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of Ontario

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Thursday 4 December 2014

Jeudi 4 décembre 2014

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 4 December 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 4 décembre 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Let us pray.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO IMMIGRATION ACT, 2014
LOI DE 2014 SUR L'IMMIGRATION
EN ONTARIO

Mr. Chan moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 49, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 49, Loi portant sur l'immigration en Ontario et apportant une modification connexe à la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

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

Hon. Michael Chan: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member for Davenport.

Today is quite a day for me, beginning this debate. Previously, this was a bill that was introduced by the MPP from Don Valley East. The former minister introduced a very similar bill, but that was not able to pass because of the election. I just want to thank him for his wonderful work. He did tremendous work and lots of preparation—basically made my life a bit easier.

Immigration is a big file in my ministry. It's quite dear to me because I am a first-generation immigrant. Immigration is a file of great significance. People say Ontario is a land of immigrants; in fact, it is. People say Ontario is filled by migrants; in fact, it is. As remarked on by our Premier many, many times, other than the aboriginal people, we are all migrants who came to this great land at one point in time; in fact, we are.

As recently as this Monday, Speaker, I had a conversation with the consul general of Korea; as a matter of fact, he was here yesterday sitting in the Speaker's gallery. He told me that he was so amazed by the fact that more than half the population of Toronto were not born in Toronto; they were born outside of Toronto. He was very amazed by the fact that we came from more than 200 countries, speaking more than 130 languages. We are truly the face of the world.

Leaving one's hometown, travelling afar, some perhaps thousands and thousands of kilometres to a new land, is

not a light-hearted decision; it's difficult. Needless to say, there are many challenges, obstacles, difficulties, barriers—you name it.

Over the years, we have heard many immigrant stories—many. Some of them may be good; some are bad; some can be ugly. Just like the western movie with Clint Eastwood: *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*. But one thing is for sure: There are never-ending immigrant stories. I would say that every immigrant has his or her own story. Being a first-generation immigrant, I too have a story to tell. I came here quite a while ago. I came here 45 years ago now. I came in September, 1969, in the fall. I was a young man, full of energy, perhaps full of great expectation.

Mr. Han Dong: You're still young.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for saying that, that I'm still young. I appreciate that.

I landed in the Toronto airport, and at that time I did not have one friend; I did not have one relative. I was picked up by a friend of my father. When I landed in this great land, I encountered a problem. It's quite an interesting problem. My problem was that I could not talk to people, I could not communicate with people, because at that time my English-speaking skills were limited. When I talked to people, they could not understand me; when they talked to me, I could not understand them. I had a problem: I could not talk to people.

So I thought, "Chinatown is always around. Why don't you go and talk to those Canadian Chinese?" But I still had the problem, because I spoke a different dialect. The Chinese community at the time spoke something that I did not understand. So when they talked to me in their Chinese dialect, I would move these; when I talked to them, they would return the favour, do the same thing like this. So I really had a problem. I could not talk to people.

In November 1969, I was lucky enough to find a job. It was, I would say, a perfect job—a bit humbling. I found a job working in a Chinese food takeout restaurant. It's still there; it's still operating. It's at the corner of Martin Grove and Burnhamthorpe in Etobicoke Centre. That's the riding there. It's at the northeast corner of Martin Grove and Burnhamthorpe. The name is Far East Chinese Food. The job was quite simple. I learned the job working in the basement. Speaker, you may like Chinese food, right? Chinese food is famous for those egg rolls. I was the one down in the basement mixing the plum sauce powder with some water in a little cup and putting a lid on it so that you can really enjoy your egg roll.

0910

Hon. Jeff Leal: What about fortune cookies?

Hon. Michael Chan: I wasn't the one doing that.

People say, "I don't like Chinese food," but you may like hot dogs. Right? You like hot dogs. In order to have a good hot dog, you need mustard. I was the one down in the basement mixing the mustard powder with water, putting it in a little cup and putting a lid on top of that; so, no meal without mustard.

It was a really simple job, but a perfect job for me because I was working alone down in that basement and I didn't have to talk to anyone. It was really wonderful that I did not have to talk to anybody. I worked down there for about three months.

Then I kind of won the lottery; I hit the jackpot. I had a big promotion. It was really a tremendous promotion. The boss promoted me from the basement to the ground floor. That was my promotion. From that point, I was able to move on.

To me, Ontario is really a land of opportunity, hope and, perhaps, glory. I consider myself very lucky: lucky enough to come to Ontario, lucky enough to crawl out of a basement, lucky enough to own a business, lucky enough to raise a family and lucky enough, today, to stand in the House as MPP representing the people of Markham-Unionville and be a minister of the crown in this beautiful province we call Ontario.

So much for my little story; I had better get back to the debate on Bill 49.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Keep going, Michael. Keep going.

Hon. Michael Chan: Actually, I have two immigrant stories. This is the lesser of the evils. I also have one that is quite telling, but I will reserve that for another day.

Speaker, Bill 49 is very important for newcomers and for employers. It's vitally important for Ontario. Ontario has relied upon immigrants from its earliest beginning. We continue to do so today. Ontario is the number one destination for newcomers to Canada. We receive more immigrants than the combined total of all the provinces and territories west of us.

That's all good, but we need to make some changes so that immigration continues to work for us long into the future. Our population is aging, birth rates remain low and baby boomers are leaving the workforce in increasing numbers. We need to ensure that Ontario businesses have the skilled workers they need to stay competitive in today's global economy.

Over the next 10 years, there will be more than 2.5 million job openings, the majority high-skilled. Our home-grown talent in Ontario will not be able to meet this demand alone. Newcomers already make up 30% of our workforce right now. We will need more skilled immigrants to help us fill those jobs and keep the economy growing.

An important part of Ontario's economy is trade. This is one of many areas where our diversity is a huge strength. Newcomers bring international connections and networks that drive economic growth. The more immigrants we have, the more we can tap into new markets; and the more we trade, the more jobs we create. It's as simple as that. This natural connection between trade and

immigration is why the Premier appointed me as Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade. On these two fronts—trade and building a skilled workforce—Bill 49 is very important to our future.

Two years ago this month, our government announced Ontario's first-ever immigration strategy. Bill 49 is the logical next step. If passed, Ontario will be only the second province or territory in the country to have its own immigration legislation.

The other day, the member from Windsor-Tecumseh—I call him Mr. Good Morning—gave incorrect information on this score. It is important to be accurate in the information we share with the people of Ontario, so let me repeat: Ontario is only the second province in the country, after Quebec, to introduce immigration legislation.

Bill 49, if passed, would help us achieve three goals. First, it would make possible a stronger immigration partnership between Ontario and the federal government in the areas of recruitment, selection and admission of skilled immigrants. Let me speak to this for a moment. For some time, Ontario has been asking for more say and control over who comes here. We believe Ontario is in the best position to know its labour force needs. Our government is continually working with employers and different communities to assess these needs, yet federal policies have a very real impact on who is allowed to come to Ontario. Federal decisions over the decade have reduced the proportion of economic immigrants coming to Ontario to 46%. Other provinces on average receive 65%. This imbalance has hurt our economy, and because Ontario is the engine of growth in Canada, this imbalance has hurt the nation's economy.

The second goal is to strengthen our immigration strategy to raise the economic immigrants total to 70%. So we must start now. It has been my pleasure to meet with Ontario employers around the province at the annual forum called the Minister's Employers Table. Our employers know what is at stake and their interest is high in making our immigration system work better. I am encouraged by the willingness of our employers to work with our government to get this right. Where we need to do a better job and where Bill 49 is going to help us is in attracting a higher share of economic-class immigrants.

If passed, the bill will improve the accountability, transparency and management of our provincial nominee program. We are counting on the PNP to help us attract more skilled workers in Ontario. The PNP is an important program for Ontario and will become even more so in the future. Some 97% of PNP nominees remain in Ontario. Our provincial nominee program is helping Ontario employers attract and retain the skills they need for today's knowledge-based economy. Our goal is to work with the federal government to expand this program even further.

More than 100,000 newcomers arrive in Ontario every year. Bill 49 affirms our strong commitment to settlement programs that help newcomers integrate into our economy and society and contribute to Ontario. Our govern-

ment has invested more than \$900 million since 2003 doing exactly that: on bridging training, on language training and other important settlement assistance that helps newcomers succeed.

The third goal of Bill 49 is to help strengthen our ongoing efforts to reduce fraud and detect misrepresentation. It would help protect the integrity of our immigrant selection program and improve accountability.

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To sum up, Bill 49 would be a beginning, not an end. It is a necessary first step Ontario must take if we are to attract more skilled immigrants to drive our economy and keep Ontario strong. So I ask this House to give speedy approval to Bill 49 and allow Ontario to begin charting more of our own course to ensure we have the skilled workers to keep us strong and globally competitive. We want immigrants to come here and plant deep roots, build strong communities and become great citizens. Because when newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds. Thank you very much.

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

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you, Minister. It's been a pleasure working with you and being your parliamentary assistant. Thank you for sharing your story as an immigrant to this country and to this province.

Mr. Speaker, before I begin I just wanted to make note that I will be sharing my time with the member from Etobicoke Centre.

I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 49, a bill to establish the Ontario Immigration Act. Ontario is only the second province in Canada to bring forward immigration legislation, and I'm very proud of our government's leadership in this area. Last week, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh stated incorrectly that Ontario is the last province to bring forward its own immigration legislation. It's a basic point of fact that Ontario is the second province, after Quebec, to introduce its own immigration legislation. I want to set this record straight at the outset, because Ontarians deserve clarity and accuracy. They do not deserve to be misled.

As the minister stated, this bill is very important for newcomers and for employers, and it's vitally important for Ontario. In fact, just last week I was in Windsor meeting with employers and talking about immigration, and those employers urged our government to continue playing a leadership role.

I have one more point of accuracy before I move on. Despite comments to the contrary in this House last week, Ontario remains the number one destination for newcomers to Canada. The sky-is-falling scenarios from the other side of the House just don't add up. In fact, Ontario receives more immigrants than the combined total of all the provinces and territories west of here.

