palliative and long-term care;

“Whereas the Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital board of governors offered to adopt a partnership model at the regional level, a continuance of voluntary co-operation without increased administrative costs and a larger, more expansive bureaucracy which was deemed to result if the county hospital was forced to amalgamate with Quinte Healthcare Corp.;

“Whereas since the 1998 forced amalgamation of the Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital with Belleville General hospital, Trenton Memorial Hospital and Bancroft community hospital into an organization named Quinte Healthcare, there has been a steady and severe erosion of Prince Edward county hospital medical services, equipment and number of funded beds and community-raised funds;

“Whereas we have moved from a well-equipped community hospital with emergency services able to provide a range of medical services, including obstetrics, backed by an impressive contingent of superior medical staff, technicians, nurses and management. We serve an important rural, urban and huge tourist population;

“Whereas very important also is the historic referral pattern from Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital to the Academic Health Science Centre in Kingston.

Established partnerships with the Kingston health care services were made long ago;

“Whereas now, 15 years later, we’re living with the realities of the programs outlined above, to the detriment of health and well-being of our citizens. This diminishing process has reduced our thriving hospital to a minimal clinic centre. This raises the spectre of probable elimination altogether. Thus, one of our most important centres of voluntary activity and economic benefit would also be lost to the county;

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

“For the safety and best interests of the citizens of Prince Edward county, we ask for an early meeting with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, Deb Matthews, her deputies as appropriate, MLA Todd Smith and the medical, elected and lay members of the county of Prince Edward. Our request for a meeting with the minister is to highlight the major changes in the past 15 years and to address the re-establishment of the county hospital as a not-for-profit corporation under the governance of an elected board.”

I’m pleased to present this to the table this afternoon.

1350

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from the people of the northeast, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ontario government” has made PET scanning “a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

“Whereas,” since October 2009, “insured PET scans” are performed “in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with” Health Sciences North, “its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through” Health Science North, “thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of” the northeast.

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

WIND TURBINES

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

“Whereas residents and municipalities across Ontario want the ability to veto and/or plan for industrial wind turbines in their community; and

“Whereas ratepayers in Ontario want all forms of energy generation to be affordable and reliable; and

“Whereas residents of Ontario want the feed-in tariff program to be eliminated; and

“Whereas residents of Ontario want to protect environmentally sensitive areas like the Niagara Escarp-

ment and the Oak Ridges moraine from the development of wind turbines;

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

“That the Liberal government support Huron–Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson’s private member’s bill, the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act, and call committee hearings immediately on the bill.”

I affix my signature in support.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

PRESERVING EXISTING COMMUNITIES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À PRÉSERVER LES COLLECTIVITÉS EXISTANTES

Mr. Klees moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 41, An Act to amend the Places to Grow Act, 2005 with respect to the finality of certain municipal planning decisions / Projet de loi 41, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2005 sur les zones de croissance en ce qui concerne le caractère définitif de certaines décisions prises au niveau municipal en matière d’aménagement.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you, Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to speak to this bill. I want to take this opportunity to welcome to the Legislature councillors from the town of Newmarket: Chris Emanuel and Jane Twinney. I thank them for their support. I’d also like to express my appreciation to Councillor Jim Tovey and Councillor Pat Mullin, who attended the press conference with me this morning; also Ms. Lois Mac Donnell, who is here representing the Glenway Preservation Association. I want to thank her for being here with us, and a number of residents from the Glenway community in the town of Newmarket.

In the time that I have, I want to do a couple of things. First, I want to set out very clearly what this bill does; I want to make it very clear what it does not do; and I also want to set into context why I believe this bill is so necessary.

Sometimes, Speaker, we don’t get it quite right in this place. When we find that we have passed legislation that has unintended consequences, it is our responsibility as legislators to fix that. That’s what I’m attempting to do with this legislation. Where there are unintended consequences is as a result of a very well-intentioned piece of legislation we know as the Places to Grow Act and its companion legislation, the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Here is where the problem is: Those pieces of legislation do something very well intentioned, and that is to prevent urban sprawl. As a result of that, we have

provincial legislation that mandates intensification of existing communities. In fact, all municipalities, and specifically the 25 within the greater Toronto and greater Hamilton area, are mandated to meet certain population and intensification targets. Provincial policy requires these municipalities to bring their official plans into conformity with those population and growth targets.

What is happening is that many municipalities have complied. I'm pleased to say that the town of Newmarket was among the first, if not the first, municipality that brought their official plan into compliance with that provincial legislation. So all is well, you would think.

Here is the problem. Because of the wording of the provincial legislation, which actually states that those growth targets are deemed to be the minimum targets, the fallout of that—and, I believe, an unintended consequence of that wording—is that, notwithstanding the fact that we have an official plan in place in the town of Newmarket and notwithstanding the fact that Newmarket is in compliance with those population and intensification targets, we now have a situation where a developer has purchased land in Newmarket—a golf course community—and without conditions, which speaks to the issue I'm addressing here with this proposed amendment.

The developer knew full well that, because of the wording of the provincial legislation, he could simply move in, put forward an application which, by the way, includes the insertion of more than 730 housing units into an existing, established community, without regard to the impact on those residents, the property values and the quality of life, let alone the impact on the infrastructure in place and the ultimate cost to the municipality for playing catch-up with that infrastructure; knew that he could bring forward that application, knowing full well that, in all likelihood, the municipality would say no and immediately trigger—as, by the way, the developer has done just this week—an appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board without even hearing back from the municipality as to what the decision would be.

So we have a situation where the municipality is in full compliance, went through the work of establishing an official plan, is meeting all the provincial targets and yet is facing the prospect of an existing, established residential community being totally changed in terms of its character, notwithstanding the effect, as I said, on property values, quality of life and the local municipality. Speaker, I think that is fundamentally wrong.

Look, we have a wonderful province. We look around at the various communities, and why do we have them? We have them because people in the development business have made a substantial investment in land, in the process of bringing that land forward for development and in building communities. I celebrate our development industry. I celebrate our building industry. We are the province we are because of those two industries, the largest employers in our province.

We have a responsibility, as a province, to create an environment within which they can succeed and within which individuals who purchase those homes can enjoy a

quality of life and can count on those communities being preserved, hence the title of my bill: Preserving Existing Communities. Speaker, I don't believe for one minute that the development industry, as a whole, intends to destroy communities. By the way, I've had a lot of calls over this past week from people within that industry, friends—perhaps today former friends; I don't know—but very strongly worded calls largely on the basis of a misunderstanding of what this bill proposes.

I want to make it clear: This bill does not take away the right of appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board in 99.9% of circumstances. It does, however, make it very clear that, where a municipality has conformed with provincial policy, where an official plan is in place that has designated where intensification can take place, where the municipality has determined that the plan that has come forward is not in the best interests of that municipality, where the lands are zoned as stable residential areas and parks and open space, and the decision of the municipality is that the application is not in the best interest of the community, the decision of the municipality will be final and may not be appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board. I believe that that simply makes good planning sense.

1400

Let me say this: There is a process in place in this province that allows—in fact, mandates—that official plans are to be reviewed every five years, and I would think that at least for that five-year period of time after the municipality has established that official plan, has made all of the infrastructure plans and investments consistent with that plan, we could all count on that plan to be respected.

If a developer wants to come forward and ask for a change or negotiate a change of that official plan, there's a time to do that, and the time to do that is when that plan is opened up. Representations can be made to the municipality, and the decision will be there. What is offensive is when that official plan is not respected and the locally elected councils who have made a decision regarding the character of their community are simply overridden by the Ontario Municipal Board, which, by the way, Speaker, you know and I know are not elected, are not accountable, are appointments by the government with, in many cases, no regard for the character of that local community. Most of them have probably never even seen the community that they're making major decisions about. So I submit to members here, I believe that it's our responsibility to correct what was an unintended consequence of the Places to Grow Act.

Since tabling this legislation a couple of weeks ago, I have had very strong support from municipalities across the province. The city of Mississauga passed a unanimous resolution in support of the bill; I received a call from Mayor Rob Burton from Oakville, saying he would do whatever he can to support this bill, and they, the town of Oakville, passed a unanimous resolution in support of the bill. Chairman Carr, from the region of Halton—I spoke with him a couple of days ago. The

region of Halton passed a unanimous resolution just yesterday endorsing this bill. We have a number of municipalities from across the province who have expressed that kind of support.

No one is attacking the building industry, the development industry. No one is calling into question the intention of anyone. What this bill is simply doing is saying, let's respect the planning process that's in place in this province; let's honour the people who make the single largest investment that they will ever make in their lives, namely their homes, so that when they put that money down and move into that home, they have some sense that they can count on the character of that community to be there in 10 years, in 20 years, in 30 years. If in fact intensification is to take place, surely we would support that that intensification takes place in consultation with the duly elected councils of that municipality, and that at the end of the day, through that planning process, we build strong communities. And so the short title of this bill is Preserving Existing Communities Act.

This is not an issue that we can ignore. If this House does not act, we will continue to allow tension within an industry where there shouldn't be any. I think by fixing this, we will actually be supporting the development industry as it seeks to continue to build strong communities in our province. I would appeal to every member here to support this bill today.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have tremendous sympathy for the intent of the bill and the intent, as articulated by the member for Newmarket–Aurora, in his desire to try to control the powers of the Ontario Municipal Board. Originally I thought I might support it as a way of just getting it to a legislative committee and have people come and speak to it and the positives and negatives of the bill.

But I want to speak to the serious limitations of the bill for a moment, and I want to speak generally about the Ontario Municipal Board. Most people don't know what the Ontario Municipal Board is. It was created in 1906, uniquely in Ontario. No other province in Canada has an Ontario Municipal Board—with such powers. No other power in North America, including America, has the powers that the OMB has, except possibly one state. The powers that the Ontario Municipal Board has to override municipal governments and to override, on many occasions, the decisions made by the planning department are extreme and, in my view, excessive. They have the power to change official plans. They have the power to change zoning bylaws. They have the power to deal and change zoning bylaw amendments. They have the power, in effect, to establish land use planning. They have incredible power that, in my view, they should not have. They are not an elected body, and they are unaccountable.

In my view, for one individual at the OMB or three individuals to make a decision where they can start from scratch—as they say, *de novo* in Latin—where the city

may have done that for a year or two, three, four, five or 10, but this body can re-begin a process from scratch, I believe undermines the work of cities and undermines the work of city planners.

This government attempted in 2006, through Bill 51, to, in their mind, limit the powers of the Ontario Municipal Board. The fact of the matter is that they did very little. Court decisions have said they have but only a limited, deferential kind of respect for municipalities—limited, deferential respect—and all they have to do is simply have regard to whatever a municipality has decided by way of its official plans or land use planning work. That is all they have to do. Having regard to official plans means absolutely nothing, because an adjudicator at the OMB can simply rewrite the whole thing, undo it, amend it, change it in any way he or she wants. Bill 51, passed six or seven years ago, has absolutely given very little to municipalities by way of powers, so we're still at the beginning in terms of what we need to do to change the OMB.

I introduced a bill three weeks ago that would allow the city of Toronto to be free of the OMB, and I wanted to start with the city of Toronto because they have their own act.

Mr. Mike Colle: Free at last.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Indeed. They have a \$10-billion budget and they're bigger than most provinces in Canada. They are a big city, a big economic power in the province of Ontario and the rest of Canada, with a big planning department, and they spend thousands of hours defending their decisions at the OMB, instead of spending those limited hours they've got to talk about how they're going to plan land use in the city of Toronto. It's just simply wrong. They're so demoralized in the city of Toronto, and understaffed, of late, that they are not able to do the double job of minding the business here in the city of Toronto and then having to defend themselves at the OMB. It's absolutely wrong.

It was my attempt to say to some of the disgruntled Liberal members: Look, if you want me to include Mississauga—and I will refer to them in a moment or two—come on in. You can join us, because I actually believe that if a city wants to opt out, they ought to be able to do it. That's the argument I put forth.

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I also argued that it is not inconsistent for the government to continue to change the Ontario Municipal Board, and by that I mean limiting its powers so that they can continue to have respect for the decisions that cities make. They are not inconsistent. My Bill 20 can proceed. Other municipalities can join in, and if the government doesn't want to do that, God bless. Change the OMB and limit their powers so you can respect municipalities. Either of the two can be done in tandem; they are not inconsistent. I'm arguing that we need to change the OMB—absolutely. But they can also respect my bill and respect Toronto. It's all about respect.

The Conservatives love to talk about that as well. That's why a couple of them supported my bill a couple of weeks ago. That was good; thank you.

But the problem I have with the bill that the member from Newmarket–Aurora brings forth is that it is limited in scope. It says that—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I understand, member from Durham. I understand what you're saying.

It says, "The decision is to refuse a request to amend the municipality's official plan with respect to land that is designated as one or both of the following:

"(i) Stable residential area.

"(ii) Parks and open space."