More importantly, passing Bill 49 would make Ontario more competitive by drawing on the talents of every Ontarian and attracting the world's best and brightest. Our success in immigration policy, of course, relies on effective co-operation with the federal government. The

bottom line is that we want to work with Ottawa to ensure that the right numbers of immigrants with the right skill sets come to Ontario to support our economic growth, which in turn supports Canada's prosperity.

The proposed immigration legislation would help us do just that. The stakes are high. We have to ensure that we are meeting demographic challenges and attracting the skilled and talented newcomers who help grow our local economies. In my remarks today, I'd like to focus on the economic contributions newcomers make to Ontario and how these contributions are needed today more than ever.

First, I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge the deep and enduring contributions newcomers have made to the quality of life we enjoy today. At every stage of Ontario's history, newcomers offered skills, knowledge, optimism and hard work that advanced our economy and enriched our communities. Speaker, looking around this House here today, I see many members who, like myself, are children of immigrants or immigrants themselves. We can all personally identify with and attest to the struggle to get established in a new country, to learn new customs and a new language, to open a bank account, find a house and pick a school.

Our family arrived in Toronto from Portugal in 1970 and settled in the riding of Davenport. I went straight into kindergarten and began the process of adaptation. Most newcomers will tell you it's easier for children to adapt. My father attended ESL classes—and thank goodness they were available. But I'm grateful to my parents for giving me the opportunity to grow up in Canada and to be here today in this House.

These are the experiences newcomers share with each other and help each other with. Immigrants chose Ontario because there was economic opportunity and the freedom to pursue it. Those contributions from immigrants in turn made the economy even stronger and broadened opportunity for the newcomers who followed. This is how immigration has traditionally worked in Ontario, but we cannot take it for granted. As the global economy continues to struggle, and as Ontario industries face global competition, we are counting on newcomers today more than ever before. We know that newcomers today are finding it harder to become established compared to previous generations of newcomers. At the same time, Ontario is facing competition from other countries that also want to attract skilled, bright and entrepreneurial immigrants. The Ontario Immigration Act would position Ontario for success in this global economic environment.

As we all know, talent is the most sought-after commodity in today's economy. Entrepreneurial spirit, cultural knowledge and creative thinking make economies more innovative and creative. Newcomers have a strong commitment to education. Three out of every four newcomers arrive with at least one post-secondary degree. Newcomers bring innovative ideas and unique perspectives; they make valuable contributions to emerging industries like information technology, engineering and bioscience.

It's worth noting that a recent study by the Partnership for a New American Economy found that seven of the most valuable brands in the world, including Apple, Google, AT&T and IBM, come from companies founded by immigrants or the children of immigrants.

We've seen similar successes here in Ontario: Plastic Mobile, the firm where the previous version of this bill was announced last winter, is a good example of an innovative, leading-edge firm founded by immigrants and employing dozens of Ontarians. Many successful firms in Ontario are founded by immigrants. They are doing innovative work in creating jobs and wealth for Ontario.

We also know that, to a large degree, economic success for Ontario comes down to trade; that's the foundation of our success. In the global economy, Ontario's cultural diversity gives us a clear edge. Ontarians come from more than 200 countries and speak about 200 languages. Our diversity helps Ontario companies understand new markets and recognize opportunities.

As we all know, we need more small and medium-sized companies exporting beyond North America. That's what our government's Going Global Trade Strategy is all about. Our effort to tap into new markets is greatly enhanced by people who speak different languages, have international networks and understand different business cultures. The personal knowledge and contacts of newcomers can make those markets a little less intimidating, and thanks to our diversity, people in those markets become more familiar with Ontario. When we take trade missions to other parts of the world, we're in a position to tell people that we have welcomed their country's contributions to Ontario society.

I give credit to our Premier, who realized the natural connection between immigration and international trade when she appointed my colleague, the member from Markham, as minister last June. She said to the minister: "Take Ontario's diversity to the next level. Help our newcomers build these connections to their former homelands in a way that benefits everyone." We saw what success in this area looks like with the fantastic results of the China trade mission in October. Almost 2,000 new jobs will be created in Ontario thanks to the strong and enduring connections between China and Ontario.

Of course, it's about more than just trade. With an aging population, low birth rates and retiring baby boomers, we are counting on skilled immigrants to continue helping to meet future labour needs. Our success in utilizing the skills and talents of newcomers will largely determine whether Ontario reaches its full economic potential. The Conference Board of Canada tells us that the cost of underutilizing the skills of internationally trained individuals is about \$3.4 billion to \$5 billion in lost productivity. That means that if we want immigrants to choose Ontario, we have to help them settle and succeed as quickly as possible, and our government is doing exactly that. We've invested more than \$900 million since 2003 to integrate newcomers into our society and economy. But we need to do more, and in a planned, strategic way. That's why Ontario now has an immigration strategy and a proposed new Ontario Immigration Act.

0930

As part of this effort, we've been working to engage employers more closely in immigration matters and diversity. That's because it is ultimately employers who give newcomers their first job. I believe that more employers are realizing that a diverse workplace is an advantage in today's global economy. Our employers know what is at stake, and their interest is high in making our immigration system work better. In other words, we must make sure newcomers know that we are not starting from scratch, that the welcome mat has been out for a long time and that we are already a very diverse society.

Speaker, it has been my pleasure to meet with Ontario employers this fall in Windsor and Oakville at an annual forum called the Minister's Employers Table. These round tables are organized by our colleagues at the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, and I want to thank the chamber for its vision and leadership in this area. The Minister's Employers Table sessions are a part of Ontario's immigration strategy.

Last year's sessions focused on immigrant selection. They introduced employers to the federal government's Express Entry application management system, to be implemented next year.

This year's sessions are focusing on labour market needs at the local level, and some key themes are already emerging from this year's tables. Employers are telling me that immigration is fundamental to Ontario's economic prosperity. They understand that Ontario must meet the demographic challenges of low birth rates with more immigration. One participant noted that immigration is an investment in our economic future.

They also realize that helping newcomers succeed in the labour market is a joint government/employer responsibility. Employers understand that they have a role to play in immigrant success and want to partner more with government and other agencies in this area.

Employers also believe that Ontario must continue to position itself as a top international destination for skilled immigrants. Simply put, success breeds success. We must build on our well-earned and well-deserved reputation as a diverse and tolerant society to attract more skilled workers. Our brand must be as a top international destination for global talent.

Employers also stressed the importance of soft skills like language and communications to a newcomer's overall success. While hard skills are often what initially attract employers to a job candidate, employers cite soft skills as fundamental to success on the job. Multiple participants praised existing government programs that have helped immigrants refine their occupation-related language training and skills.

I had the chance to see the fantastic newcomers settlement programs first-hand while I was representing the ministry at the employers tables. In Windsor, I had the opportunity to tour the Centre for Skills Development and Training, the training centre in Burlington, and the Halton Multicultural Council. I also met with instructors and students at the Mason Educational Centre and the Collège Boréal campus in Windsor.

One young woman's story from that visit particularly stands out. This young woman arrived in Windsor 18 months ago from China. Very much like my parents and countless other immigrants, she came to Ontario in pursuit of a better life. At Collège Boréal, she is receiving settlement assistance and language training. What struck me was her excitement about being here. She told me that she loves living in Ontario and that she wants to learn to speak English so that she can begin working as soon as possible and start giving back to a place she feels has already given her so much.

It's because of hopeful and optimistic stories like that that our government is bringing forward Bill 49. It's why we support the various on-the-ground agencies that help our newcomers build the soft skills that allow them to offer employers a complete package and get started on the road to success.

In his remarks, I heard the minister say that Ontario employers, communities and our government are in the best position to decide our labour market needs in this province. What we are realizing is that there are several different labour markets in Ontario. We need to listen to employers and educators and workers and newcomers in those communities to fine-tune our immigration selection and recruitment to meet their needs.

It is impossible for someone in Ottawa to be any closer to the ground than we are here. Here's our issue: We have the knowledge, but we don't always have the control to get the skilled newcomers we need and want. That's why we need to make immigration a top priority in this Legislature, as our government is doing by introducing the Ontario Immigration Act. If passed, Ontario would be only the second province or territory in the country to have its own immigration legislation. It would also enable Ontario to welcome more highly skilled immigrants to help meet our future labour market needs.

The legislative proposals would also strengthen our very successful immigrant selection program, the provincial nominee program, and enable it to keep Ontario growing and keep Ontario strong. Around 97% of nominees remain in Ontario. Our view is that when something is working, we need more of it, not less of it, so we're going to maximize the value of PNP to our economy.

The legislation would, if passed, demonstrate Ontario's leadership in immigration and position Ontario to take advantage of proposed federal program changes in the selection of economic immigrants scheduled for early 2015. This would include increased employer participation in immigrant selection, a key concern for businesses. If passed, the legislation would respond to labour market needs by expressly allowing the minister to set immigration targets in policy for provincially selected immigrants.

The minister talked about fraud. Bill 49 recognizes that fraud is a two-way street. The system needs to be protected against fraudulent applications, and potential newcomers need to be protected from unscrupulous operators. Bill 49 acts against both. Having a robust com-

pliance and enforcement regime will help to protect applicants and deter abuses of their trust by predatory representatives; ensure that perpetrators of program fraud cannot profit from the system; and give Ontario's immigration officers greater ability to catch misrepresentation and go after those who take advantage of immigrants and the system.

We are committed to respecting the principles upon which the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act is based. We have collaborated closely with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner regarding collection, use and disclosure of personal information under the proposed immigration legislation. We want to ensure that we strike the right balance between the need to use information we collect under our selection programs and the need to protect applicants' privacy.

Bill 49 is the right bill at the right time for Ontario. Most importantly, it recognizes the long history of immigration to the province and creates a framework for implementing the province's immigration vision.

Ontario competes with other places that are trying to create the best jobs, welcome skilled people and attract new industries. To meet this challenge, our government is creating the conditions for growth. We have competitive corporate tax rates, among the lowest in North America. We offer attractive R&D incentives, among the best in the G7. We have a workforce that's among the most highly skilled and educated in the OECD. Yet our most valuable asset is the skills of our people.

It is an encouraging sign for our economy that so many highly educated newcomers choose Ontario, but we need to work to ensure they can contribute to the fullest. It's important to remember that many newcomers left home, family and friends abroad. Others had opportunities to go elsewhere. They chose us. We need to do our best for them as they integrate, find jobs and build a good life. When newcomers achieve their dreams for a better life in Ontario, their success makes life better for all Ontarians.

Ontario has found strength in diversity. It's who we are: a diverse and welcoming province; a dynamic, growing, sustainable, knowledge-driven economy; a place with the highest quality of life and people determined to keep making that quality of life even better. By passing Bill 49 into law, Ontario can strengthen our reputation as a place where people of all backgrounds can prosper, and we can support strong and diverse communities that nurture the best immigrants and the best citizens, because when newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

0940

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's a privilege to be able to speak to this bill and to share my time with the member for Davenport.

I wanted to speak to this bill because this bill has a very personal connection to me personally, and a personal connection to, I think, a lot of people in my community

of Etobicoke Centre. My grandfather immigrated to Canada in the late 1940s from post-World War II Germany. At that time, he applied to come to Canada because he knew—or he had heard—that jobs were available here, that there was an opportunity for him to build a life for himself and his family. In fact, he came by himself and spent two years living here before my grandmother was able to join him with her children, my mother.

When he was applying, they asked a number of questions, and some of the questions that my grandfather told me that they asked him were pretty basic things. They asked things like, “Can you work? Are you healthy? Are you strong? Can you do manual labour?” Those are the kinds of questions that were being asked at the time. And when my grandfather came, sure enough, he applied those skills; he applied that willingness to work and that motivation to some very, very labour-intensive work. He worked for Ontario Hydro building some of the hydro power lines that we have in our province. He eventually was able to get a job at Canada Post and worked for Canada Post for many years before retiring.

The reason I think this story is important is because, like so many immigrants, he came to this country believing that there was opportunity here—knowing that there was opportunity here. Canada facilitated that opportunity by making sure that they were attracting the kinds of people that Canada needed to make this country great. We need to continue to do that, and I think that what this bill does is it helps to ensure that we will continue to do that. We, of course, need the help of our federal partners, the federal government, but I think it takes important steps to make sure that we can do a better job of doing that.

Since my grandfather’s day of immigrating to Canada, the global economy has changed. The nature of the labour market has changed; it has become more global. When I think of the immigrants of today—recently I met someone who is working as a doctor for my GP who came to Canada from the Soviet Union and who had full medical qualifications. She spent a tremendous number of years and effort trying to gain medical qualification here in Ontario. Initially, when she came, she thought that process would be much easier. Unfortunately, it took her many, many years. The unfortunate part is that she discovered this only upon arriving in Canada.

Hon. Liz Sandals: That’s the problem.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Exactly. That’s the problem, exactly, as the minister’s saying. People come to Canada thinking that they’ll have that job, just like my grandfather thought he would have that job. My grandfather got that job; the immigrants of today deserve the same.

Once in a while, when I take a taxi to events in my community, for example, I meet drivers who are qualified in many different fields who came to Canada thinking they’d be able to work in that field, and now they can’t. We need to do better by those folks. They’ve come here to build this country, and they deserve better. And we deserve better. Making sure that immigrants to our country come to Canada knowing what to expect will

not only ensure that they live a better quality of life—that in itself is a good reason to take these steps—but it will also ensure that we all live a better quality of life.

When I think about our economy, we have shortages—yes, we have unemployment, and we need to tackle those issues, but we also have a lot of small businesses that are looking for workers in skilled fields, and we’re not able to fill those vacancies. There are a lot of folks from around the world who could help us do that, and we need to help make sure that happens. We all benefit from this.

There’s a couple of things in this bill that I would like to highlight that I think are important. One is that we are going to be able, through this legislation, to accelerate the recognition of credentials for folks who are applying. That’s going to allow people who are being accepted to know faster that they’ve been accepted and allow those folks who aren’t going to be accepted to work in their fields to be declined more quickly so that they have the information before them to make a decision as to whether they want to come or not. That’s the first thing.

The second thing is, provisions have been put into this bill to clamp down on fraud. There are so many people who come to this country with great hope and with great optimism. Unfortunately, in some cases, they are made promises by folks about services that will be offered to help them settle here, about jobs that they will get when they come here, and that never comes to fruition. This bill will allow the government to institute fines; it will allow criminal charges to be imposed on folks who abuse that trust. I think that’s critically important so that people applying to Canada, applying to come to Ontario, will have faith that they will be treated as they should be.

I think the last thing I would just mention quickly is we need to make sure that our federal government is working with us on this. Ontario understands the local economy; we understand the local conditions here and what the labour market demands are. It’s really important that the federal government partner with us to make sure that we can better meet the demands of the labour market here.

When my grandfather came to Canada, the system that recognized his credentials, the system that recognized his experience and what he could bring to Canada, was there to ensure that it matched the labour market needs of the day. We need to do well by those people applying to Canada today, just as we did by my grandfather. Let’s make sure that we attract the folks, that we give folks the information they need to know whether they’ll be able to work in their chosen field or not.

We’re going to accelerate that process, and we’re going to work with our federal partners to make sure that we do well by those people who want to come to Canada and help build this country and make it better, and those people who want to come to Canada to help build this country, to make it better for all of us in all 107 ridings around this province.

I think this is an important bill. It takes important steps to make sure we accelerate the recognition of credentials, that we clamp down on fraud and that we work even

more effectively with our federal partners to make sure that we attract the kinds of folks who can build this country and do well by them. I hope we can enjoy the support of members from across the aisle as well.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to offer a few comments in regard to the bill. One of the things that I certainly want to recognize is the value that the speakers have made with regard to the value of immigration.

Regardless of whether you came in the last 10 months or the last 200 years, the motives have very often been exactly the same thing: It was a better way of life, there was a greater economic opportunity, and the fundamentals of democratic society, the stability that goes with democratic society, is certainly an attraction as well.

One of the things that is really important as we pursue 21st-century immigration is to look at the kinds of balance. The speakers have talked about the economic influence, and obviously that's an important one, but we have to always consider how we're going to create the right balance.

I recognized in the remarks a moment ago the fact that we have people without jobs and jobs without people. When we have that kind of data available to us, I think it just makes it that much more important to understand the mechanics of immigration and the kinds of benefits, both for the community at large but also the people coming.

One of the things that I've always felt was most unfortunate was some kind of message that people would get in their own home country: "You can be this when you come to Canada," and they discover that, no, they can't.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, this is the first opportunity I'll have, as the critic of citizenship and immigration, to stand up in my role to discuss this bill and give my questions and comments to the minister.

I understand that the Auditor General is doing her annual report, and that will be released next week on Tuesday. But I was able to obtain a couple of highlights of some of the things she's going to chat about. One thing I'm particularly interested in looking into, and what her remarks are going to be on, is the provincial nominee program and how that's working—how that's working now, and then comparing it to the kinds of changes that are in this bill that are, hopefully, going to make it better and improve it.

As the member from York Simcoe said, managing the expectations of someone who wants to come to another country, whether it's Canada or Ontario or another province, is something that has to be very thoughtful and streamlined, because we don't want to have that reputation of asking people to come, and then they arrive and, sure enough, it's not what they signed up for. Then, you know, they could feel trapped here, and they've left their home country. So there are a lot of socio-economic concerns when you apply for something and it doesn't come out to what you expect. It's a life-changing experience, as we've heard from many members.

0950

The other thing I want to address is the fact—and I'd like to talk about this later on if I have the opportunity—that we're gathering information and collecting information and we're supposed to use it appropriately. I understand they consulted with the Information and Privacy Commissioner, so that's interesting, and I'll make some comments on that later. But the information piece and how we're going to use it is something of interest to myself, and I'll pursue that later on. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Newmarket—Aurora.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm delighted to be able to speak for a couple of minutes to this very important bill. Someone said to me once, and I think it's very true for virtually all of us, that we are all immigrants to this place. We all have immigrant stories. My own story starts on my father's side, with my grandparents leaving England after World War I, when there wasn't much opportunity for them. They had a brother here in Canada who suggested that this was the land of milk and honey. They sold everything, bought passage, shipped everything they owned here, brought their children here and landed just in time for the Great Depression of 1929.

There was no social safety net in those days, and a job that had been promised to my grandfather as supervisor of maintenance for TTC, of course, had disappeared. So the first 10 years for them was very difficult. I grew up listening to the stories of my grandparents talking about how hard it was to be an immigrant to this great country but also how glad they were that they stuck it out and stayed, because it gave their children and their grandchildren a fantastic opportunity to grow and to thrive.

Of course, coming from Aurora myself, we have one of the greatest, I think, successful immigrant stories in the form of Frank Stronach, who founded Magna International. The headquarters is still in Aurora, providing a lot of wealth and a lot of jobs for people in Canada.

I'm very excited by Bill 49. I think, from a high level, just the fact that the vision and the objectives that it will set, if passed, for immigration to Ontario is very, very important for the success of people coming to this great province. Thank you.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise to provide some feedback and comments to the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade and the members for Davenport and Etobicoke Centre: excellent stories. I don't think that any of us can say we're not an immigrant; it's a matter of when we became an immigrant to Canada and Ontario.

I do want to comment on one of the points that the minister raised: his request for a speedy approval to Bill 49 from the opposition. It can't be reinforced enough that it's not up to us to have speedy or slow approvals of legislation. The government House leader—that would be the Liberal House leader—chooses which items we are going to debate in this chamber. It is the Liberal

House leader who puts forward the motions for closures. So whether or not a speedy passage can occur with Bill 49 very much depends on the individual who sits at the corner of your front bench.