I think that's okay. But as I read in the Newmarket official plans, they include, in addition to residential areas, urban centres, commercial, business parks, major institutional areas and natural heritage systems that are excluded from this particular bill and that could have—maybe should have—been added, but they're not. So we only are limited to two areas, and that is stable residential area and parks and open space. That is all.

I understand why some of the folks are here, because they want to be able to defend themselves from a potential development where there are golf courses right next to this residential community, and if they build there, that would infringe, I'm assuming, on some of the effect it would have on the surrounding community. I understand that.

The bill says, however, on the next page, that "subsections (2), (3) and (6) apply if the municipality can demonstrate it is achieving the applicable population growth and intensification targets determined under the plan." So, what this bill says is that it has to meet that standard, and if it doesn't, these two items are appealable still to the OMB, which leaves you somewhat vulnerable, assuming that municipalities can establish a process to determine what that growth is and if they are meeting the growth objectives. So you're still subject to an appeal, and everything else is also subject to an appeal.

Things that I mentioned in my debate around Bill 20—in Kitchener–Waterloo, the city and the planners, together over a 10-year period, said, "We don't want urban sprawl." It took them 10 years. The developer said, "We don't like your plan. We like urban sprawl." God bless them. Believe it or not, the OMB ruled in favour of the developer because they liked their plan better than the city's combined with urban planners. I'm assuming you agree with me that something is wrong with that. Not only was Kitchener–Waterloo containing urban sprawl, and not only did the city and urban planners agree, but the OMB overruled them. It's tremendous power that the OMB has to object to, deny, override, overrule a city, and that is fundamentally wrong. Those decisions will still apply. Other decisions, such as if a developer wishes to build a high-rise where the official plan calls for lower heights, would be appealed. Those still proceed. There are a number of other decisions which I do not have time to speak of, but my point is that the bill is limited in its scope in terms of how it attacks the problem of the Ontario Municipal Board and how it doesn't protect the

city from other elements of growth that you will be subjected to in Newmarket.

I know some of the city councillors in Mississauga were here, but the Mississauga resolution seeks to amend legislation such that, "There is no appeal in respect of the official plan policies of a municipality or a planning board, adopted to conform to the growth management population, intensification and employment targets and policies as set out in the provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe area and related regulations and provincial policies." That is very different than what is being proposed here. My sense is that Mississauga councillors think that the bill might be doing a little more than they think it ought to be doing, but it doesn't.

So I speak in favour of the sentiment of what you're trying to do, but it is incredibly limited in terms of its scope. It does not attack the powers of the OMB that it should in a way that will reform it so that all communities in Ontario are protected, which is what we need to do. If we give the city of Newmarket the power to be able to say, "No, we're opting out; we don't want to have the OMB override us," that's the kind of powers they would want, and that's what we should be fighting for, because that's the real reform that we need in this province.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I wish the members that had been here in—I'm trying to remember. Yes, it was 2001. I remember I proposed a bill like this; it was a revolutionary bill. I said, "Let's abolish the NDP"—the NDP? No, "Let's abolish"—

Interjection: Hooray!

Mr. Mike Colle: Okay, agreed? Unanimous consent?

There I was in 2001. I said, "Here's a bill to abolish the Ontario Municipal Board." Did I get any support from the NDP? No. From the Conservatives? Oh, God, it's like abolishing the Vatican. They said, "You can't touch that."

Anyways, I have a bit of history on the OMB and this issue, and I really commend the member from Newmarket–Aurora for bringing this forward, because it's a real-life issue in many communities, not only in his community, but right across the whole province, because we do have growth issues. I represent an area—if you want to see the OMB at work, drive up to Yonge and Eglinton. You can't even find a piece of grass to walk your dog anymore, because somehow, despite the OMB and despite city council's official plan, it's just basically condominiums everywhere. There's another about 300 already on the go, and city council always says, "Oh, it's not our fault; it's the OMB's fault." Meanwhile, there goes up another building. Then city council says, "Oh, we've got section 37. We like section 37." The member from Thornhill knows about section 37.

What they do is, they use the OMB as this bad guy—not to say they're good, but they say it's the OMB's fault. Meanwhile, the city of Toronto has all this section 37 stuff going on and buildings up everywhere. We've got

more cranes in the sky—you know, the big construction cranes—in Toronto than in all of North America combined.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: They're right here. They're in my riding.

Mr. Mike Colle: Come to Eglinton–Lawrence. I think I've got a few more now than you.

Anyways, there are more cranes in the sky than in all of North America, including Mexico City: more in the GTA than all of North America combined. You take New York—forget it; they've got 30 or something. Mexico City's got about 20. Then I talk to developers that come and see me: "Your government's not helping us. Your government's allowing too many appeals, and we can't get our work done. We can't make any money." And I say, "For God's sake, how much money do you guys want before you're happy? How many more condos will make you happy? How many hundreds more cranes do you want before you developers are happy? God love you." We love the developers, we love the people in construction, but for God's sake, stop once and say, "Hey, we're not doing too bad."

1420

Never—you're never going to hear from developers, "Oh, Ontario's not bad. Toronto's not bad." They're always saying, "We need more. Cut the red tape," as the Tories say all the time. "Cut the red tape and we will build more condos wall to wall."

I just think, in this bill here—getting back to this bill—there's some very fascinating comments made, and they're very valuable, really. There is an issue that has to be dealt with. I just tell my friend from Newmarket, I think what we really need to do here is get the best and the brightest around a small table and look at your issue; look at what the member from Trinity–Spadina has talked about, opting out; look at what I've been saying for the last too many years, and see if we could come up with something that is comprehensive. Because we all know we need the growth, it's just growth that is manageable and sustainable. We need the jobs; we need the services. But we also need appropriate infrastructure.

If you look at Highway 7—the member from Highway 7 isn't here, but God love Highway 7. There are so many wonderful subdivisions, wall-to-wall subdivisions from all the way from Uxbridge to King City and beyond. Anyway, everything's been built up there, yet they've got Highway 7—it's wall-to-wall trucks 24 hours a day. You can't breathe on Highway 7. There's no transit on Highway 7.

God forbid they had a plan and said, "Listen, as you're building all your subdivisions and new developers are making your money, why don't you put a bit of money aside to maybe build a subway underneath Highway 7?" Maybe as all these people were coming to the Highway 7 corridor, they could have built a subway, a kilometre every two years and said, "God, we can breathe and walk on Highway 7," rather than making it a truck thoroughfare.

That's why you need a provincial plan. That's what I'm trying to point out to you, is that you can't have one

municipality opt in and out, because what happens is they play against each other. So the developer will say, "Well, I can't get it in Newmarket. I'm going to Aurora. I can't get it in Aurora; I'll go to Uxbridge." So that's why you need—if you do the opting-out thing, my colleague from Trinity–Spadina, you've got a bit of an issue because they'll play hopscotch. They'll play one municipality against another.

That's why I'm saying we need a comprehensive, real approach to this, where we can manage growth. Because I think we've done a reasonable job, considering the pressures we've had, that there are beautiful communities still—no better place to live than in Aurora, Newmarket, Uxbridge, Snowball Corners, Thornhill. These are beautiful places to live, but we haven't done a very good job of providing the proper services, which I mean are the proper roads, the proper sewers, the proper transit. All these things could have been done better because there could have been money and planning in advance, rather than after the fact, when you know who benefits? It's all the OMB planning lawyers. They make a—I used to call the OMB the annuity plan for planners and lawyers. That was their retirement plan: They just went to the OMB. God, it's the city versus the community, the community versus—so the people who won were the lawyers, the planning lawyers. They call themselves environmental lawyers now, by the way. They don't call themselves development lawyers.

So that's who wins in all this, because there is too much confrontation and litigation. There isn't a real opportunity to have a proper citizen review of the applications—a proper citizen review of the application. Because what happens is, right now, if you do take away the OMB, which as I said you can do it and you should do it, you have to put a proper review panel in place.

If you look at Oregon, they've been doing this for the last 20 years. It works very well there. If you do just straight off abolish the OMB, and if you then just have them go to Divisional Court—wow. The lawyers are going to go, "Oh, this is going to be fantastic if they go to Divisional Court," and they'll be in court and then the big guys will win. The cities will waste all kinds of money fighting in the courts. If you think the OMB is expensive, take these to the courts. If you appeal every decision to our court system, talk about delays.

My time is up. My good friend from Ottawa can talk about Ottawa's planning mistakes in a few minutes. Anyway, thank you for listening.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you very much, Speaker. I think it's safe to say that in this House there is no member and probably never has been who represents a riding within the urban boundary that hasn't gotten into the fray in some kind of dispute that involved what citizens want versus what the cities they live in want versus what their own planners want versus what developers want.

I think what this bill is informed by is that kind of dispute in my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora's

riding. As I say, we've all experienced it. What we have is a triangle, and I would like to think that triangle puts citizens on the top, and on the bottom two corners you put the cities and their planning departments and the developers.

You know, they're all people who, I think, are well intentioned. Citizens want to live in a community that they thought they bought into at some given point in their lives, making an expenditure that is not even arguably the most significant expenditure of most people's lives, and so they want to preserve its character. Cities want to create places that people want to live in. They want to collect taxes on a regular basis. They want to have nice parkland, keep their roads maintained and provide clean water. And developers, who sometimes are very maligned, as my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora has said, are just people who are in business, and that businesses, relatively speaking, is a decent business. They build places for people to live. They build backyards for kids to run around in. They build parkland, because oftentimes cities where they build demand that they do that, and oftentimes they do it anyway. So our issue here, in dealing with Places to Grow or any other act that pertains to how our municipalities function, really are within our purview to address on the basis that this triangle remains in balance.

My colleague from Newmarket–Aurora has mentioned a lot of the rationale behind Bill 41, which has been prompted by a particular issue he has dealt with in his riding, but one that, as I've said, has been paralleled and will continue to be paralleled in ridings all over this great province. The bill is really about giving some kind of power—I'll just say "some additional power"—within the current provincial guidelines to municipalities. We could really have quite a lengthy discussion of those guidelines, but for today let's be very specific.

The bill sets out three conditions where local municipal plans would trump the Ontario Municipal Board, the OMB: (1) that a municipality has an official plan in accordance with provincial intensification policies; (2) the targets for density, as outlined in the provincial growth plan, are achieved; and (3) the local council has not requested any density redistribution from what has already been allocated.

Local residents know their communities well, but on a different level than a centralized body. That's why my friend from Newmarket–Aurora has people here today; they have a vital interest in what's going on adjacent to the golf course. No MPP has ever escaped the ire of citizens who feel strongly about some aspect of a proposed development, certainly not within the urban boundary. I myself represent two major cities in the province of Ontario, because Thornhill straddles Vaughan and Markham. These are indeed places to grow, and they're growing like Topsy. They are subject to intensification, and that intensification is always being questioned by any element of it, whether it be the citizenry, the planners or certainly the developers. So we're in these disputes on a constant basis.

This bill does not override the OMB, but it does give more autonomy to local communities. That's really what it purports to do and what it should do. It would prevent planning decisions from being a Queen's-Park-and-bureaucracy solution. It contemplates input and local opinion in changing the face of communities.

How our communities will look in the future is a pertinent issue to all of us as our population does continue to grow. Think about it: We're talking about 8.5 million people in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area by about 2025. That's spitting distance from here. That's 12 years away. The GTHA, as it's called, is projected to be among the fastest-growing regions in the province—indeed, in the country. The GTHA's share of Ontario's overall population is projected to rise from 47% right now—actually, in 2011—to 52% by 2036.

Significant growth must be growth within guidelines and must be controlled growth. That's a significant increase that requires comprehensive, long-term planning for the overall livability of a community that takes future growth into account.

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As I represent my constituents from Thornhill, I do know first-hand about a rapidly evolving community. Population projections from the province of Ontario indicate that York region's population will rise to 1.5 million people and the number of jobs will increase to 780,000 by 2031—again, not very far into the future. The city of Vaughan is one of the fastest-growing municipalities in all of Canada. Our community has gone through many changes over the past decade, and it will continue to undergo considerable transformation.

Municipal planning is a very complex issue that encompasses taking every aspect of day-to-day life into account, from roads and infrastructure to transit and parks, from green space to garbage collection. To have a neighbourhood that thrives economically and socially, people need a larger say. Exactly what that looks like differs for each particular community, and with this bill, the OMB could not overrule the official plans and zoning bylaws established by municipalities so long as the municipalities are in compliance with all of the provincial intensification policies. That basically—I hope I've summarized it well—is what my friend wants to do with his bill, and that's why I'm happy to support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: And the way we pay for infrastructure and transportation is with development.

I want to make a few comments. I don't have very much time. We're looking at a major review right now of the Places to Grow Act, which is well under way, and we've set this up as if the interests of people who build things and the people who live in those neighbourhoods are inherently at conflict. I was supportive of the member for Trinity–Spadina's bill and continue to work with him and others.

When I meet with residents' groups and when I meet with the home builders, we have conversations, and I

keep on saying to them that I actually was the mayor of a city in a different jurisdiction that had no OMB. It's easy to be opposed to the OMB. What are you going to do if there isn't an OMB? What does that look like? I say, "Go look at Alberta's system, look at Manitoba's system, look at BC's system," and I say to the development community, "Have you had a look at that? Does it make sense to you?"

There are all kinds of better ways to do this, because my residents don't like giving up their Sundays from their gardening and their families to plan strategies to protect their neighbourhoods; and most of the developers and business investors I know really don't like to spend all the money they have to on lawyers and panelists.

I remember when I left my career in civic politics. The headlines in the paper about the day before I left was, "The Cranes are Back," because I was a mayor of a city that hadn't seen any development. It has been freeloading a tax on the development community here that you probably wouldn't do if you didn't have them, because right now, outside the doors of this building and across this region, and unfortunately not yet across enough of Ontario, some of the safest houses, beautiful neighbourhoods and most spectacular architecture is being built by an industry that is one of the most remarkable. We have the most competent construction trades and trade unions.

If you look at the inquiries in Quebec, we have one of the most honest and professional development industries, quite frankly, right now in the world. I have 47 condo towers going up in my constituency, and the quality and beauty of them is really quite extraordinary. If you look at the preservation of the Distillery District, which is being led by the private sector, it is truly remarkable. You see a commitment from developers. Plus they pay section 37 money. Plus they pay park development fees.

Do you know the city of Toronto hasn't finished its official plan? Do you know how much park they've set aside for the city for all of this new tax revenue they're getting? Zero. Do you know how many hundreds of millions of dollars developers have paid in section 37 and park money for a park out there? Kristyn Wong-Tam, my city councillor, and I have had a campaign for three years to get the city to buy a piece of land, set a piece of land aside. God bless, as my friend from Trinity-Spadina says; please, just zone a piece of land for park space. We can't get it.

So what is the problem there? I go out to some of the 905 communities and, quite frankly, we have some challenges with municipalities that aren't doing intensification. There's a little irony here that we have a developer who's actually trying to do intensification and we have politicians on the supposed right who are blocking that. No one likes intensification until they get it.

I remember my friend Anne Johnston running in support of the development of high-rise buildings at Eglinton and Yonge.

Mr. Mike Colle: The towers.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: That's right. She ran in support of them and said, "If you're not going to put big

towers here, where are you going to put them?" And she lost. There's a lesson there. Maybe we need to deal with the political problems here.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you for recognizing me this afternoon, Speaker. I look forward to the opportunity to speak in favour of the member from Newmarket-Aurora's bill.

We've heard a few words here today: "intensification," "density." We've heard a little bit of talk about the growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe. What we understand in southern Ontario, Speaker, is that your job here with this greater Golden Horseshoe plan is to restrain growth.

I'm going to take a few minutes to talk about this bill and what it means in northern Ontario, because we have a northern growth plan which is an absolute disaster, I may say, one that doesn't even mention our Ontario Northland. But the whole purpose of a growth plan in the north is to ignite growth. So, while we have a plan in the south that's restraining, we have a plan in the north that we want to see that ignites growth.

I want to read something that the member from Newmarket-Aurora said in the press conference. He asked, "Why is this legislation necessary?" My favourite line was his next one, when he said, "Well, from time to time, we don't quite get it right here." And by "here," of course, he's talking about Queen's Park.

Then he added: "Legislation can have unintended consequences, and when those unintended consequences become evident, we have a responsibility to amend that legislation to ensure the public interest is protected."

Speaker, I wanted to talk to you about this bill, and a similar bill, or a related bill, that was passed, and exactly what the member from Newmarket-Aurora is referring to about not quite getting it right at Queen's Park and unintended consequences when it comes to planning and development in my area, northern Ontario.

I can tell you, as a sitting mayor of the city of North Bay for two terms, about the surprise—the shock—when a planning bill that had passed crossed my desk. At the time, it was called Bill 26.

Ironically, it was named the Strong Communities Act. This bill, designed by men and women in southern Ontario, spilled over into northern Ontario and was anything but a strong communities act. That's why I support what the member from Newmarket-Aurora is saying. We need to have the local municipality be the body that speaks for the north.

Let me tell you what that Strong Communities Act referred to. In southern Ontario, you cannot build on any provincially significant wetland, and I concur with that. I think that's an important environmental and ecological advance.

Now, in northern Ontario, we only have wetland and rock outcroppings. Really, that is what we build on, so our industrial parks are very expensive. They're either built on rock, which means we have a lot of blasting, or

they're built on wetlands, which means we have a lot of filling-in to do, and that's what we do.

In the north, you are allowed to fill in a wetland if you create a new wetland of equal size. That's a rule that we've had in northern Ontario for decades. I can tell you that, as mayor of North Bay, when I sold a piece of property to Home Depot in a wetland area, they filled it in. We built the most spectacular five-acre wetland adjacent to a 100-acre wetland, and we built boardwalks and signage. It's a gorgeous place for families to go. We wouldn't have had the money to do that.

This new Bill 26 came in and said you can no longer fill in a wetland in northern Ontario and build a new park. You must conform to the rules of southern Ontario.

So here we are. We had just finished an industrial park: tens upon tens of millions of dollars, streets paved, hydro lines put in, utility poles put in, telephone put in, high-speed Internet put in, fire hydrants—a beautiful plan that was designed locally, approved locally, met our official plan locally; all of that is zoned locally and ready to go. And this rule that somebody down here in Queen's Park made up—on the Liberal government, I might add—imposed this thinking, this southern Ontario thinking, up at home.

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We had to shut down the industrial park. You can drive through it today; you can just drive through it. It is the most expensive wetland you could possibly have—with high-speed Internet—and now they're building a brand new industrial park up on the airport escarpment in North Bay, on another several hundred acres of land that need to be—tens upon tens of millions of dollars.

So I fully support this local approval, this local respect. I believe our party has respect for local government. We know that who knows best about what to do in your own municipality is the local government that we duly elect there. I thank the member for bringing this important bill forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Newmarket–Aurora, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues for their contribution to this debate. I am somewhat perplexed, I must admit, by some of the things that I've heard. I find it difficult to comprehend the comments that my friend Mr. Marchese made today, because I heard him stand very passionately to speak about how he believes the OMB should be absolutely eliminated in favour of giving authority to the city of Toronto. And yet, he equivocates his ability to support what I'm saying, which is precisely what the honourable member has said, albeit narrow in scope, yes. The bill was intentionally designed to be narrow in scope.

I believe in this place—and we've been talking for years about the need to comprehensively reform the OMB. What I've learned about this place is that's it's better to make incremental changes sometimes, but at least to achieve that incremental change rather than wait

another decade or two decades before anything happens. And so, I find it difficult.

I hear the members opposite talk about their dissatisfaction with the OMB. On Mr. Sousa's website, if anyone cares to go and look there, it talks about the Minister of Finance as a member from Mississauga—great dissatisfaction with the OMB.

Speaker, I'll be very interested to see how the vote goes, and I'm going to make one last appeal to every member here. Take the opportunity. Let's make this incremental step. Let's give local authority where it is needed and deserved.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We'll take the vote at the end of regular business.

CHILDREN'S LAW REFORM
AMENDMENT ACT (RELATIONSHIP
WITH GRANDPARENTS), 2013
LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT
LA LOI PORTANT RÉFORME
DU DROIT DE L'ENFANCE (RELATION
AVEC LES GRANDS-PARENTS)

Mr. Craitor moved second reading of the following bill:

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

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

Mr. Kim Craitor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When you say the word "grandparents," the natural reaction is, it's a beautiful word. There's nothing more special than having grandparents. Grandparents are the lifeblood of grandchildren, so this is what this bill is all about. I'm saying that particularly for the people who are watching it on television, and I know there's a large number of people who are watching it. I know that if I had asked, I could have filled this room with many, many grandparents, but I asked them not to come all the way down here, not to take their time. It's a difficult thing to come all the way into Toronto with the traffic and so on, but I know they're watching. So I want to say to all of them who are watching, thank you.

I do want to recognize two people who are here. I know they're going to be recognized more properly a little later on, but I want to recognize the Alexanders, who are grandparents, who took the time to come up here, so thank you so much.

I need to first, as well, thank my two co-sponsors. It's a unique bill, where we have three members of Parliament who have sponsored this bill. I want to recognize the member from Whitby–Oshawa and the member from Parkdale–High Park. You're not supposed to say their names, so I will not say Christine Elliott or Cheri DiNovo.

Again, I have to recognize the grandparents who have been with me on this journey to get this bill passed to give grandparents rights.

I'm going to talk about the bill. In its simplest form, what it does is it amends the Children's Law Reform Act to allow the formation or the continuation of a personal relationship between a grandparent and their grandchild or grandchildren. I think it's something we just take for granted, that grandparents will always be able to see their grandchildren, like it's a normal thing. Nobody expects that something like that would never happen, but it does.

The bill also sets out to the courts the circumstances that the court should look at when they're looking at maintaining that relationship. Is it in the best interests of the child? And it gives a list of things that they ask the court to look at when they're trying to make a determination that a grandparent has made an application to be allowed to continue with the relationship with their grandchild.

I've been working on this bill for eight years as an MPP, and far too often what I have seen is that when a couple separates or gets a divorce—and that's the real world; it does happen out there. Subsequently, sadly what happens is, the relationship between the grandparent and the grandchild diminishes. Sadly, sometimes it's just because the grandchild or grandchildren are used as a pawn. It's sad to say. As a result of that, there's a discontinuation—if you can imagine that a grandparent is no longer allowed to see their grandchild. It's just a horrible thing.

In my eight years here dealing with this bill, I'm going to tell you that between phone calls, people coming up to my office and emails, I've probably talked to over 5,000 people. It's hard to believe that that's the number, but it is. In fact, I was telling my friends that I've been working on this bill before there was Facebook and Twitter. That's how far back it goes.

It is important that we understand—I don't think I need to say this—what grandparents are. They're more than just relatives; they're the mainstay. They can provide guidance. They can provide the security that children lack sometimes at home, with or without parents. They provide support. Grandparents provide stability. They provide a sense of self to the children, seeking love and understanding. Grandparents are, in fact, the heart and soul of grandchildren.

It's sad to say that more than 75,000 Ontario grandparents are denied access to visiting or seeing their grandchildren. Probably, over 112,000 grandchildren in Ontario suffer from the effects of not being able to have a relationship with their grandparents. This can only damage future generations of our children.

I just want to quickly share with you why and how this bill came about. I can still remember in 2003, shortly after I was elected as an MPP, I had these 12 people—maybe it was 14—show up at my office. They were all grandparents, and they were sitting there talking to me, and they were telling me all their individual stories, like Herb and Marie from Niagara-on-the-Lake. They were telling me that their daughter, unfortunately, had died

from cancer. They had always spent time with their grandchildren. It was just a normal thing to do. The husband was remarried, and there's nothing wrong with that, but the new wife decided that it wasn't appropriate for them to see their grandchildren anymore. They hadn't seen them in five years.

I had another individual whose daughter was murdered, unfortunately, in Niagara Falls. The father decided that he didn't want the children, so they decided, as grandparents, that they wanted to raise the children. When they went into the courts to try to get that process through, it took about two to three years, I think they told me, and spent about \$50,000 to \$60,000. You would think it would be that simple for them to show that they had the wherewithal and the love and the caring to be the ones who wanted to raise the three grandchildren.

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Those are the kinds of stories—I mean, I could probably spend 30 hours telling you all of the stories that I've heard. I would tell you, you'd probably shed a lot of tears when you hear from grandparents who've been denied access to their grandchildren.

The bill exists elsewhere. It exists in the Yukon. It exists in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec and Nova Scotia, so it's long overdue here in Ontario, and it really is such a simple bill to put through.

The other thing I'm going to mention are a few personal stories, because I think those really touch with you what happens when grandparents can't be a part of a child's life. Some of them are very close; in fact one that I'm going to share with you is from my executive assistant here at Queen's Park. Her name is Michelle, and she gladly gave me permission to share this story, because she's very passionate about this bill.

Michelle was explaining that her sisters grew up in a home where they witnessed and experienced family violence, drug and alcohol addiction, poverty and dysfunction. Their only saving grace was the loving relationship and the influence from their maternal grandmother, whom they called Nanny, a woman of great faith and strength. She was the stronghold, the positive role, that helped them through their rough times. Her Nanny was her shield, her pillar.

Because of the family breakdown, her stepfather would not always allow the children to see their loving grandparents. They were abruptly and randomly denied visitation throughout their childhood. They would write letters, do their best to visit and to keep in touch, and plead with their daughter and her husband to see all the children, only to be promised visits, then denied at the last minute. These days were gruelling. They were all involved, it took years, but finally the pair separated and the maternal grandparents moved in with their daughter and all the children, helping to raise the children and the grandchildren. They contributed by providing support, love and a loving environment. Their grandmother, Nanny, was their role model. She was instrumental in promoting her and her sisters becoming happy and successful women.