I will be speaking very briefly later on to the Ontario Immigration Act and will cover off some of the points that we would like to make sure are part of the public debate that must occur when we have new pieces of legislation coming forward. But I think it was important for clarity to remind people that it is not a matter for the opposition to hold up or in fact speed up legislation through this legislative chamber; that lies solely and wholly with the government members and most particularly the House leader. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. I now recognize the minister for two minutes on his response.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What a good day today. I heard from my PA from Davenport, the MPP from Etobicoke Centre, the MPP from York–Simcoe, the MPP from Dufferin–Caledon and also the MPP from London–Fanshawe. I think there is a common consensus about newcomers, about immigrants, that we all recognize that they're here and it is very important that they are here.

I heard some stories about your grandfather, which is also fantastic. We all had a story to tell. I had mine. I had two, by the way. I have spoken on one. The other one will be coming up, maybe, another day, but that one is quite a bit tougher than the one I mentioned.

Anyhow, I think Bill 49—again, allow me to repeat that it's going to do three things over there. One is to strengthen the communication between Ontario and the federal government. I think this is critically important because they are the ones who actually assess people, the incoming, and also outgoing as well. Strengthening that communication relationship, a line that we can talk, I think is very, very important. Also, the streams of immigrants coming over here, too, the skilled workers: Definitely, we need those skilled workers, but perhaps lower-skilled or unskilled workers we should be looking into, too, because I keep hearing other provinces, like Alberta, perhaps Saskatchewan—they talk about the lower-skilled workers as well. So those are the communications that we should really strengthen and get the input back to the federal government.

I see the clock is running out, so I'm going to sit down here and continue the debate.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to stand down the hour lead from our critic.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Dufferin–Caledon has requested that their lead be stood down. Agreed? Agreed.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to speak to Bill 49, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991.

I again want to remind everyone, although it's pretty obvious to most of us here, that of course we are all immigrants. It is strictly a matter of what year we came. My family would have been called today economic refugees, because the country that we were leaving was in dire circumstances. I jokingly say they ran out of food so we came to Canada.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Jokingly, but that's what happened.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: That's exactly what happened. I think you can probably figure out where from the Isles we came.

Anyway, I would like to take this opportunity to speak on Bill 49. This bill is actually a reintroduction in the Ontario Legislature. It was previously called Bill 161 and was introduced by the current Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport and minister responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games. Bill 161, of course, died on the order paper when the government called the election in June.

I want to highlight the fact that our federal counterparts have made multiple extensive changes to the immigration system here in Canada over the last decade, including the Federal Skilled Worker Program and the provincial nominee program, to name two. In addition, our federal counterparts plan to introduce the expression-of-interest immigration reforms to make the immigration system more responsive to labour market demands. The EOI or expression of interest “will provide governments and Canadian employers access to skilled foreign workers and expedite their entry into Canada for jobs that aren't being filled by people already” living “in Canada.” The EOI will also “complement the provincial nominee program which will continue to be a key mechanism to allow provinces, territories, and employers to meet regional labour market needs. Almost 41,000 provincial nominees (including their spouses and dependants) were admitted to Canada through the PNP in 2012, up from approximately 3,500 in 2006.”

The provincial nominee program, as stated on the ministry's website, is “an immigration program through which Ontario nominates individuals and their families for permanent resident status based on a pre-approved job offer in the province.” I think this is important to mention because of its integral role in our immigration policy.

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It's also important to talk about the immigration policy of other jurisdictions. Of course, the most obvious and cited example is Quebec's immigration policy. As a result of the 1991 Canada-Quebec Accord, Quebec fully assumed responsibility for establishing immigration levels and for the selection and integration of immigrants. In areas under its responsibility, Quebec develops its own policies and programs, legislates, regulates and sets its own standards.

In contrast, Ontario's immigration policy is tied to that of the federal government. Media focus has been on Ontario taking a Quebec-style approach to immigration.

I want to mention some important statistics about immigration in our province and other jurisdictions. The

federal government recently released immigration stats for last year. What they also provided was a table of statistics from 2004 through to and including 2013 on the amount of permanent residents in each province and territory.

There are three categories that make up the definition of a permanent resident. Permanent residents are based on foreign nationals sponsored by close relatives or family members in Canada, and include spouses and partners, dependent children, parents and grandparents. Permanent residents are also based on economic immigrants, who are people selected for their skills and ability to contribute to Canada's economy, including skilled workers, business immigrants, provincial and territorial nominees and live-in caregivers. In addition, permanent residents are based on refugees, which include government-assisted refugees, privately sponsored refugees, refugees landed in Canada and dependants of refugees landed in Canada who were living abroad.

The number of permanent residents is quite startling. Newfoundland and Labrador saw their permanent resident number nearly double from 2004 to 2013. Prince Edward Island's permanent resident number tripled. Nova Scotia's increased by almost 1,000. New Brunswick's increased by more than 1,000. Quebec's number increased during the same time frame. Manitoba's almost doubled. Saskatchewan's number increased from roughly 1,000 to 10,000 during the same time frame.

Only two provinces' permanent resident numbers decreased. They are British Columbia and right here in Ontario. I don't think it takes too much to make a connection between the economy of Ontario currently and in the last number of years compared to other parts of Canada. In the time from 2004 to 2013, Ontario has lost 25,000 permanent residents.

Interjections.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Perhaps the minister needs to listen more and talk less.

What is also sad is the fact that in the breakdown of regions within our province, only four regions saw increases in their permanent resident numbers. This is quite sad.

If we are to further break down these statistics, things get even more dire. If we are to just look at how many of those permanent residents are economic immigrants, which this bill focuses on, the numbers get worse. For example, the number of economic immigrants in Ontario in 2004 was 67,602. In 2013, that number significantly declined: It was 47,623. That's a 20,000-person drop. I consider that disappointing to say the least.

Let's compare these numbers to the western provinces where we continue hearing stories about them taking away our Ontario-trained skilled workers. Manitoba, in 2003, had 4,999 economic immigrants; that number grew to 9,602 in 2013. That means it almost doubled, for those who can't do the numbers. Saskatchewan had a meagre 883 economic immigrants in 2004. In 2013, they had a whopping total of 8,812. That is an astonishing increase for Saskatchewan. In 2004, Alberta had 8,742 economic

immigrants. In 2013, they had 22,645 economic immigrants.

There's another interesting statistic. TD Economics performed a study looking into interprovincial migration. This bill is obviously referencing immigration from outside Canada into Canada, but I think this stat paints more of a complete picture. TD Economics performed a study looking into interprovincial migration, and guess what? Ontario lost roughly 18,000 individuals to other provinces in 2012. Alberta gained roughly 47,000 individuals from other provinces. Saskatchewan gained another 2,500 individuals from other provinces. The proof is in the pudding. Economics absolutely plays a crucial part in why these two provinces have gained so many individuals from other provinces across Canada.

The study by TD Economics states, "Drawing Canadians to their province is not a new phenomenon for these two prairie provinces. Saskatchewan has been a net beneficiary from interprovincial flows since 2007, while Alberta has not experienced a net loss since 1994. Both provinces have posted the strongest recovery since the recession and exhibit the tightest labour markets, so it is no surprise that they demonstrate the strongest lure for other Canadians. The unemployment rates in these provinces are the lowest in Canada and act a signal to potential entrance to their labour force. Further, real per capita incomes are higher in both provinces relative to the rest of Canada."

The study's sum-up of these two provinces was, "Alberta and Saskatchewan are likely to continue to lead the pack in terms of net inflows of migrants across Canada and within Canada, as both resource-rich provincial economies are expected to outperform the rest of Canada."

This government cannot continue to ignore the importance of having a strong economy. In 2012, the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants produced a survey on the services aiding immigrants in Ontario. In it, there are some facts that bear out what we've been discussing here. Some 80% of new Canadians in Ontario stay in their first city of residence. However, of the 20% who relocate from their first city of residence, the largest percentage do so because they're seeking better employment opportunities—not a surprise to you, I'm sure, Speaker.

I think the numbers speak for themselves. Here in Ontario, the opportunities simply don't exist that once did. Our attraction to immigrants and migrants and our economic success are linked together, whether you like it or not.

If we want to stop our population from leaving our province, then we must return to being the economic engine of Canada. But as long as our economy is controlled by a government that is not keeping its eye on the ball, I have little confidence that we will ever return to our once-proud status as the economic engine of Canada.

When we were prosperous, not so long ago, we were attracting more new Canadians to Ontario. The finance minister's own numbers bear this out. From 1997 until

approximately 2002, this province experienced one of the greatest booms in immigration that we've seen in the last 40 years. It also happened to coincide with one of the greatest periods of economic prosperity this province has seen in that same time frame. It was a time when the Progressive Conservative government created a million jobs in Ontario. No wonder we continue to hear stories of individuals leaving our province to go west.

The worst part of it is it's skilled young workers who are leaving our province. As noted in the study when they say that "migrants tend to be younger, well-educated and highly skilled," we're losing the cream of the crop, Speaker.

I also want to mention one more interesting finding from the TD Economics study. They said, "As populations permanently move to different regions, their tax revenues that follow them can be counted on to bolster their new government coffers."

The reason I wanted to mention this is because, as we heard during the recent fall economic statement this fall, this government reported that their revenue projections were off by half a billion dollars and resulted in lower projections for the next three years. I'm not saying that this is the reason for this massive miscalculation. But I do think it is something worth looking at more closely.

This government has mismanaged our province's immigration policy for a decade, when it could have been working with the federal government to ensure Ontario's economic needs were met by new Canadians.

In regard to the provincial nominee program in Ontario, many of Ontario's nominees leave Ontario for the western provinces after a number of years because of Ontario's poor economic climate. As a result, Ontario's allotment of spots remains stuck at 2,500, whereas Alberta and Saskatchewan have 5,000 spots available.

Minister, if the truth hurts, you'd better listen to it.

The government has brought forward this legislation because the federal government forced their hand with the introduction of the 2015 expression-of-interest policy.

Let's take a moment to discuss what this bill will do.

Bill 49 will allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council, through regulation, to create a registry for employers to select foreign nationals who have been selected for a selection process. We're back to that old "by regulation" trick again, where we won't be participating in any kind of public debate or discussion on which employers, which parts of the economy, need the assistance and will benefit from new immigration.

An employer who wants to participate in a selection program must sign up for the newly created registry, unless stated in the regulations.