Jackie from Trenton—I've talked to her many times—said that the last time she saw her great-grandson was in 2010. This is 2013. Imagine, we're entering 2013 and she's not been able to see her great-grandson since 2010.

Teri-Lynn is a grandparent who took her granddaughter's mother to court just to continue to have access to her grandchildren. That took a year in the courts, and she was granted two hours of access every other week. That seems like it's a bit of a success story; however, her granddaughter's mother packed up and went to Whitehorse and took her granddaughter. She's never seen her since. I could certainly go on and on and give you many other situations.

The bill is just so simple. What it says is that when a grandparent makes an application to the court to have the right for access, to have the right for custody or even, in some cases, for unforeseen reasons, to actually take custody of a child, the bill would give direction to the courts—just direction—because it would have the word “grandparent” in the Children's Law Reform Act, where it doesn't exist right now. There is still a responsibility when a grandparent makes the application to prove that it is always in the best interests of the child. The child will always come first.

The reason I tell you this is because I've actually seen cases where people have used the existing legislation and they've gone to the courts, and the judge has said, “You know, you've presented a good case and you've established that you have a great relationship with your grandchildren, but you're only a grandparent, so in my opinion, I'm not going to grant you access or visitation rights.” It is extremely important that we include that word in there so that the courts have some direction on how important grandparents are to a grandchild's life.

I do want to say to everyone that has supported this bill—and I could give you all the municipalities who have sent in resolutions—the Steelworkers, the CAW workers, Cangrands with Betty Cornelius—the list is endless of all the organizations that have supported this bill since we've tried to have it passed in the last eight years. I want to say thank you to all of them as well.

This is really a great opportunity to move the bill through to second reading. I've had it there before, so I'm excited that it's being heard again for second reading, but I think I'll be more excited when it goes to committee, the committee takes it out for public hearings, and it shows up back here for third reading.

I think for all of us as MPPs—and I know we all care. I know that probably many of us have grandchildren. Can you imagine, as a grandparent, that suddenly you're not going to see your grandchildren again, and you haven't done anything wrong? This bill is pretty special in that it will give you that positive feeling as members of provincial Parliament that it will help the grandparents out there in Ontario who are going through those difficult challenges of having grandchildren ripped away from their lives for no really good reason.

I'm pleased to make those comments and I'm looking forward to hearing from all my colleagues who will be speaking about the bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak for a few moments about Bill 48, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act with respect to the relationship between a child and the child's grandparents. I really am honoured to co-sponsor this bill once again with the member from Niagara Falls and the member from Parkdale–High Park to address the very important relationship between a child and his or her grandparents.

The member from Niagara Falls indicated that he has been working on this for eight years. This is the fourth or fifth time this has been brought forward. I really do hope that at the end of our debate today we can get a positive response on it, move it into committee and then be able to bring it back for third and final reading. It is very, very important.

Before I start, I would also like to thank the grandparents who are here today and all of the people who are watching this debate. I would especially like to mention Ms. Lynn Porteous from my riding of Whitby–Oshawa, who is here, and of course Mr. and Mrs. Alex and Olga Alexander, who have been here for, I think, all of the debates. I know that we're not supposed to show props here, Mr. Speaker, but I would just like to show the packages that Mr. and Mrs. Alexander have sent to all of the members in this House to express their wish that we support this bill. They have taken a lot of time and effort to make these packages up. They have put their heart and soul into this, so I thank them very much for their advocacy. It means a great deal to all of us. Thank you.

Mr. and Mrs. Alexander already know what members from all three parties know: that the relationship between a child and his or her grandparents is very special, and it's really important in establishing a child's place within a family. It makes them feel supported and secure in a very loving relationship. It has been a special one for thousands of people, but sadly, as the member from Niagara Falls indicated, today in Ontario, nearly 75,000 grandparents have been denied access to their grandchildren.

This, of course, is through no fault of their own. It's in a situation where their children and their partners split up. There are custody and access issues, and the grandparents' rights aren't always considered in the great scheme of things, or don't need to be formally considered. I can say that when I was a practising lawyer before I came to this place, I did a little bit of family law, and I saw all too often that the rights of the grandparents sort of got lost in the shuffle when considering what the best interests of the child were. Really, they're not recognized in any kind of a significant way.

Of course, it's always preferable if people can work out these relationships in an amicable way, but that doesn't always happen. We know that very often these custody and access matters become very acrimonious and end up in court.

What Bill 48 would do is bolster the need for the courts to consider the relationship of the child with his or

her grandparents in determining what are the best interests of the child. That is always going to be the paramount consideration: What is most important for the child, and is that relationship with the grandparents something that needs to be considered and to be ongoing on a regular basis?

It's important to note that the bill does not guarantee that the grandparents will be allowed an extended relationship with their grandchildren, but certainly it is something that needs to be considered as being what is in their best interests. If passed, Bill 48 would maintain the onus on the courts to determine the best interests of the child, taking into consideration all of the other factors that are based on the child's needs.

Members from all three parties have acknowledged that this is the right thing to do, and I would ask for all-party support here, because we don't want to keep passing this on second reading and have it go nowhere. It's really important for so many people across the province of Ontario, for grandparents and for grandchildren, that we actually get this into committee and we hear from all of the people who want to speak to this issue, and that we bring it back here and actually vote on it and put it into action. So, I would ask for all-member support on this very important issue. It means a lot to 75,000-plus people in the province, grandparents and who knows how many children. Thank you.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an absolute pleasure and an honour to be a co-sponsor. Yet again, you heard from the member from Whitby-Oshawa about the number of times we've co-sponsored this bill, the number of times it has come before us and the number of times it has passed second reading only to kind of die on the order paper.

That can't happen because the point—there's one I want to make—is this: This is a grandparents' rights bill, but it's really a children's rights bill as well. It's about the rights of children to have access to their grandparents and to the entire family history, to their culture and sometimes to their language. So it truly is a children's rights bill.

I speak very personally about this because I want to share my story. Were it not for my grandmother I probably wouldn't be standing here today. I want you to picture my grandmother, long since now deceased. She was a very Victorian lady. Her hair actually came right down to the middle of her backside. She braided it and wrapped it around her head—very Victorian. At night, she would brush it out—100 brush strokes. I still remember my grandmother, who was in her 80s at the time. You normally don't think of women in their 80s as beautiful, but as a little girl watching her brush her hair with one blond streak in it, I remember thinking, "What a beautiful woman."

She also was a very strong woman. She was an artist and a painter. Her maiden name was Patrick. Her married name was Wilson. She always signed her paintings "Wilson-Patrick," because in those days she thought—

and she was probably right—you couldn't sell a painting if it had a woman's name on it. She was an artist. We grew up on Bedford, which sounds chichi, but it wasn't back then. We ran a rooming house on Bedford; she ran it. My grandfather died before I was born. She ran the rooming house. She housed my parents—originally moved back there during the Depression. She looked after her children, all four of them—far-flung, some of them were—and she looked after her grandchildren too. She also looked after half the cultural heart of the city of Toronto.

Rita MacNeil, who recently passed—shout-out to Rita—sang in our house. Glenn Gould played the piano in our house because the Royal Conservatory was just down the street—two blocks—and my brother was a musician. He used to play in a band some of us old people remember called Lighthouse, so he knew many of these cultural icons. They used to come and perform, and my grandmother would hold dinners for them. So there was always an artist or two around our table. We never had less than 10 people at our dinner table, with my grandmother sitting at the head of it carving in the British tradition. That was my grandmother. She would invite them to paint with her if they were artists, to sing for us if they were singers and to play for us if they were musicians.

Also, to complete the picture of my grandmother, who loved to play chess: She always had a little glass of sherry in one hand and a cigarette in the other. There you go. She called them her coffin nails. She was quite the gal.

Here's where her life and this bill intersect, because my parents did not have a happy marriage. My parents had a terrible marriage. When they were together in the house they were always fighting. Sometimes the fights were pretty violent. Now, had I been left alone only with them, I can't imagine what that life would have looked like. But my grandmother was the mitigating force. She was the one that basically sent my parents to their corners. She was the one that looked after me in the midst of it, and when she died I left home—I was 15 at the time—because I couldn't abide living there.

I think of the street children—of which I was one—now. Many of them have left homes because of the dysfunctionality of their mothers and fathers, or a combination thereof, and the lack of any alternative within their families who will look after them, who will give them a safe place to be and to sleep.

I often tell the story—it's a story of hope, I think—that when I first was elected and came here, my office overlooked Queen's Park, where sometimes I would sleep as a 16-year-old, because normally I couch-surfed but sometimes I wasn't lucky, and that's where I would sleep. I could look out that window at where I slept. Had my grandmother lived, that wouldn't have been the case.

Because my grandmother lived, I stand here. Because of her influence, I believe, I'm the person I am—not because of my parents; because of her influence.

I can tell you that that tradition of grandparents does not change. I have many grandparents in my riding who

look after their grandchildren, who have full custody of their grandchildren. If it were not for them, their grandchildren will not be the people that they will one day be. Their grandparents look after them, for a myriad of reasons: sometimes divorce; sometimes mental health and addiction issues, actually. Thank God for the grandparents who are there and who can step in.

As the member said, and I think it's an important caveat in this bill, this is not automatic. I know all grandparents aren't like my grandma. I know there are some bad apples. You have to still make application.

I know one of the concerns about this bill was that this might be a kind of backdoor way, you know, in a divorce, of having the other spouse get—no. You have to make application. As the member from Whitby–Oshawa said so clearly, it's what's in the best interests of the child that the court takes into account, and the court is the mitigating factor here—Family Court. There is an application to be made; it's not automatic. But it's certainly necessary.

Again, the member from Niagara Falls said it clearly: There are many grandparents who have been caught by the lack of this law change—really caught. They don't have access to their grandchildren; they never see their grandchildren. More to the point, again to my initial point, this is a children's rights bill. Their children do not have the right to be with them. That's sad; that's absolutely sad, because they represent our history and our culture, and our history and our culture defines us. Without our history, without that background, who are we, truly? They are part of us.

Certainly, in this era of increasingly small and nuclear families, we have lost, in many ways, the joy of extended families, of many relatives under the same roof and what all of that means. Particularly for women, it means help. It means assistance in raising your children, in helping with them. To have that cut off, that's sad.

I know my own children—my parents had died by the time my children came along, and my in-laws live in Chicago, a very long distance—had not the wonderful experience I had growing up with a grandmother present and there: again, a mitigating factor in my case, an essential, crucial factor. My house became unlivable when she died. It became unlivable. I knew that when I was young—that much, I knew—but I didn't really realize until I'm standing here today, and years before this, of course, that it truly was her that made the difference. It was her that made the difference. How many of us can say that?

Well, the member from Whitby–Oshawa says that 75,000 grandparents have been caught in this: have wanted access and have been caught in trying to get access. That's a lot of families. That's a lot of people. Importantly, most sorely importantly, that's a lot of children. We need this law.

I've heard some encouraging words. I know that every decision in this place is made out of corner offices, that one in particular, and around that cabinet table in particular. So, please, hopefully—we have two cabinet members

in the room right now. I'm hoping that others are listening. I'm hoping that this will get through the cabinet, get through the corner office, and come back as law, because then, finally, families across Ontario can begin to celebrate what is so essential and what should be so obvious.

I started with a picture of my grandmother. I want to end with a picture of my grandmother and dedicate this to her and to you—thank you for coming—and to all the grandparents out there who are watching, listening and I know were participants in writing this bill. I want to say thank you, first of all, and I want to leave you with that image of my grandmother with the hair wrapped around her head, with a little glass of sherry—it was always one, always little—

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Interjection: Every night.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo:—every night, her medicinal sherry—with her coffin nail in her hand. Sometimes she'd put the sherry glass down and pick up the paint brush and paint marvellous portraits, by the way, of which all of our family members now have one at least, and she would hold court. Really, it was like a salon with some of the best and the brightest of Toronto. But truly, the only person she cared most about in that salon and who cared most about her was a little girl named Cheri DiNovo, who sat there and absolutely benefited from her presence and her life.

I thank the member, Kim Craitor, for coming up with the bill. I know he didn't do it alone. I know grandparents were part of this. I thank the member from Whitby–Oshawa for cosponsoring it and, most of all, I thank all the grandparents for all the incredible love they do and I hope, I really do hope, that one day I get to be one too.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: Well, I'll just say that I am a grandparent of six beautiful grandchildren. They are very entertaining and very much a value added to our lives, to say the least, every minute.