The minister may establish a fee for employers to pay to sign up and participate in the newly created registry and selection process.

This part of the bill provides the minister with the power to use any information provided by the employer, given to the registry, to be used as deemed fit by the minister.

I want to say, Speaker, at this point, that I always get concerned when it's governments picking and choosing. Historically—and I'm not picking on any political affili-

ation of a government—when governments get involved in picking and choosing who gets the additional immigration employees, we don't do a very good job of it. It's actually not our responsibility. When we try to do that, we can get caught.

The minister is also granted the power to distribute the information provided by the registered employers to other provinces, territories and the federal government, if it is deemed fit by the minister.

We're giving a lot of power to one person.

The minister will also establish the conditions to sign up to the registry. The minister can also cancel the registration of an employer if the minister believes it gives incorrect information or does not comply with the conditions of the registry. The minister only has to provide a written letter to the employer of the cancellation. Where is the right of appeal there, Speaker?

This part of the bill was created to make the province compliant with the federal government's 2015 expression-of-interest policy. In addition, it is also in keeping with the recommendation made by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to enable employers and immigration consultants to navigate the EOI system.

Another important part of Bill 49 is that it will establish a provincial immigration selection process, in keeping with the development of the 2015 expression-of-interest regulations.

This part of the bill acknowledges that this program can only take effect through an agreement with the federal government, as stated in the federal legislation, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, which authorizes the provincial government to create and/or continue a selection program. There are similar agreements in existence in provinces like Manitoba and British Columbia, while no such agreement currently exists in Ontario. As no agreement exists with the federal government, this provision is largely in anticipation of the federal government's new immigration strategy in 2015. A selection program cannot exist if it is not authorized by the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

Another part of Bill 49 will create enforcement and compliance officers, to ensure employers and international job recruits are not providing false information. They will be able to access fines and penalties. This part of the bill is for fraud prevention purposes.

The ministry has suggested—sorry, Speaker. You look like you're going to stop me.

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

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce, in the public gallery, some constituents of mine: Elizabeth Davis-Dagg; and Selena Campbell, with her children LeRoy

Campbell and Debbie Campbell. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to welcome to the Legislature the family of Bhutila Karpoche, who works in Cheri DiNovo's office: Lobsang Chozin, Kari Khedup, Sonam Youngdon and Tenzin Dhakden. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Granville Anderson: It's my pleasure to introduce the mother of page Hannah Hamilton; her grandmother, Dianne Mott; her sister, Sophie Hamilton; and her brother, Jake Hamilton. Welcome.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure today to introduce to this assembly two of my friends, Hanif Patni of Ottawa and Kristine Hubbard of Toronto. They're not quite in the gallery at the moment, but they are here today to talk about passenger safety in taxicabs.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I rise on a point of order to seek unanimous consent that the orders for second reading and third reading of Bill 16, An Act to proclaim Christmas Tree Day, be called immediately and the questions on the motions for second and third reading of the bill be put immediately without debate or amendment; and that the order of the House referring Bill 28, An Act to proclaim the month of October as Hispanic Heritage Month, to the Standing Committee on Social Policy be discharged; and the order for third reading of the bill be called immediately, and that—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would say to the member that I'd like to finish introductions. If we could correct the clock in any way possible.

The Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a real pleasure for me to introduce some folks in the members' west gallery: Atul Swarup; his daughter, Lauren Van Leeuwen; and Sarah-Sophie Dahl, who is an exchange student from Denmark, here in Ontario with the Peterborough Rotary Club. It's an opportunity for her to see question period and parliamentary democracy here in the province of Ontario.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have a few introductions. Susie Matthias and Shelly Ireland from London, Ontario, are joining us today, and Judith Robert from Toronto.

I'd also like to welcome Smokey Thomas and Doug Evetts to the Legislature. Good morning.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to introduce some of my constituents: the mayor of French River, Claude Bouffard; Sébastien Goyer, the CEO of French River and my Liberal candidate in the last election; and Michelle Clark.

Hon. Mario Sergio: We have 43 students visiting the Legislature today from James Cardinal McGuigan Catholic High School with their teacher, Joseph Pulcini, the department head of Canadian and world studies. I would like to welcome them, and I hope that they will enjoy the day at Queen's Park.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to introduce and welcome Warren "Smokey" Thomas, the president of OPSEU, as well as Doug Evetts, his assistant.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the grade 10 students and staff from Erindale Secondary School. They are visiting the

Legislature today. They're not here yet, but they will be here soon.

Erindale Secondary School was a recent recipient of a 2013-14 Premier's Award for Accepting Schools, so I want to congratulate them and welcome them to the Legislature as well.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I would like to introduce, in the press gallery here with us today, Isabel Alves, from Sol Português, a wonderful newspaper in my riding of Davenport. Welcome, Isabel.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am delighted to welcome today two students who live in London West and attend Sir Wilfrid Laurier Secondary School in London: Brienna French and Lena Gahwi, who are volunteering in my constituency office.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to introduce Dann Nichols, chair of the board of directors of one of the four UNESCO biosphere reserves in Ontario, the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Network; and Louise Mantha, his wife. She is on the board, responsible for the arts portfolio, and they are both involved in the Rotary. I applaud them for their wonderful volunteerism.

Rano Daoud is also sitting in our members' gallery. He's the president of the Frontenac provincial riding association. His wife, Stephanie, has just completed, half an hour ago, her last test to be a licensed and registered psychologist. They are both from my riding, and I welcome them warmly to the chamber.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Joining us from Don Valley East here today is Arnella Csongradi. Welcome to the Legislature.

Also joining us at the Legislature today are about 100 volunteers and the volunteer ambassador for the Pan/Parapan Am Games, Pinball Clemons, who is here today. I want to say thank you to the volunteers who are here supporting the Pan Am Games.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Joining us here today in the public gallery is a parent of Nick Zalewski, one of our pages: his mother, Catherine O'Halloran. Welcome.

WEARING OF BUTTONS

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to allow members to wear red rose buttons in recognition of the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. December 6 marks 25 years since the 1989 murders of 14 young women at École Polytechnique de Montréal.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Community and Social Services has requested unanimous consent to wear buttons. Agreed? Agreed.

ANNIVERSARY OF MONTREAL MASSACRE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I seek unanimous consent for a moment of silence in commemoration of the Montreal massacre.

This Saturday actually marks the 25th anniversary of the murder of 14 women at the École Polytechnique in Montreal, and as the minister has mentioned, it also marks the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. In light of this, I think it's appropriate for us to rise in this Legislature for a moment of silence and observance.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The leader of the third party has requested unanimous consent to recognize a moment of silence for the massacre in Montreal. Agreed? Agreed.

I'd ask everyone to rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

1040

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

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Davenport.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I seek unanimous consent to put a motion without notice for Bill 16 and Bill 28.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested unanimous consent to put a motion on Bill 16 and Bill 28. Agreed? I heard a no.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development. I think I'll ask to stand down the lead question until the minister arrives. Agreed?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The leader of the loyal opposition has requested to stand down his lead. I move to the leader of the third party.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. The Liberals don't seem to believe that people aren't getting their money. The minister says she's finding it difficult to validate these anecdotes. Here's a validation for her: Leanne Chard's son has a disability and he relies on ODSP to pay his bills. When his cheque didn't arrive, Leanne looked into the issue. She was told her son was removed from the system and Leanne, as her son's trustee, was also removed from the system. Leanne called the Liberal constituency office of her MPP and was given the cold shoulder.

Will the Liberals admit that these problems are real and actually start fixing them?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I think everyone in this House knows, we are doing the very important work of replacing an old, outdated system that did not serve clients well, nor was it the best system for the workers. As we're in this transition period, I want to say thank you to those front-line workers who are working very, very hard to fix any problems as they arise. I also want people who are recipients of social assistance to know that we

are absolutely committed to making sure they get the cheques that they are, in fact, entitled to.

I do want to comment: Additional staff have been sent to local offices; people are working around the clock to fix any problems, and we've had great success. In fact, within 24 hours, 99% of the overpayments were stopped or retracted. This is a system that has worked in Australia, the UK, New Zealand, Germany and New York City. I know the minister will want to address any supplementary questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Leanne's son's next cheque is actually due on December 22, and she's worried that if there's another round of problems there will be nobody for her to call over the holidays.

Can the Liberals guarantee that this problem is solved and that there won't be any late cheques in December?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I want to reassure all members of this House that we take our jobs in the Ministry of Community and Social Services extremely seriously. The welfare of vulnerable people is our number one concern. I have been asking searching questions of my officials, I've been calling mayors; I want to hear about those vulnerable people who have, unfortunately, not received the appropriate payment to which they are entitled. It is this type of hands-on approach that I'm personally taking to this issue, and I want to hear everything that I need to hear in order to ensure that the December round of cheques is, in fact, successful.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The minister should tell her MPPs that she wants to hear the stories, because Leanne went to her MPP, a Liberal MPP, and was given the cold shoulder when her story was shared. The minister needs to actually tell her MPPs to do their job. Leanne is worried that her problem won't be solved and, frankly, I am worried too.

Since this program launched, we're told that nearly 10,000 separate incident reports have been created, and hundreds more are being created by the day—incident reports because there have been problems with the cheques. Now, that says to me that the problem still has not been fixed. Can the Liberals give any guarantees whatsoever to the thousands of vulnerable Ontarians who rely on ODSP and social assistance that their next cheques are actually going to be in the mail and delivered on time?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I do want to reassure the leader of the third party that we have put in a very strong support strategy for our front-line workers to troubleshoot issues that may be arising from the new system.

Since the SAMS launch, my ministry has also put in place dedicated phone lines and email addresses for areas that are particularly challenging for staff, so they have direct access to support staff. There are some 42 addi-

tional staff in the field. Any area office that is having specific differences, we will send committed individuals to that office. So anybody, in terms of our municipal partners, ODSP officers requesting that kind of additional support, they're going to be getting that. We are, of course, in daily contact with all our partners. I'm getting reports on an ongoing basis in terms of the issues locally.