The member from Parkdale–High Park was talking about grandparents, and I'm just trying to think of my grandparents. The sad thing is that my grandparents—we were separated. We were forced, after the war, to leave Italy and came across to Canada for a better life, and we were separated. Half of their children were in Italy and half here. My grandfather was a fisherman. That's what he did. He'd go out and fish every day in his rowboat. Then my grandmother—the only thing I remember about her, she was always worrying. She was a professional worrier. I'd say, "Who are you going to worry about today?" She was worried about her kids. That's all she did, worry about her kids.

The member from Niagara Falls, I think, has really brought forward a bill that is more than another piece of legislation. It really deals with the quality of life in this province and in many families. We're talking about children, and we're talking about grandparents and parents. I think this bill has been here—I go back to

when the Tories were in power. It's since 1995. They tried it; it got blocked then. I don't know where it gets blocked, but it seems to get blocked all the time.

I think that maybe on this bill we, as MPPs, could rise up, be heard and speak to the House bosses who run this place now. Go to your House boss and say, "Listen, we want to help kids and parents and grandparents take care of this problem." It makes eminent sense. Other provinces do it. Other provinces have put this in place. It connects children who are, in many cases, in a very vulnerable state because of some marriage breakup. It's when they need the grandparents most that they can't be there for the kids because of lawyers, courts—I've been in Family Court and seen some very excruciating things in Family Court, I'll tell you. The ones who suffer the most in Family Court—it's seeing what the grandparents go through, when they see families torn apart and they're ripped apart from their grandkids. So we've got to say no to the lawyers and to the know-it-all judges and to the know-it-all House bosses, and say, "Let's support this bill that most of us in here, all of us MPPs, think is a good idea." I can't remember anybody speaking against it in all the years I've been here. Somehow, it gets blocked. Somebody's blocking it, whether it's a Conservative block, a Liberal block, an NDP block, so it really needs us to speak out.

The member from Niagara Falls has been trying his darnedest, hitting his head—I don't know how many times he's done this bill and it just can't go through the perfunctory process of going to committee. We've got to say, "Listen, we want public hearings on this. We want to hear from the parents and grandparents, we want to hear from kids, we want to hear from the experts," and even bring in a few lawyers—not too many lawyers; just one or two lawyers.

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Colle: We'll put a limit on the lawyers that come in; we'll put a cap on the lawyers that come in. And we'll ask the experts, "Why can't we do this as they do in other provinces, especially today when you know the stress that families are under?" Husband and wife—both partners—are working, trying to make ends meet, rushing around, child care. Kids need grandparents more than ever now, and if you've got grandparents who are willing to give support—I've seen so many grandparents give financial support, moral support. They cook, they clean, they even house families in times of trouble; the grandparents are stepping forward.

Right now, there is this bureaucratic block that exists in Ontario, for no good reason, that doesn't allow grandparents to basically help children get through these troubled times. They're doing government a favour. You know, they're the ones, out of their own pockets—some of them would rather help their grandkids than buy food for themselves. They'll buy food for the grandkids and clothe the grandkids.

So here we are. We'll find some way. The lawyers will come and make briefs and so forth, and tell the decision-makers around here, whoever they may be, "Oh, you can't do this bill because we've never done it before;

it's not the thing we do in Ontario." Well, I think it's about time we stood up to the House leaders, stood up for children, grandchildren and grandparents and supported my colleague from Niagara Falls, because we want this done. It's as simple as that.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak today on Bill 48, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act with respect to the relationship between a child and the child's grandparents. As has been said throughout the Legislature in the fourth or fifth time we've debated this, that relationship is fundamental to our society, and we have a willing group of wonderful grandparents, many of whom are here today, who want to participate, and we need them to participate in their grandchildren's lives. They provide everything: guidance, emotional support, financial support, as the member has just said, and above all, they are the ones who love them and really care about them and want to see them grow up.

The member from Parkdale–High Park told a wonderful story of how important her grandmother was to who she is today. I think we can all relate to that. The member from Niagara Falls has brought this bill forward many times, and the member from Whitby–Oshawa. So you have a trifecta here of all the parties together.

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I know. It should go through; we hope it does.

You know, we have grandparents who live healthier and longer lives than they did before, so they are around and want to be involved, and they are in a better position now than at any other time to raise the newest generation.

In the stories that are sad, they sometimes have to be more involved than maybe the parents want them to be involved, but we don't want them frozen out of their grandchild's life for legal reasons. When you hear the statistic of 75,000 grandparents in Ontario who have been denied access to their grandchild, it is almost unbearable to comprehend. You know the tragic stories certainly exist out there, but the grandparents being the key stability during that horrible period when the grandchildren need them most, and the grandparents have a void in their lives also when those grandchildren are taken out of their lives in tragic and heart-wrenching stories. So the bill is worthy of support, because it amends the Children's Law Reform Act to give some consideration to this crucial relationship between children and their grandparents.

Now, when the courts consider the best interests of a child—and I think lawyers have to be part of the solution; the member from Eglinton–Lawrence mightn't agree, but they do have to be a part. That's the way our laws do act. But I think there is a willingness, hopefully, to break down these barriers that exist, because the best interests of the child should always be paramount.

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So recognizing the fact that the bill retains the child's interests as the primary test for any action, it will be the grandparents' responsibility to show that having access is

to the child's benefit. I'm sure most of us would agree that having access to grandparents is, by and large, a huge benefit to the children. In giving grandparents some status in court decisions, which this bill does, it recognizes their special place for enhancing that child's welfare.

I applaud this bill, I give it my full support, and maybe this is the magic number that makes it happen.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to commend the member for Niagara Falls for not giving up. He's tried many, many times, in collaboration with other members from the other two parties and on his own.

I think the Minister of the Environment has it right: It's the whiz kids who are in charge of this place. The little kids, the young 25-year-olds—that's who's in charge. I remember the Minister of the Environment now, in opposition, saying, "It's the whiz kids who are in control," and no different, and now, as fast as they get in—you've got different whiz kids running the show.

This is about grandparents. This is about kids. This is about the well-being of children and their connection to grandparents, and as the member for Parkdale–High Park talked about, the strong relationship she had with her grandparents and how she—she didn't save her, but she was the sanity in that relationship that we all desperately need, and God bless. Why wouldn't we want that? It's about time, and I hope for the first time in this minority government that we can make this happen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm pleased to speak in favour again of Bill 48, an act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act, and I'm pleased again to be standing in this House supporting my colleague from Niagara Falls and his co-sponsors from Parkdale–High Park and Whitby–Oshawa.

On December 5, 2012, at 3:54 a.m., Rhea Aurora Jeffrey was born—my granddaughter—all nine pounds, six ounces of her. She was a very big girl, and she was born in Calgary, Alberta, and she's beautiful. She's the most beautiful little girl I think I've ever seen, and I'm pretty sure all grandparents feel that way. Unfortunately, she's in Calgary. I'm trying to get her to Ontario, get her closer. That would be my dream, to have her that close.

So I have a different feeling about this grandparents' bill than I did the first time or the second time I spoke about the bill. You feel kind of different when you become a grandparent, and it's a wonderful gift. So I'm glad to be speaking about this bill. I have spoken in the past in favour, and I'm still supportive of it, because I know how important that stability is for all children. We know that children need strong feelings of self-worth, and we know that those long-term relationships with grandparents are often the reason that a child thrives.

We know that family law issues, particularly as they relate to custody—and certainly the member from Whitby–Oshawa spoke about this. The custody issues of access to children can be particularly difficult. It's no less

so when dealing with the issue of access by grandparents to grandchildren.

It's fortunate that in most cases arrangements related to the custody of and access to children, including access by grandparents, are settled without recourse to litigation in the courts. The cases that do come before the courts, therefore, represent a very small percentage of the overall number of potential family law cases.

Historically, as we've heard, grandparents have no legal rights or access to their grandchildren simply by virtue of their biological relationship. The legislation in all Canadian jurisdictions now makes it possible for grandparents to apply for custody of and access to their grandchildren. There is no jurisdiction in Canada, however, which provides grandparents access as a right, which is usually referred to as a presumptive right of access.

My parents emigrated to Canada when I was three years old, and we left all of our extended family in Ireland and England. I think I've spoken about this before in the House. We didn't have any money, so we really didn't travel back and forth. It certainly wasn't as affordable as it is now, and I didn't have the luxury of a weekly or a monthly Sunday night dinner to talk with my grandparents. Really, even phone calls were pretty expensive at the time. We used to write those little airmail letters back and forth, and something else we did is we sent audiotapes back and forth. We actually still have those audiotapes in our possession where they were telling me stories and I was telling them stories. I feel sad that I missed that opportunity and I wish that all grandchildren had that opportunity to get to know their grandparents and to have that time.

Certainly I didn't get the chance to get to know my grandparents until I was significantly older; I think I was a teenager by then. Of course by then, I received all that love and attention that grandparents tend to shower on their grandchild and, of course, I was worth it. I was the only grandchild in the family, so I was definitely spoiled in that respect—deservedly so, I might add.

My grandparents were Frank and Rose Gray. They made a big difference in my life. They were very simple individuals. My grandfather was a plumber and my grandmother worked in a children's home. They made my life meaningful and they made me feel like I was important and special, and they were very supportive of my children. They're no longer around, but obviously I now realize how important and how special that role is as a grandparent now that I have a granddaughter, Rhea. She's special, and I think that certainly it's one of the nicest gifts I think one of my children has ever given me. It's a great gift to know that you're a grandparent. I know how valuable that resource is, and I'm certainly feeling some pressure to do a good job as a grandparent. It's important to maintain those ties.

I want to be here to support my colleague from Niagara Falls and my colleagues from Parkdale–High Park and Whitby–Oshawa in their attempts to bring this legislation to a successful conclusion. It's a good piece of legislation. I'm happy to support it.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a pleasure to stand and speak in favour of Bill 48, an act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act. I think we all have some great stories about our grandparents and certainly we learn something new every day. I had no idea the member from Parkdale-High Park's brother was a member of Lighthouse. That's an amazing fact that I think is quite interesting. We could certainly use some sunny days this spring. Hopefully that brings good things.

We all think about our own stories and I'm lucky to still have a grandmother, Rose Moore—she watches; hi, Nana. She's amazing. She's been an amazing influence in my life and certainly on all of my cousins as well. My own grandmother—Grandma Jackson, who's no longer with us—had 30 grandchildren, including myself, and she made each one of us feel like we were her favourite. I had a really enriched experience by having access to my grandparents, by being able to have them as a part of my life. Still having my grandmother as a part of my life today makes it that much more rich, not just for me, but for my kids too. I can't imagine having gotten this far without their influence; they've made me part of what I am today.

To rob any child—and I think the member from Parkdale-High Park had it right. This isn't about the grandparents as much as it is about the grandchildren, about the kids, and making sure that they have every opportunity to have success in their lives. If that means, in these cases, making sure that their grandparents have an opportunity to have the same sort of influence I had from my grandparents why should we not give them every opportunity, through this legislation, to succeed that way? There are so many ways children can fall through the cracks in this world. Why wouldn't we give them every opportunity, like this bill suggests, for their families to help them out? I have several friends, some of them are very close to me, who have had their lives affected very much by the actions of their grandparents. In some cases, their lives have been saved by their grandparents.

Before this bill came up—and I'm fairly new to this place, so this is the first time I've seen it—I had no idea that this wasn't the case, that there could be the opportunity taken away from some really good grandparents—75,000 of them, potentially, who don't have access to their grandchildren, therefore, by virtue of that, grandchildren not having access to their grandparents and all the advantages that may bring to them.

I want to thank the member for bringing the bill forward. I certainly will be supporting it, and I think that hopefully the leaders of your party will see fit to see it all the way through. It's very rare in this place where we get an opportunity to all agree on something. It looks like this is something that we all agree on. Why don't we just put any partisanship aside for this one, and for many of these private members' bills, in fact, that we can all agree on? Let's get it through. Let's do the right thing by the children of Ontario and just get it through.

1530

Interjection.

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's good for the kids, it's good for our province, it's good for our country. Let's just do it.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's a pleasure to—you have an excuse to talk about your grandparents, and my memories of my grandparents are absolutely wonderful.

The only thing about this bill is, it's too bad this bill is even needed in Ontario or, indeed, anywhere. To come between children and their memories of their grandparents is indeed a shame.

I can remember my grandparents—I think the year was about 1948. On Easter Sunday, after church, we'd go back to my grandparents' house for lunch. It was a big lunch; it was a dinner. My grandfather loved the magic of holidays. He loved Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, those kinds of things. As we came into his house on that Easter afternoon, he told us that the Easter Bunny had probably been around the house somewhere. In one corner of the house, there was a barberry plant, about 18 inches high, with little thorns all over it, and every one of those thorns was covered with a gumdrop. So it was a gumdrop tree that the Easter Bunny had left—a vivid memory, and only one of many, many memories, of your grandparents.

I'll look forward to supporting this bill. Hopefully, it will go through unanimously.

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

The member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Kim Craiton: I have two minutes, right?

Interjection: Yes.