Again, we urge any person who has an issue with their payment to contact their caseworker, and we will make every effort to rectify the problem.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Acting Premier. Yesterday, we asked for the contract that the Liberals signed with IBM for the deeply flawed SAMS program, but we didn't get it. So I'm going to try again. Will the Liberals release the contract with IBM that left people across Ontario without the social assistance and ODSP they rely on?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Again, clearly hearing the comments made yesterday, I think we're all aware that there is a process in terms of document release. I have looked into this, and of course we wish to be open and transparent. So we are going to be following the type of process that is required in this type of contractual relationship between a private company and the government. There may be some proprietary commercially sensitive information in the contract. The process will be followed. If there is a formal document request, I certainly won't interfere with that process.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government confirmed that Ontario is getting private sector IT support for the massive problems with this SAMS program. When there's a problem with the software, Ontarians deserve to know who is actually paying to fix it. Either IBM has to fix the problem or we're paying out of pocket to fix their faulty product. Will the Liberals release the contract so we can see which one of these it is?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I have been informed that the issue of transition was addressed in the contract and that our private sector partners are covering all the costs of the transition support that is required for the front line through the requirements of the contract.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals were warned that this computer system was not ready and would likely have massive problems. In fact, the people who warned them are right here in this House with us today. They ignored the advice, and now vulnerable Ontarians are the ones who are having to pay the price.

Ontarians have the right to know who is paying for that decision. Will the Deputy Premier, the minister re-

sponsible for transparency, live up to that mandate and actually release the contract?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can simply repeat what I've said before. There's a process in terms of release of this type of information. I will not interfere in any way with that process. I will encourage that process to take place. Clearly, this type of information may contain some commercially sensitive information, and I think everyone needs to respect that.

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I want to just make it very clear that job one in our ministry is to ensure that all vulnerable people are appropriately taken care of—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. I'm trying my best to listen to the answer, but with the interruptions on my left, it's a little difficult.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You're not going to learn much from the answer.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I don't need your comments.

Minister?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I simply would like to reassure everyone yet again that our job is to ensure that cheques are delivered smoothly. Every effort is being taken to ensure that the next cheque run will go well. People are working constantly in this regard. We have the support of our private sector partners—IBM—in this endeavour, and we want to assure everyone that we are following due process.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure. Ontario's auto sector is the backbone of communities throughout our province. We all know the hard work and tremendous pride that auto workers put into their jobs. That's why it's so alarming to hear union and auto industry executives raise concerns about the troubled state of General Motors' Canadian operations. Next year, for example, Chevrolet Camaro production stops in Oshawa altogether and will move to Lansing, Michigan. In 2016—just a year and a half from now—one of the two assembly plants in Oshawa is scheduled to close.

A shutdown of Oshawa would result in nearly 3,600 jobs lost. Minister, what action is your government taking to stop the shutdown of auto production in Oshawa, Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, let me tell you right off the bat what we're not going to do—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. The members closest to me on my left: It's very difficult for me to carry on if you keep trying to shout down the person who's answering. Next time, you'll be named.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, let me tell you right off the bat what we're not going to do. We're not going to do what the PC Party did. At the earliest sign of trouble in the auto sector during the recession, they ran and hid. They failed to stand up for the auto sector.

We partnered with the federal government to make sure that GM is even here today, because had we not done that, had we taken the advice of the party opposite, we would not have an auto sector like we have today here in the province of Ontario—an auto sector that employs over 400,000 Ontarians.

The member raises some valid concerns. We are looking carefully at the future of GM in Oshawa. In my supplementary, I'll talk a little bit more about the optimism of the new president of GM with regard to their investments in Ontario.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Minister, these aren't meant to be hard-hitting partisan questions. This is meant to stand up for the hard-working men and women in our auto sector.

Other jurisdictions, as you know, are taking urgent action to strengthen their auto sectors for the 21st-century marketplace. In 2013, Michigan's governor created the Michigan automotive office. This office is headed by an experienced industry professional who reports directly to the governor. That's how seriously Michigan takes its auto industry, so it's not surprising that Oshawa's Chevrolet Camaro is moving to Lansing, Michigan.

The Michigan automotive office has issued a 30-year strategic plan to grow the state's automotive industry base. Minister, I just ask you: Where is your long-term plan to grow Ontario's automotive base?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, let me talk about the investments this government has made, over the objections of the party opposite, to grow our economic base in the auto sector: \$800 million of investment we have invested in the last 10 years. We've gotten back \$10 billion of investment made by auto companies here in the province of Ontario for investments that the party opposite refers to as "corporate welfare."

Shame on you. Shame on the party opposite to get up today, a party that does not support any support that we've given to the auto sector, any support that we've given to the hard-working men and women—400,000 strong—who have jobs in this sector. Mr. Speaker, they've opposed us every step of the way.

We'll continue to work with the auto sector in this province, we will continue to work with the companies, we will continue to make those important investments, and we will continue to have a strong auto sector here in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister can be partisan and get in a bickering match with us, I suppose. That's not going to help the workers who are depending on his government to do the right thing.

Obviously, what you're doing isn't working, Minister. GM is leaving. The plans are on the table. The warning signs are there. So what you're doing isn't working.

In Michigan, they don't just throw billions of dollars after billions of dollars. They have a seven-point plan that doesn't involve money. It involves marketing, strategic branding, talent development and attracting new talent, engineering networks, policy and legislative advice to the government, business development advice, working collaboratively with the government, capital attraction and development. These are things that don't cost billions of dollars.

You raise electricity rates, slap on the red tape, put up the taxes and then throw in billions of dollars to correct your mistakes. It's not working. When are you going to come up with a 30-year plan that works?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please.

Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I know why the party opposite so admires the administration in Michigan: They're a right-to-work state. That's why they like the state of Michigan. You know what else, Mr. Speaker? They have an \$8 minimum wage in Michigan. I know that party would love to bring our minimum wage down to \$8, but get this, Mr. Speaker: They also have a lack of support for maternity leave in Michigan. That's the kind of administration they want to run.

That's not the kind of province we're building here in Ontario. We support our auto workers, and we support our auto—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please.

Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We'll continue to work in partnership with that sector. We're going to continue to make investments like we made near his riding, in Alliston: a \$857-million investment by Honda just a few weeks ago. We will—

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

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. It doesn't seem as though I'm getting through to some of you. On the government side, Minister of the Environment, you're the loudest. I would ask you to keep it down.

New question.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, your government has continuously promised to fix the troubled CCACs. We have heard repeatedly of the bloated CCAC CEO executive salaries, which cost us \$3.5 million every year. All the while, there are cuts to home care services that are leaving our frail elderly people and people with disabilities in peril. The situation is truly appalling. Minister, can you tell this House how you are going to get these 14 CEO salaries

under control so that money can be put back into front-line care?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Over the last number of years, we have been reducing the CCAC CEO salaries considerably. In 2007, they amounted to \$5.6 million in total, and in 2012, they were down to \$3.6 million. It's not just the CEO salaries; as well, the proportion of the total CCAC expenses that goes to administrative costs has also declined significantly and is estimated at 4.4% in 2012-13. So they are coming down.

But we also have an important bill before the Legislature, Bill 8, which looks specifically and directly at the issue of executive compensation in the broader public sector. It's actually going to pertain to our CCACs as well and the salaries of the CEOs and the senior staff there. It's going to prescribe the parameters going forward in terms of the level of compensation that's responsible.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Again to the Minister of Health: Your ministry stated to the Ottawa Sun that it "does not have access to the terms and conditions of the CCAC CEO compensation plans." This is a poor excuse. In fact, your excuse sounds an awful lot like the excuse the Deputy Premier used to give about Chris Mazza's blockbuster salary at Ornge, and we all know how that ended.

Minister, once again, under your Liberal government, patients and front-line care are suffering because you refuse to take action. Why are you abdicating your oversight responsibilities and allowing these salaries to compromise front-line care?

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Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm taking my responsibility as Minister of Health very, very seriously. I appeal to the opposition—I suspect that we might have the support of the member opposite—to support and pass Bill 8, because that bill does precisely what the member opposite is asking for: It allows us to get access to that information and to prescribe, within certain parameters, what that executive compensation level should be, not just in our CCACs but across the broader public sector.

I look forward to the support of the member opposite. It's an important bill. We've been debating it here in the Legislature. The sooner we get it passed, the sooner we're going to be able to move further in the direction where we all agree we need to to control executive compensation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Again to the Minister of Health: It's appalling that you would deflect your ministerial responsibility and not take immediate action to get these CEO salaries under control. If it's true that your ministry does not have access to the terms and conditions of these salaries, then why haven't you taken action and tabled legislation in this House to fix it?

You use time allocation for lots of other things; why haven't you used time allocation for this one, Minister?

You've had weeks and numerous opportunities to do so, yet you continue to allow front-line care to suffer.

Minister, when are you actually going to take action to fix this problem?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: In fact, we have tabled legislation to do precisely what the member is asking for. It's called Bill 8. In reference to time allocation, as well: We did, so there's no excuse.

We have the opportunity in this Legislature, in a very short period of time, to pass this important legislation that will do what the member is asking: to provide those parameters, and the direction and the ability for every ministry in this government to oversee, be accountable for, provide direction to, create parameters for and control executive compensation in the broader public sector. I find it unbelievable that the member opposite didn't know that that legislation already exists.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Acting Premier. Your government used the dictatorial power of the majority to shut down the justice committee with respect to the inquiry into the gas plant fiasco, denying us the opportunity to interview such key witnesses as Laura Miller and Peter Faist.

But there's another matter: Going into the election, there was an ongoing OPP criminal investigation into the deletion and destruction of documents within the Office of the Premier of Ontario.

Acting Premier, can you give us an update? Because since the election we've heard nothing. Can you give us an update, or have you asked the OPP for an update on that investigation into criminal activity in the Premier's office?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for posing the question, and I want to thank the members of the justice committee, who have been working very hard in completing the work of the justice committee, as was committed by this government.

I'm confident that the members of the justice committee will continue to do the work, make sure that there is a report available based on all the testimonies and evidence that they have heard over the last almost three years, and be able to give recommendations to the government when it comes to the siting of large energy infrastructure projects. We look forward to the committee finishing their work.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Acting Premier, the people of Ontario want to know where this investigation is going. If you haven't asked the OPP for an update, well, I have. I've written a letter to Detective Constable Duval, asking him for an update.