Mr. Kim Craiton: Then I'm going to use it. Thank you.

I have to say this in all sincerity: I've introduced the bill about five times, and I think the saddest part is that it hasn't gone through, but the best part is listening to the members talk about themselves as people, talk about their personal lives. Sometimes you don't realize—particularly on this bill, when they talk about their grandparents and the challenges that they faced in their lives as they were growing up. In this House it's always controversial, and sometimes we forget that we're just all people who have led very different lives, and how important grandparents are in our lives, but also the challenges that many of us—I listened to some of my colleagues speak about their lives growing up, and it's kind of a warm and fuzzy feeling, because this House is so contentious all the time. I just wanted to put that on the record. That's probably the biggest benefit for all the years I've introduced it: I really got to learn a lot about some of my colleagues because of them speaking on this bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): You still have two minutes. I don't know why you're sitting down.

Mr. Kim Craiton: I was showing respect for the Speaker. This Speaker, I respect. Wait till David hears this.

Some people wonder why I feel passionate about introducing a bill for grandparents. I've told this story, but it's a great opportunity to say it again to two wonderful people. I was raised through family and children services, so I never knew my parents. Two wonderful people, who were not young people—they were elderly people—took me into their house as foster parents. Their names were Nick and Mary Craiton. I'm not sure what happened, but I never left that home; for whatever reason, I stayed there. So to me, they're my parents. In fact, I legally changed my name to carry their name on, because they had no children. I tell you this because they were not young. When I think of them, they were more like grandparents, although they're my parents. I can't imagine where I would have been in my life if those two very special elderly people—by the time I was 16, they had both passed away—I wouldn't be standing here in this House today; I probably wouldn't have been a provincial member of Parliament. I just can't imagine.

That's why I've been so passionate about the bill: Because, in my own way, I have felt what effect a grandparent can have on a child and how much they can direct them to go in the right direction.

This bill—you're right: I'm frustrated. I'm frustrated it hasn't gone through. It sure seems simple to me. I don't want to be critical of my own government, but come on, guys, wake up. Come on. This bill has got to go through.

Before I close, I do want to thank Minister Gerretsen, the Attorney General. He spoke today and said that he wishes the bill has success tonight. He can't be here, and he's wishing that it goes through for committee and for third reading. I want to put that on the record as well.

Thank you to everyone who spoke. I am extremely touched.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote at the end of regular business.

ENSURING AFFORDABLE
ENERGY ACT, 2013
LOI DE 2013 FAVORISANT
L'ÉNERGIE ABORDABLE

Ms. Thompson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 39, An Act to provide for control by local municipalities over renewable and affordable energy undertakings / Projet de loi 39, Loi prévoyant le contrôle des entreprises d'énergie renouvelable et abordable par les municipalités locales.

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to stand and debate my first private member's bill as the proud member for the riding of Huron-Bruce. Bill 39, the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act, is a very, very important piece of legislation that all parties should be embracing, because time and time again, the facts are stacking up. The Auditor Gen-

eral, the Fraser report, Don Drummond, even the medical officer of health from Grey-Bruce—people are stating over and over again in public that this Green Energy Act has failed. I really hope that the government and our third party are listening today, because we have to do better by our people throughout Ontario.

Before I really get started debating this important piece of legislation, I have some thanks that I'd like to share, first of all to my caucus colleagues for their support. Wow. You know what? People across Ontario see what you're doing on their behalf, and let me tell you, it means the world to them, because they frankly have their backs against the wall. They have gotten to the point where they're saying, "Nobody's listening to us anymore," and that is absolutely shameful. But every step of the way, I have been part of a team that gets it, that takes time to listen and understand and consult, and as a result, we're trying to make a difference and ensure that we have affordable energy in Ontario that ultimately will sustain jobs, because at the end of the day, that's what this is really all about: reliable, affordable energy hosted by willing communities.

To that end, in terms of willing communities, or more specifically those communities that are not willing, I was absolutely over the moon today—not like a member across the House, but I was over the moon, thrilled with the fact that we had municipal leaders willing to come forward and drive to Queen's Park today to stand up and have their voices heard.

To Kevin Marriott, mayor of Enniskillen: Thank you so much. Your words were absolutely spot on, and they struck a chord with the media.

To Robert Quaiff, councillor from North Marysburgh: Thank you for coming back for a second day in a row. Your community must be very proud of you. You stand up for what matters. Because of that, you've made a trek to Queen's Park two days in a row, and I really, really thank you for that.

To a local mayor of mine from Huron-Bruce, Larry Kraemer, mayor of Kincardine: Thank you very much. I can't tell you the amount of strife that mayor has had to deal with in his council chamber because of this failed energy scheme called the Green Energy Act.

It's absolutely horrible to listen to people plead to have their voices heard because the placement of turbines is affecting them in a very negative way. And you know what? All the mayors and councillors were very, very eloquent today in stating their cause, and I invite people to take a look at the media tomorrow and take a look at the news conference we had at lunch hour, because their messaging needs to be heard across the board.

To the 91 municipalities that have signed resolutions asking for their municipal planning power to be returned, I say thank you and hang on. Tim Hudak and the PC Party is listening, and change is indeed on the way. It will be our priority.

1540

And to the tens of thousands of people who are calling for an immediate moratorium and changes to the Green

Energy Act, I share a heartfelt appreciation for all you are doing at the local level. Please know that Tim Hudak and our PC caucus stand beside you, because guess what, Speaker? They need support. It has been a long haul. It has been a number of years since this Green Energy Act was introduced, stripping so many things from people, and it has just made them tired.

People are tired of hearing the same message from the government and the third party. People are tired of coming to Queen's Park only to be told their opinion doesn't matter. People are tired of hearing that the government listens to communities, but clearly the proof has been in the proverbial pudding when the government only listens to communities that will make a political difference, and that's shameful. What I'm referring to specifically is the cancellation of the gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville, and interestingly enough, the changes to the approach in Windsor, Kingston and the Scarborough Bluffs with regard to specifically wind energy. It's not right. What's good for one has to be good for another. We don't have a government that's demonstrating that right now, and things have to change.

So to that end, I repeat myself again. To the ladies and gentlemen who are working so hard to try and make a difference and stand up for their communities, for their betterment, I say hang on; Tim Hudak and our PC caucus, we continue to listen, and we're working hard. And if you take a look at our discussion papers, Respect for Rural Ontario, and our energy paper as well, you will see we'll be taking very exact steps to right this wrong that's known as the Green Energy Act.

When I think about the people who are working so hard at the grassroots level to make sure the municipalities and the communities that they know and love stay intact, I don't blame them. I can't help but worry about them because they are tired. These are people who work day and night to stand up for their homes, their health, their friends, their neighbours, their families and their communities. Unfortunately, in return, they are not receiving a government that stands up for them. In fact, this government is doing nothing but stomp them down, and it has got to stop. Quite frankly, it's shameful.

I am proud to be a member of a party that supports the hard-working folks around Ontario who need a break. I say "hard-working" people because some of the most common calls that my constituency offices in Kincardine and Blyth receive are from worried constituents about their energy and utility bills. They're afraid that they can't carry on, especially through the winter months.

We're so fortunate to have agencies that are available to help out these people who find it hard to pay their utility fees, but guess what? Those agencies are running out of money faster and faster every year. That's a worry, and it's a sign. People aren't donating like they once did, and why is that? It's because they're having fewer and fewer dollars left in their pockets, and something has to change. That's why it's important that we tune into the messaging that we're receiving from the Auditor General, from Don Drummond and from the Fraser report.

I'd like to share a couple of quick facts. The realities are, ladies and gentlemen, that prices are up, demand is down, and we have a surplus power situation in Ontario. This has to be addressed. Nobody's doing it right now, and that's why Bill 39, the Ensuring Affordable Energy Act, is so, so important.

We know we need renewable energy as part of our energy mix going forward, but we need to do it in a way that is respectful to communities and makes economic sense. To those of you watching on TV, I share with you, please don't get caught up in the spin. Just because the opposition party does not agree with the Green Energy Act, don't let people make you think that we do not believe that green energy has a place in our overall energy mix. Please, ladies and gentlemen, know that we have a place for renewables, but again, it needs to be hosted by willing communities, it needs to be reliable, and it has to be affordable.

Plain and simple, though, when we talk about economics, the FIT program is unaffordable, and I'm not the first person to tell you this. I referenced Don Drummond. I referenced the Auditor General, as well as the Fraser report. Just last week, we heard again that the planned expansion of wind energy under the GEA is not cost-efficient, and it will, if pursued, raise the cost of provincial energy to households another 40% to 60%. People can't afford that, and we need to start listening.

I worry about what people are saying. When we talk to people out of the government and talk to people in the third party, it's an interesting go, and I need to share some things with you, because I encourage all members in this House to stand by the people of Ontario. Don't say one thing at home and another here at Queen's Park.

I want to quote the leader of the third party, from May 14, 2012. She said, "Ontario's electricity bills are some of the highest in Canada, and over the next decade the government says they plan to spend billions and billions on new electricity supply. In estimates committee ... the Minister of Energy couldn't even tell members of the committee how much he planned to spend. For families who are already paying unknown costs for cancelled power plants in Mississauga and Oakville, this is getting pretty darned scary." But you know what? She has an opportunity today to stand up for those people by supporting Bill 39.

Another quote comes to mind from the third party. I have an email that the member from Essex sent to a constituent, and I'm going to read it to you. In this email, the member from Essex said, "We believe that the approach the provincial government has taken in implementing its renewable energy program has a number of flaws. We are concerned that people who are negatively affected by nearby ... turbines are not getting the supports they need. Part of the problem is that the government has dragged its feet in the development of noise measurement protocols, so it's difficult to assess exposures experienced by concerned residents. We believe we need to review and strengthen supports for people who may be negatively affected by wind turbines."

Mr. Rob Leone: Whoa. Who said that?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: The member from Essex said that. It will be very interesting to see today if this member, as well as his entire caucus, is going to be saying one thing at home and another here at Queen's Park yet again today.

To the third party, and specifically to the member from Essex, if you truly believe that the government has taken the wrong approach and that people are negatively affected by wind turbines, I see no reason why you will not support this bill when it goes to vote today. Let's work together in committee and get an affordable, reliable energy plan together.

Do you know, the NDP aren't the only ones carrying on doublespeak here? The new Premier herself is very much like the old Premier: She likes to say one thing in local regional media outlets, but at Queen's Park, quite frankly, it's very opposite. In Belleville, the Premier said, "I've had many conversations with folks who are concerned about the placement of wind turbines ... about community input, and so am I. I think we need a better process...." Well, Premier, Bill 39 is a good bill. It's about good policy. Here is your chance, Premier, to direct your government to engage in good policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you—

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Walker: Unanimous consent for more time?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. I just want to say to the audience with us today that you're welcome to be here and observe, but participating in the debate by cheering or clapping is not allowed. I'd just remind you of that.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member who's arguing with me knows better.

Further debate? The member for Davenport. Sorry; Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the clarification.

To the surprise of no one in this House, I rise to oppose this bill. This bill would block serious action on climate change in Ontario. This bill will lock us out—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask members on my left, close to me—there was due respect to your speaker throughout the entire speech, so I would ask you to give the same respect to the other speakers during this debate and keep some order in the House.

The member for Toronto–Danforth.

1550

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This bill will lock us out of a huge and growing manufacturing sector and, frankly, this bill would lock us into—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Oxford, if you're going to heckle, you have to go to your own seat.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, all of that is obvious to anyone who reads that bill, but I want to speak to some other matters with regard to this bill. I think everyone in this House will recognize that we have a mess in the electricity system in Ontario. The Conservatives started all this with privatization of the electricity system, and the Liberals have continued that. Private profits in the electricity system currently account for about 10% of the price of electricity that people are paying for. People feel that pain in their pockets every day. This bill ignores that; one of the biggest sources of increased costs for electricity ignored.

Subsidies to private power, nuclear and gas plants have a huge impact on our hydro bills. The Environmental Commissioner, an officer of this Legislature, said that 70% of the global allocation—those subsidies—goes to nuclear and to gas; 5% goes to wind and solar. I say to the member, you're ignoring the 70% and going after the 5%.

The Conservatives claim to care about the cost of electricity but bring forward a bill that doesn't address the big costs or the big issues. This bill will make the mess worse in Ontario. It fails in so many ways. Let's start with the section that says that no person shall install or operate a windmill "unless the installation or operation is authorized by a bylaw of the municipality." Speaker, put yourself in the place of a municipal councillor or mayor from rural Ontario. If this law passes, then they are in a situation where they have people coming to them saying, "Pass a bylaw to defend our income, because we signed contracts." Others, who oppose wind, will come to them and say, "Pass a bylaw and you've got a fight on your hands." Suddenly, what the Conservatives have done is download this controversy to every municipal council in this province.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, come to order, please.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Note as well that this would launch 1,000 lawsuits. Every municipality that didn't pass a bylaw would get sued, and every one that did pass a bylaw would get sued. This is a fabulous employment program for the legal profession; not so much for the people of Ontario who want to work in manufacturing.