Look: I'd be the last one to ever accuse this government of doing something underhanded, but it might be a

little more than coincidental that, since you got your majority, this OPP investigation has gone completely underground. We're not hearing anything about the criminal investigation into the destruction and deletion of emails within the Office of the Premier of Ontario.

So I'm asking you today: Will you endeavour to get an update from the OPP as to where this criminal investigation is going? Because the people of Ontario want an answer.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): If everyone would notice, I am standing and you're still carrying on.

Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I think it would be pretty polite and mild for me to say that the question from the member opposite is fairly absurd. I think he recognizes that there is a live police investigation that is under way and it would be highly inappropriate for any member of this House, especially members of the government, to be speaking about that police investigation. The member is a smart individual. He knows that very clearly. I think the question is highly inappropriate. Nor will we start engaging in the discussion around police investigations, because that is up to the OPP. They're arm's-length and independent from the government. We will let them finish their work.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Acting Premier. There's a growing trend for charitable organizations to give out gift cards to clients to help them buy Christmas gifts and groceries for the holidays. Giving gift cards is a more dignified approach to helping these vulnerable people because they don't have to line up at food banks or at Christmas hamper programs. But there is a grinch out there trying to steal Christmas. Money Mart has piloted an initiative in Hamilton whereby they will redeem these gift cards for cash but only at 50% of the card's value.

Why does this government allow grinch-like Money Mart to steal Christmas from our most vulnerable people in Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. David Oraziatti: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. As the member knows, there are a number of organizations in Ontario that have been regulated by our government. We've stepped up to enforce and increase regulations with these organizations. It is an ongoing challenge to ensure that the unscrupulous practices like you're talking about are—that we ensure that these individuals are put out of business or that there are greater regulations. We've increased protections under the Consumer Protection Act. We've increased the fines,

as well, for organizations and individuals who may conduct business like this.

As you are aware, our ministry did take very significant action to ensure that one of these organizations was put out of business because of their practices.

We are going to continue to be vigilant with respect to these organizations. We will continue to bring forward legislation and change regulations where necessary to ensure that these practices are dealt with.

I'd also indicate to this member that our government has eliminated the expiry dates on prepaid gift cards.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: This is just one of the many areas where we've seen time and time again that the Payday Loans Act needs to be tightened up.

Forcing individuals who are already under a great deal of stress during the holidays to pay this extraordinarily high rate for an exchange is simply disgusting. I think everyone in this House agrees that this type of scheme that takes advantage of people who are already so vulnerable, particularly at this time of year, is not acceptable.

Is the minister's heart two sizes too small, that he won't ban these exorbitantly high exchange rates that allow payday lenders to take advantage of people like this? Will the minister do something to address this problem so that it doesn't happen?

Hon. David Oraziatti: Absolutely. This is certainly not a partisan issue. I think we all agree that those individuals who are vulnerable and those individuals who may from time to time need to use these organizations to complete financial transactions—we want to ensure that they're not taken advantage of.

We have a cap on the maximum allowable borrowing rates in Ontario, and they are in about the middle of the range across the country, as the member knows full well. We brought in regulations to tighten up payday lending and deal very aggressively with an organization in this province that was practising beyond the scope of their licence; in other words, taking advantage, quite frankly, of vulnerable residents in the province of Ontario.

We will be responding to this. If the member has any specific information, I would be happy to speak to him about that as we continue to enforce these regulations.

1110

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: My question is for the Minister of Finance. On Tuesday you announced that there will be amendments made to Ontario securities laws with a goal of promoting greater representation of women on the boards of publicly traded companies.

My constituents in the riding of Burlington and, indeed, I'm certain all Ontarians are very pleased with this announcement. Studies have shown that greater gender diversity on corporate boards will promote stronger organizational health and improved innovation, leadership growth and performance.

Having been fortunate enough to hold multiple senior-level positions, including those on publicly traded companies, prior to becoming an MPP, I take pride in this measure that our government is implementing. Minister, could you please tell this House why you are taking this important step?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you to the honourable member from Burlington for her very thoughtful question.

You know, Mr. Speaker, women make up 48% of the workforce and yet only account for 16% of board members. Through discussions and surveys conducted by the OSC, we've learned that 50% of responding companies have no women directors; moreover, women working at the remaining responding companies only account for 10% of women on senior levels. Further findings tell us that companies with a higher representation of women in executive-level positions experienced 35% higher return on equity and 34% higher total return to shareholders.

I agree with my caucus colleague that greater gender diversity promotes stronger organizational health, innovation, improved leadership and business performance. Mr. Speaker, that's why we're calling for this disclosure.

I think most of us in this House agree and recognize the great potential available for all of us by having more women in executive positions, and I am proud that we're taking these steps.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you to the minister for his response.

Research has indeed found that gender diversity in corporate leadership is linked to improved governance and stronger performance in both financial and non-financial measures. We know that increasing the number of women in corporate leadership is good for the economy and good for business. It's also good for society. That's why helping women reach their full potential by supporting women in leadership is part of this government's commitment to creating a strong and fair Ontario.

The minister responsible for women's issues has noted that this announcement is a critical step towards achieving gender equality across all sectors. Can the minister please tell us how these measures will serve to promote equality in leadership within the corporate world and beyond?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: As the Minister of Finance mentioned, women account for only 16% of members of Canada's FP500 companies, and that hasn't moved for a very, very long time. So when we tabled the 2013 Ontario budget, it included a commitment to broaden gender diversity in corporate leadership.

Last year, when we asked the Ontario Securities Commission to undertake the review and public consultation on this approach, we felt strongly that this was a policy that would encourage and support firms to increase the representation of women in corporate leadership.

What is quite remarkable and wonderful, Speaker, is that other Canadian regulators are now following Ontario's lead to comply or explain and are coordinating efforts with our Ontario Securities Commission. I'm very excited about this announcement and the positive change our government's action will take to bring corporate sector representation of women up higher.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services and outdated excuses. Minister, my office has been inundated—

Interjections.

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

I would say to the member that in this Legislature, we have always respected each other and respected their titles. I'd ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Carry on.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Minister, my office has been inundated with calls this week after the problems with your new SAMS program were made public. These individuals have told us that the issues with the new software at Ontario Works and ODSP are far greater than your government is letting on.

We have obtained information that many front-line staff are taking stress leave, and, contrary to the earlier statements in the House, they're not seeing additional staff. They are taking time off due to their inability to help their clients and they are frustrated at not being able to do their job properly.

Minister, how many workers at ODSP and Ontario Works have taken stress leave due to your little glitch?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Certainly I'm delighted to hear that the member opposite is suddenly so concerned about front-line workers. I'm sure that those front-line workers were under considerable distress when your government cut social assistance rates by some 22%.

The member will know that we are supporting in every way those front-line workers. We have put in place hotlines; we have supportive staff to help—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. The party that asks the question is the loudest. So obviously you don't want the answer.

Minister?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I think we need to understand this is a new system. At the end of the day, it will make the system overall much, much better. Caseworkers will be able to spend more time with their clients. We know that they are concerned for their clients. We're trying to support them in every way that we possibly can through the introduction of this new system.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Minister, at least the Premier has shown the decency to apologize to those who have been affected by these problems and not resorted to deflection in her responses, such as you have just done. It would be nice to see if you would show the same respect and courtesy to those employees.

Not only is the new software proving to be very problematic in the delivery of these services—it's so stressful that workers are taking time off—but when workers are taking time off due to a broken system, who knows how many other people will be affected by the shortage of front-line caseworkers as a result?

Minister, will you demonstrate transparency, accountability and openness, and a genuine respect for the people of Ontario, and bring yourself and your staff back to the estimates committee? Really, let's examine this little glitch in far greater detail, instead of just having deflection from this minister.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Of course, as I've said before, I truly apologize to those individuals who have suffered hardship through this new computer system. I am working constantly, in terms of hearing from the front lines what those issues are. My ministry is in constant communication with all 257 offices that have had to introduce this very large system.

Certainly, as we work towards the next pay run, and being mindful in fact that the vast majority—some 500,000 people—did receive their payments on time this last pay run, we want to make that 100% this next pay run. There's no question about it. We are doing everything we can to ensure that that happens. We are offering support to front-line workers. We will be covering overtime costs for those workers, as I've assured many of my municipal colleagues. We want to get this right.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-term Care.

This Liberal government has promised again and again to fully inspect every long-term-care home by the end of this year. On April 15, the Deputy Premier said: "I stand by my earlier commitment that every long-term-care home in this province will have had that rigorous quality inspection by the end of this calendar year." But now, with just days to go, it has been revealed that 60% of long-term-care homes still haven't been inspected.

Why has this Liberal government broken its promise to protect seniors by failing to inspect each and every long-term-care home before the end of this year?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Associate Minister of Health.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I thank the member opposite for that question. It's a very important question.

I want to reassure this House that, indeed, by the end of this month we would have scheduled every last inspection in the long-term-care homes—all 633—and we look forward to completing them very shortly in the new year.

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Speaker, the main thing is the intent. If I may say this, the main thing here is we didn't want to just do them for the sake of doing them; we wanted to make sure we got it right. So, yes, they will be completed by the middle of January, and they will all be scheduled by the end of this month.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Scheduling inspections by the end of the year is not the same as was originally promised by the Deputy Premier, who said that in this province we will have had the rigorous quality inspections by the end of this year. That's a promise.

Speaker, it's outrageous that this government has dropped the ball and failed to conduct a resident quality inspection in 60% of long-term-care homes. That means seniors and their families don't have the protection this government promised.

But we know that when Liberals break a promise, they try to change the promise and hope no one notices. So on Tuesday—and it is apropos that the minister is responding to the supplementary—of this week, the associate minister backtracked as fast as she could and promised to schedule every inspection by the end of the year. That's a far cry from the Deputy Premier's assurances that these inspections would be completed this year. I understand that there was an FOI, so maybe that's why the backtracking this year.