What the Conservatives have done is said, "Okay, here's a hot potato. Local municipal councillor, local reeve, it's all yours. Good luck. God bless," as my colleague Mr. Marchese would say. Did anyone in the Conservative Party proofread this bill? Do you understand what you're putting forward? Apparently not. You're not actually blocking the operation of these windmills; you're making sure that municipalities get to deal with it.

Have you calculated the damages on this? Every week in this Legislature we have hearings in the justice committee on the cancellation of the gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville, and frankly, it's clear that the Liberals didn't make any calculation when they decided

to shut down those two gas plants. The Conservatives have made no calculation with this bill, but I have to tell you, the legal bills would dwarf anything we've seen so far—anything.

The second matter, given that my time is short, is that this bill would also allow municipalities to cancel or prohibit energy efficiency. So I ask the Tories, what have you got against saving money? When did you decide—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Northumberland–Quinte West, come to order.

Mr. Peter Tabuns:—hydro bills. When? When?

Speaker, we do have a mess in Ontario. The Green Energy Act should have been substantially amended along the lines that the NDP proposed when it came forward: more local ownership, public ownership, public facilitation of consultations—a wide range of changes that would have made the bill far more acceptable to Ontario—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Dufferin–Caledon, you're warned.

Mr. Peter Tabuns:—ignored by the Liberals and, frankly, by the Conservative Party.

This bill won't clear up the mess. It will make things worse in Ontario.

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to speak to this bill, Bill 39. Earlier this week—I think it was Sunday—the world's two biggest carbon polluters, the United States and China, signed an agreement to reduce greenhouse gases. This is amazing—China, who have refused to look at this, and of course, they can't breathe their air. They know what they are doing with all their coal. But they signed an agreement. The US and China have about two thirds of the emissions, and they're working together. They know how serious this is for the world. Advancing co-operation and conservation and alternative and renewable energy forms a critical part of their new agreement.

Meanwhile, the Canadian government continues to push dirty coal, denies the severity of climate change and stops progress at the annual climate change conferences. Canada is always winning the fossil awards.

Just like their federal colleagues, when it comes to climate change initiatives, the Ontario PC Party cannot claim any form of leadership in the realm of renewable energy. Simply put, Mr. Speaker, the Tories have done nothing constructive on this issue. In fact, as the member from Huron–Bruce has shown, Bill 39 sets the stage to dismantle the Green Energy Act. Bill 39 would restrict the use of goods, services and technologies designed to promote energy conservation. It would also restrict activities with respect to renewable energy projects, renewable energy sources or renewable energy testing projects. This is all being done under the guise of giving municipalities more control.

Our government has made it clear that it intends to work with municipalities, work with local communities, so that they are involved with planning from the beginning. Our government will give more control to municipalities about dealing with the level of control that particularly rural municipalities would have over solar and wind energy in their communities.

Almost 20 municipalities are currently building projects under Ontario's feed-in tariff program. Through our new FIT rules, we created a new points system which ranks projects according to how many support points they've received from municipal councils, as well as local communities and aboriginal groups. These are strengthened protections for agricultural lands. This gives municipalities more control. Since the FIT program's introduction in 2009, it's been successful at developing wind, water, solar and bio-sourced power. In conjunction with Ontario's clean energy policies, the FIT program has already created more than 31,000 jobs. Ontario now has 2,700 clean-tech firms and employs 65,000 people in the clean-technology sector, generating annual revenues of more than \$8 billion.

As we close our coal-fired plants in—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order, the member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My point of order, Speaker: Is there a requirement to tell the truth when a member is speaking?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member knows well that that's not a point of order.

The member for Ottawa–Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Speaker.

As we close our coal-fired plants in 2013, carbon in our atmosphere will rise above 400 parts per million. The acknowledged limit to maintain global warming to reasonable levels was 350 parts per million, a point which we exceeded about 25 years ago.

Obama and the US government have signed this deal with China at a time when they are putting pressures on our Canadian government to clean up our act or they will not approve the Keystone project.

The Canadian government continues to deny climate change as our emissions increase. It is strange that they used Ontario's record on closing coal to show how green we were to the Washington people.

Our provincial Conservatives wish to move backwards by cancelling green energy and really cancelling the Green Energy Act. Is this any different than their private member's bill about the spray-all-you-can pesticides, which was soundly beaten in this House? The ban on the cosmetic use of pesticides has reduced toxics in urban streams by 80% and protects our children. That's what this is about.

1600

European leaders and Obama have said dealing with climate change cannot take second place—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order. The member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, the MPP from the Liberals isn't even speaking to the bill. I think members have to speak to the actual bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Ottawa–Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: European leaders and Obama have said that dealing with climate change cannot take second place to economic matters. We cannot justify doing nothing, as—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order. The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, the member from Ottawa–Orléans clearly is not speaking to Bill 39, which was introduced today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I believe he is, and I've ruled already.

The member from Ottawa–Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: We cannot justify doing nothing, as Peter Kent has said, because if we do nothing, 50 other countries—we're only 2%—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member for Oxford, if I have to warn you one more time—

Mr. Phil McNeely: Doing nothing by 50 countries means we will do nothing at all in this world, so we have to do our share.

Green energy costs are higher than hydrocarbon because we do not pay a price to dump the carbon in our atmosphere. Hydrocarbons may be lower-cost than wind, but only because the cost of dumping of carbon in our atmosphere is not included. This bill, by disregarding the terrible costs of climate change, does not recognize this fact.

Right now, there are literally thousands of Ontarians participating in the province's groundbreaking clean energy economy. Communities across this province, from Chatham-Kent to Frontenac Islands, to Prescott-Russell to the north—hundreds of millions of dollars in direct benefits from wind energy projects.

Students in new renewable energy programs at Fanshawe College, St. Clair College and St. Lawrence College are currently graduating to 100% employment in a homegrown industry. By continuing to incorrectly identify wind energy as a source of rising electricity costs in Ontario and advocate for an end to wind energy development, the PC Party threatens to pull the plug on new manufacturing, investment and jobs at a time when the province badly needs all three.

The Global Wind Energy Council released its annual market update. We're going to have, globally, a 19% increase in energy projects—many reasons that we should be strengthening the Green Energy Act and having more wind power.

Unfortunately, I'm out of time; I'd better leave some for Bob.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's an honour to speak to Bill 39. I didn't realize this was your first private member's bill.

This member from Huron–Bruce, from the moment she was nominated, spoke out against the problems that were in the Green Energy Act. During question period, she has raised issues. During debate, she always brings it back to green energy and how it's impacting her community, and quite frankly, I think that's why she is doing such an excellent job representing Huron–Bruce. Well done.

This is a very important piece of legislation. If enacted, Bill 39 would fix a lot of the problems that we, and you, under the Liberal government, created when they passed the Green Energy Act.

In 2009, the Liberal government implemented the Green Energy Act with very little planning and, quite frankly, even less foresight. From the very beginning, the public and the PC caucus raised a number of serious concerns with the legislation, all of which were ignored by the Liberal government.

Now, over four years after the Green Energy Act was debated in this very chamber, many of these concerns have become a reality and need to be addressed. That is why I am proud to stand in support of the member for Huron–Bruce's Bill 39, because I believe it will go a long way towards cleaning up some of the mess the Liberal government has created.

The fact is, it's regrettable that we are even debating Bill 39 today, because many of the problems that it addresses could have been avoided in the first place if you had listened. For example, consider the central issue of municipal planning rights. Bill 39 rightfully restores full planning power for green energy projects back to municipalities, where it should have stayed all along. Municipalities across Ontario have protested the undemocratic seizure of their planning rights by the Liberal government in 2009.

This was something I personally spoke to four years ago, when the Green Energy Act was debated, with my own private member's bill in 2010 that called for restoring municipal planning rights. It's all there in Hansard if you want to read it—March 2, 2009, when I stood in this chamber and voiced the concerns of Dufferin–Caledon residents: “The municipalities in Dufferin–Caledon, like Mulmur, Caledon, East Garafraxa and Amaranth, have all done very detailed planning and community engagement where they have” spoken to their community and gotten the feedback they needed about how they wanted their community to grow and what they wanted in their community. They're saying, “Let's incorporate it into what our community is and what our community stands for.” The Green Energy Act took that away from them. Unfortunately, as I pointed out, four years ago the Green Energy Act totally removed that ability from our municipalities.

This ties into another major issue with Bill 39, which is the health concerns that surround industrial wind turbines' proximity to residential homes. Again, I raised that issue with setbacks and possible adverse health effects in debate four years ago. On the issue of setbacks,

I pointed out in 2009 that a German company specializing in renewable industries argued that buildings, particularly housing, should not be nearer than two kilometres to the wind farm. Did you listen? No. The Liberal government proceeded with a very inadequate 550-metre setback. In essence, these problems were all well known to the Liberal government in 2009 and have been known to them for four years. They've done nothing about it. That's why it's essential that we get Bill 39 passed in second reading today and get it to committee so that we can return planning rights to the local level, which will allow health concerns to be addressed by municipalities and can tailor a unique solution for their unique community.

Bill 39 will also safeguard important natural areas like the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Niagara Escarpment and cancel the costly feed-in tariff program, which drives up hydro costs to unsustainable levels and makes it harder for Ontario families to afford energy. It is for these reasons and many more that I will be supporting Bill 39.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: This is another example where Conservatives make absolutely no sense. Here we go. This particular party has decided to put forward a bill that essentially will replicate what happened with the gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville across this province. When you read this particular bill, this bill essentially says that the FIT program could be cancelled, and is very grey and nebulous on when the cancellation date will actually happen. As a result of that, there is a distinct possibility, because of the way the bill is written, because all of this is delegated to regulation through the delegated authorities of the act, to essentially put us in a position where you could have a situation where the government would end up cancelling existing windmills. I've got to admit that there are a number of windmills built that are problematic to some citizens, but to put us in a position of actually having to relive what happened in Mississauga and Oakville all over the province of Ontario?

If I have learned one thing through the debacle of what this government has done over Mississauga and Oakville, it's that you can't, after you've made a decision, all of a sudden try to cancel the contract in the way that this government did. We have now spent close to \$800 million to \$1.3 billion, depending on whose numbers you talk about, when it comes to the way that this government cancelled Oakville and Mississauga. I would think that the Conservative caucus would have learned something from that experience to say that you draft a bill that doesn't make it possible to cancel contracts that are already in place in order to allow the same type of debacle not to happen just in Mississauga and Oakville, but in communities across this province.

Are there problems with the Green Energy Act? Yes. Are we in support of green energy? Yes. There is a better way of doing it. Our friend and critic, Mr. Tabuns, raised how you can have development of green energy in a way that reflects the needs of being able to develop that energy, in a way that makes sense, both from the eco-

omic perspective and the perspective of the communities affected. But what this Tory caucus is trying to do is move a bill that would essentially make it possible for governments to be able to cancel existing FIT contracts, let alone cancelling the FIT program itself. All I know—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It should be. It should be cancelled.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There you go. It's admitted. It should be cancelled, and now the Conservative caucus is saying what they're prepared to do is cancel existing FIT contracts. If you do that, you are into one heck of a lawsuit that will cost the taxpayers of this province billions of dollars.

For that fact, there's no way I could support this act, because I agree with the Conservatives that there is a problem when it comes to siting, but I don't agree that we should allow this to happen in such a way that ends up having the taxpayer holding the bill for what could be hundreds of millions of dollars when it comes to the cancellation of existing contracts.

1610

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I want to congratulate the member for Huron-Bruce on this bill. It shows she is listening to her constituents. That's what I try to do as well.

Back on March 5, I hand-delivered to the Premier a letter and a package from North Perth about the wind farm proposals threatening the community. Our message was clear: We in Perth-Wellington are not willing hosts. We're still waiting for a response.

This bill would ensure that wind turbine projects go exclusively to willing host communities. It would reinstate municipal planning powers for renewable energy projects, something the McGuinty-Wynne government stripped away. It would give municipalities an effective veto over wind turbine projects.

This bill would ensure energy affordability, so that wind power would only be used if it was cost-effective. It would eliminate the costly feed-in tariff program, and it would protect the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges moraine from wind turbines.

These actions are just common sense. Passing this bill is an opportunity to do the right thing after so many years of this government doing the wrong thing. Make no mistake, this government's policy, beginning with the Green Energy Act, has left destruction in its wake. It has left divided communities, unaffordable power, shuttered manufacturing plants, lost jobs and special deals for wind energy companies, all to no environmental benefit.

My constituents know it is nothing short of a scandal. They know the McGuinty-Wynne policy has been a miserable failure. My constituents noticed the government's throne speech, which talked about suddenly wanting to work with municipalities. It talked about respecting local decision-making when it comes to energy projects like wind turbines. They were also pleased that the Premier finally admitted her process for siting wind

turbines could be better. No kidding. We've been telling her that for years.

So here again is another chance for the government to listen to the people, turn back from the failures and arrogant ways of their past and do the right thing. The people are here today watching. So, Premier, I ask you, do the right thing immediately.

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

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm happy to speak to Bill 39. I want to welcome all our guests here. We have different opinions on this issue, but that's why we're here to have a debate.

Of course, New Democrats want to see our province develop an energy plan that is green, that is sustainable and that creates jobs for people in our province. We hear loud and clear that the Liberal government has made mistakes with implementation of the Green Energy Act, but Bill 39 is not the solution to this Liberal government's failure to enact a green energy program in a careful and respectful manner. That's why I will not be supporting Bill 39.

Bill 39 claims it will make energy affordable, create jobs, protect the environment and give municipalities a greater say, but New Democrats know this bill will not achieve these things. People in Ontario should be more concerned about the privatization of our power generation and the continued subsidization of expensive nuclear power. The people of Ontario are paying the price for the disastrous private power deal the Liberal government struck to relocate gas power plants, costing Ontarians hundreds of millions of dollars.

Both Conservatives and Liberals support billion-dollar subsidies for the nuclear industry and support privatization. This government has already committed \$1 billion to Darlington's refurbishment, even though its energy plan has not been approved and the total cost of the project is not yet known. How is this responsible planning? What about conservation? The cheapest, cleanest energy is the energy we save, and we have a Liberal government that has cancelled retrofit programs that would allow Ontarians to save money and save energy.

There's a reason this Liberal government reduces emphasis on conservation and energy efficiency beyond 2020. It's because that's the time refurbished nuclear plants are expected to begin coming online.

Speaker, Bill 39 claims to protect the environment, but wind energy is not the greatest threat to a healthy environment. We know that the Liberal government's decision to keep coal plants open until 2014 instead of shutting them down today will lead to the unnecessary deaths of 1,000 Ontarians, according to the RAO. That's not something we hear Conservatives speaking about.

The biggest threats to the Oak Ridges moraine and the Niagara Peninsula are not wind turbines. They are urban sprawl and development; they are aggregate extraction and new highways.

There is an undeniable need to increase local community and municipal input in renewable energy projects.

Communities need to be given opportunities for meaningful input in the development and siting of projects, and greater opportunities to derive real economic benefits from these projects. Priority should be given to community-based and public energy projects, and we should have strong domestic content requirements so that manufacturing jobs are kept here in Ontario.

The Liberal government has failed to do this. They've failed to be respectful to communities. I urge the government to learn from this bill and find solutions that support our renewable energy sector and work for all of our communities.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: This is the latest in a series of Conservative bills aimed at shutting down Ontario's cutting-edge renewable energy industry.

My colleague the MPP from Niagara Falls summed it up for me earlier this afternoon. After Hayes Dana shut down an industrial plant in Thorold South, a new investor, TSP, out of China, bought the facility, invested \$20 million of their own money, asked for no subsidy and has sent locally hired people over to China for training. Back in Ontario, those employees are part of a cutting-edge, 21st-century, high-value, high-wage manufacturing operation.

Anticipating clean energy opportunities, Niagara College graduates pointedly reminded the member for Niagara Falls that they expect him to vote against this bill and for the good jobs that they expect to fill in the coming years.

The best way to grasp what the Tea Party Tories plan to do with energy in the future is to look at what they've done with energy in the past. On their sad, sorry watch in government between 1995 and 2003—eight long, lost years—our air got worse because they cranked up the use of coal by more than double what it was when they took office. Dirty coal cost Ontarians more than \$4 billion each year in health and environmental costs. By the time our government took office in 2003, coal-fired generation amounted to a quarter of Ontario's total. Ten years later, coal use for power generation is down by 90%. Ontario is on track to fully eliminate coal as an electricity source within four years.

So what's this bill about? This bill is about going back to burning dirty coal while chasing out high-value, high-wage jobs and destroying Ontario's market leadership in renewable energy.

Saying no to renewable energy is familiar territory to Tea Party Tories. By 2003, there were exactly 10 wind generation units in all of Ontario. Today, there are more than 1,000, and Ontario's wind generation capacity is about 2,000 megawatts, roughly equal to four Pickering-sized reactors.

This bill is not about helping municipalities. During those eight lost Conservative years, here are some of the costs dumped on your Ontario municipal property tax base by the Conservatives: public health; Ontario Works; disability support; social housing; land ambulance—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound: You're warned.

Mr. Bob Delaney: —drug coverage; roads and highways; court security; and public transit.

This bill is not about low-cost power. During their eight lost PC years, the Conservative government paid up to \$2.83 per kilowatt hour from gas plants—gas plants—while they were selling the power to you at a subsidized 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour. That's why you ended up with a \$21-billion stranded debt when Ontarians relieved the Conservatives of their unfortunate burden of power in 2003. That alone should be sufficient reason to vote against this bill, just as this Legislature has turned down three nearly identical Conservative bills on the same subject since 2011.

In Ontario, more than 20 municipalities are currently actively building feed-in tariff, or FIT, projects. That list includes areas represented by Conservative MPPs, such as Brockville, the Kitchener area, Lambton Shores, Waterloo and others. Their MPPs won't speak in favour of good jobs and clean energy in their communities, so I will.

And in case you want a case of irony, consider that the same Tea Party Conservatives that campaigned on cancelling two gas plants, with no idea whatsoever of how to do it, have had their members state clearly that they plan to shut down Ontario's world-class clean energy industry with no idea how to do it.

1620

Consider, for example, these words from the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex on December 19, 2012, at a municipal council. He said that “we realize that when we make the commitment, we're not going to build them.... So scrap the 50,000 projects that are in the queue. We realize that there is going to be a cost, our lawyers have told us that there are opt-out clauses and we sure as hell are going to pay those out....”

The same party that gave us the Highway 407 giveaway, the worst privatization deal in the history of the world, and the same party that spent \$350 million filling in the Eglinton subway now says it's going to spend even more billions of dollars shutting down green energy. This summer rerun of a bill is a flimsy, uncosted campaign promise to spend billions of dollars of Ontario taxpayers' money not to generate power.

Speaker, I'm in favour of jobs, growth, secure electricity and clean energy. Those are all at risk with this rehashed reactionary bill, and that is the reason I'm going to vote against it.

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

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: We're hearing a lot today about the financial cost that the Green Energy Act has had on manufacturing here in province in Ontario, and I'll get to that in a moment. But something that was briefly mentioned that I find is a shame, and I think Abe Lincoln said it best, Mr. Speaker. Here is the travesty of it: “No

man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent.”

So here we have municipalities that are being dictated to by this government as to they cannot have a say where these wind turbines are going to be established. And that is the travesty of democracy in the state of Ontario today. They should be ashamed of themselves. This government is a travesty—a plague on this province.

I would like to just say, the NDP members are saying how they are for and Liberals are saying they're for manufacturing. Well, I just came yesterday from the manufacturers' association in my riding, and the number one concern from the manufacturers in Northumberland–Quinte West is the cost of electricity, especially if they look at their global adjustment, which fluctuates to pay for this Green Energy Act and the inconsistency of the wind that's blowing, not just across the way here—

Interjection: On the moon.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: On the moon as well.

Mr. Speaker, it's a travesty that democracy has been trampled by this government. The rights of Ontarians have been trampled on.

It's hard when we're sitting over here trying to get some good, good legislation. I want to commend the member from Huron–Bruce for her hard work and dedication in representing the people of her riding with distinction, I might add. So good for you. I want to say that we here in the PC caucus, and Tim Hudak, stand up and listen to Ontarians, and we care about people back home and what it does.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to rise in the House to support MPP Lisa Thompson's Bill 39. I'd like to also add my congratulations and thanks to the MPP from Huron–Bruce for her hard work on this file.

If passed, this bill would ensure that wind turbines would only be placed in local municipalities that are willing hosts, and municipalities would be given full veto power over wind turbines.

In my riding alone we have thousands of turbine developments installed now or proposed. These include projects like the Adelaide, Bornish, Cedar Point, Grand Bend, Jericho, Napier, White Pines and Zephyr projects. In Kent county alone, there are proposals for over 570 industrial wind turbines, including one of the largest wind turbine developments in the entire world. Clearly, it's time for local control and local decision-making when it comes to the placement and approval of industrial wind turbines.

This bill would also repeal the feed-in tariff program. Ontario has lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs since this government came to office, and now Ontario has the highest energy costs in all of North America. Clearly, we need change in the province of Ontario.

Rather than acknowledge that there is a problem in the way the government has handled renewables in the past and that the process needs to change, the McGuinty-

Wynne-Horwath government has ignored the problem, and they have ignored the people of Ontario. Unfortunately, this behaviour is typical of this government. They plow legislation through without any consultation. They have forced wind turbines on communities and pitted community against community. The public has raised concerns regarding the impacts of wind turbines, but this government and the third party, the NDP, don't care.

I will continue, as will our caucus, to push for changes to the Liberals' failed Green Energy Act and costly feed-in tariff program and will support, proudly, MPP Lisa Thompson's Bill 39 here this afternoon. I encourage all members in this House to do the right thing: Stand up for Ontario families and support Bill 39.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sorry, my mistake. Two minutes to the member from Huron-Bruce. My apologies.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much.

You know, I stand today and I acknowledge our members from Toronto-Danforth, Ottawa-Orléans, Timmins-James Bay, Davenport, and Mississauga-Streetsville.

While we understand where you're coming from, I can't help but say to my seatmate and critic of energy that I'm afraid you might have been proven wrong today, because our critic of energy has the science behind him that has said that turbines typically blow at night when we don't need the energy. Well, to the member for Nipissing, I have to say that you were proven wrong today, because there was a lot of wind blowing right here in this chamber. It just doesn't make any sense.

And to my fellow caucus members from Dufferin-Caledon, Perth-Wellington, Northumberland-Quinte West and Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, thank you. Thank you for understanding what the Green Energy Act has done across Ontario. It's been an absolute mess. It has caused chaos, it has ripped communities and families apart, and it's unaffordable.

We heard the government and the third party reference manufacturing. I want to share with you an email I received this past week. It reads, "The gas plant cancellation circus came back to the news this week. One report I read had the Ontario taxpayer footing the cost for the cancellation. This can't be accurate, is it? Electricity rates and energy policy are a real sore spot for me. I cringe when our business gets its monthly bill."

That came from Dirk Nielson, VP, manufacturing, Bogdon and Gross Furniture Co. in Walkerton. To Dirk I say: Stand by. Tim Hudak and the PC Party get it. Three per cent of green energy is costing 55% of your total energy bill. It has to stop. That's why we need affordable energy in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

PRESERVING EXISTING
COMMUNITIES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À PRÉSERVER
LES COLLECTIVITÉS EXISTANTES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 16, standing in the name of Mr. Klees.

Mr. Klees has moved second reading of Bill 41, An Act to amend the Places to Grow Act, 2005. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Klees.

Mr. Frank Klees: I was so excited, I forgot. I'd like to refer the bill to the Standing Committee on General Government.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: There were five standing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I found four.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order: the member from Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, the vote was called. You called it on the ayes, and there were five or more members who stood.

Interjections: Four.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Colle was standing as well.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Klees, was it general government?

Mr. Frank Klees: General government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to general government. Agreed? Agreed.

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

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

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Craiton has moved second reading of Bill 48, an Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act with respect to the relationship between a child and the child's grandparents.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Craiton.

Mr. Kim Craitor: I refer the bill to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, or on the other hand, let's just have third reading right now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to legislation and private bills.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Regulations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Regulations and private bills. Agreed? Agreed.

ENSURING AFFORDABLE
ENERGY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 FAVORISANT
L'ÉNERGIE ABORDABLE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Thompson has moved second reading of Bill 39, An Act to provide for control by local municipalities over renewable and affordable energy undertakings.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1632 to 1637.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hudak, Tim

Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia

Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Craitor, Kim
Damerla, Dipika
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic

DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Paul

Milloy, John
Mori, Reza
Natyshak, Taras
Piruzza, Teresa
Qaadri, Shafiq
Schein, Jonah
Sergio, Mario
Tabuns, Peter
Takhhar, Harinder S.
Taylor, Monique
Wong, Soo
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 33; the nays are 40.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: I move adjournment of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard noes; I heard "yes." I'm not sure.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On division.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): On division.

This House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m. on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1641.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

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

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Millroy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	London West / London-Ouest	
Vacant	Windsor–Tecumseh	

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Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Bill Mauro
Taras Natyshak, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
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Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Bill Mauro
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Dipika Damerla
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Jerry J. Ouellette, Shafiq Qaadri
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
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Joe Dickson, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Monte Kwinter
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
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Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

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Ted Chudleigh, Cheri DiNovo
Ernie Hardeman, Helena Jaczek
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
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