Will the government own up to this broken promise and tell Ontarians that long-term-care residents' homes will be inspected—and assure the families that 60% of homes will have been inspected by the end of this year?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I guess the member opposite didn't listen to my answer, because if she had listened to my answer—

Interjections.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Order.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's unfortunate that we heard it.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Well, there's a difference between hearing and listening.

If you had just understood my answer—

Interjections.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I just want to say that by the middle of January, every last inspection will be done. There's a holiday season, and that is the reason. But the spirit is being respected.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade. Minister, today is International Volunteer Day, our annual opportunity to thank those who have donated their time in an effort to better their communities. Ontario depends on not-for-profit organizations and their volunteers to deliver vital services and build strong, inclusive communities.

In my riding of Ajax–Pickering, a large number of constituents rely on volunteer services for after-school programs, religious services, many athletic clubs and organizations, seniors' programs and much more.

It is very important to my constituents, and all Ontarians, that volunteer programs like these are safeguarded. Could the minister tell us how the government of Ontario is supporting our volunteer initiatives across the province of Ontario?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Ajax–Pickering for asking the question.

Speaker, International Volunteer Day is a great opportunity to recognize and to say thank you to the dedicated volunteers who help make Ontario great. Our government supports a number of programs to help encourage and promote volunteerism in Ontario. We know it is equally important to support activities that broaden understanding about volunteering in Ontario.

That is why, as part of the province's legacy plan for the Pan/Parapan American Games, our ministry will be working with the Ontario Volunteer Centre Network to create a certification program that recognizes skills acquired through a volunteer placement.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you to the minister for letting us know about absolutely everything, including how our government is encouraging volunteerism in our province.

I'm happy to hear that the Pan Am volunteers will receive certification for their hard work at the games. Over 10,000 athletes and officials from 41 countries will be coming to our province next summer, and the eyes of the world will be on Ontario. The volunteers will be the backbone of the games, instrumental to delivering successful games. Volunteering is going to be a great experience.

Volunteers will have the opportunity to make friends from around the world, learn new skills and make a positive impact on their communities. I'm happy to believe that their hard work will be recognized by an official certification.

Could the minister please tell the members of this House—

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

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): There are several conversations going on in the House while the questions are being asked. I would ask those members to take it outside.

Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: For the sake of absolutely everything, I want to refer it to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport and also the minister responsible for the Pan and Parapan American Games.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to start by thanking the volunteers who are with us here today. I know when I thank them—

Applause.

Hon. Michael Coteau: One of the greatest legacies of these games is our volunteers and the skills that they'll be able to acquire during the games. In fact, they'll be able to take those skills and transfer them to other not-for-profit work, volunteerism and of course employment.

One of the best parts about the volunteer training that we're providing is the accessibility training. We're going to have over 23,000 people greet our spectators, our sport athletes and our visitors to really help every single person of all abilities.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I just want to remind the gallery: We do love you being here, but you're not allowed to participate in the debate by cheering or clapping. I'd ask you to keep order.

MUNICIPALITIES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): New question, the member from—

Interjections: Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: You used to be the only one to get it right.

My question is to the Minister of Rural Affairs. Since being elected, I have continually heard from my rural municipal leaders about the challenges with the unpredictable and declining Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund. This year, my upper- and lower-tier municipalities will see a 20% cut in their OMPF funding for the upcoming year, money that could go to critical infrastructure projects.

I find it interesting that the government website states that the 2015 OMPF funding has been designed to increase targeted support to those municipalities with the most challenging fiscal circumstances. Southwold, in my riding, lost over 50% of their tax base when Ford closed, and as a result the local council has announced that taxes will rise by 45% over the next three years. However, their OMPF funding was also cut 20%.

Minister, how do you define "challenging fiscal circumstances"? Is it your plan to balance the budget on the backs of rural municipalities?

Hon. Jeff Leal: This is an interesting question. It's interesting from the perspective of the party who down-loaded, who had an exercise called Who Does What, which became the "Who got done in" exercise. Municipalities got done in; that's the history of the party opposite.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: Let me continue, Mr. Speaker. Through extensive consultation with ROMA, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, and the Ontario municipal association, we've gone to a formula now of \$15 billion, that provides a set amount every year to municipalities right across the province of Ontario. This is something that municipalities asked for; this is something that we deliver for municipalities. It makes sense. It's a good program. It addresses critical infrastructure needs—

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

Hon. Jeff Leal:—municipalities right across Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Minister, you're talking about policies and decisions made over 15 years ago, and since then you've done nothing to correct them. It's reflected in the election: We are the voice of rural Ontario, on this side of the House. You've got to start listening.

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Your government has mismanaged taxpayers' money for over a decade, and rural municipalities and their residents are paying for it. Under your government, my riding has lost over 6,000 manufacturing jobs and an enormous amount of tax base for my municipalities. Yet, your government continues to cut the OMPF funding.

My rural municipalities do not receive any of the gas tax money, but would like access to it in order to deal with their enormous infrastructure deficits. Rural municipalities in my riding would like to see a three-to-five year projection of their individual OMPF funding allocations so they can prepare their budgets accordingly.

Minister, you're either not standing up for rural Ontario in cabinet or you're being completely ignored. Which is it?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, let me tell you, back in 2008, the then Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the wonderful mayor of Ottawa, Jim Watson, negotiated an unprecedented deal for uploading the services right across Ontario. The services that this party downloaded during their time in government effectively crippled municipal finances right across the province of Ontario.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, come to order.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, our government has listened to municipalities through the 2015 program. We will continue to recognize the challenges of northern and rural municipalities, and better target those with challenging fiscal circumstances. That's why this year the province will be providing \$515 million to 388 municipalities across this province.

Our government has a record of helping municipalities right across Ontario, in comparison to the—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sit down, please. The member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, you're warned.

New question.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, this week, we heard yet another deeply disturbing story of a family being torn apart due to the inadequate developmental services available for children in Ontario. Nine-year-old Niko Leduc suffers from a severe case of reactive detachment disorder, which causes him to be extremely violent

and act out self-destructively. Due to the extremely serious nature of his problems, there is nowhere even close to his Greater Sudbury home that can provide the intensive treatment he needs. Niko's mother, Dr. Nicole Desmarais, has been told that the only way her son can get the care he needs is by making him a crown ward.

Minister, do you believe taking this child away from his mother is an acceptable response to the plight of his family?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. As she knows, I can't discuss the specifics of cases, but I'm always happy to talk with her generally about what we're doing both in developmental services for children and child welfare. On the developmental services front, there have been a number of investments made. In fact, an additional \$5 million this year to reduce wait-lists—

Interjections.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles:—\$5 million this year, Speaker, to reduce wait-lists for different services, such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech-language therapy. These new investments will bring the total for children's rehab services to \$104 million.

Speaker, I know that the member opposite is very interested in the work of our children's aid societies. They do an excellent job each and every day protecting the safety and security of our children, and I welcome further question in the supplementary.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Speaker, first, I would like to remind this minister of a report from the Ombudsman, in May 2005, called *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*. Where are families supposed to go? This is absolutely unacceptable.

Niko is scheduled to come home tomorrow with absolutely no supports. This family is up against a brick wall now. Their son desperately needs specialized care, but he also relies on the loving attention of his mother.

If a child with a physical impairment required treatment, we wouldn't dream of making that child a crown ward. Why is a child with mental health problems treated differently? Does the minister believe that children who need mental health treatment should be treated the same as children with physical health challenges and have the ongoing support of their family?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, I absolutely believe that children and youth with mental health issues should be treated in as timely and as accessible a way as other persons with illnesses and injuries. That's why I recently announced the creation of 14 children's mental health lead agencies across the province to coordinate those programs and services, so that families and children can go to one place to get the services in the community that they need.

We know that 70% of mental health issues start in childhood and adolescence. We know that one in five adults has a mental health issue. Our investments in our comprehensive mental health program are extensive—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Hamilton Mountain, come to order.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: —and the lead agencies I've announced are going to be coordinating that service, helping families navigate.

Next year, I will be announcing more lead agencies, for a total of 34 lead agencies across the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Sit down, please.

Miss Monique Taylor: Shame on you. What if it was your child?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Hamilton Mountain, you are now warned.

New question.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. December 6 is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. This day was established by Canada's Parliament in 1991 to ensure that Canadians would never forget the tragic deaths of 14 young women who were murdered at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal on December 6, 1989. As we mourn the loss of these women today, we are also reminded of all women and girls for whom violence and the threat of violence are daily realities.

Minister, the Premier has placed upon your directorate the responsibility for continuing the work of leading our government's efforts to prevent gender-based violence, with the goal of an Ontario where all women live free from the threat, fear or experience of violence. What initiatives has your directorate implemented to raise awareness of violence against women, strengthen support for victims and focus on prevention?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Davenport for raising this very important issue and raising awareness on this important day. As I've talked about before in this House, our government has increased funding for community services that help deal with domestic violence. That increase has been 55% since 2003, and we actually began these investments at a time when the former government was cutting services, such as to women's shelters. In 2013-14, we're investing \$142 million into these very important services.

I was with the Premier this morning to announce a package of initiatives to raise awareness of sexual violence and harassment; to enhance prevention initiatives to combat sexual discrimination, harassment and violence; and to improve support for victims of sexual assault and harassment. We remain very much committed to an Ontario free of domestic violence and sexual violence, because we believe that every woman has a right to feel safe and secure, wherever they may be.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you, Minister. I think this government has demonstrated that women and their children in crisis are a priority. Recently, there has been a very bright light shone on the importance of supporting women suffering from abuse and harassment, but the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women reminds us that this is a difficult problem that has been troubling society and its victims for a very long time.

Sometimes there is a lack of awareness or information as to the availability or accessibility of resources out there. In Davenport, several not-for-profit organizations provide shelter and counselling for women who have suffered domestic violence. For example, Abrigo and the South Asian Women's Centre both offer a positive environment where women facing abuse can receive a wide array of support.

Constituents in my riding of Davenport and advocates have expressed interest in knowing exactly how the government is addressing the needs of women and children at risk. Minister, could you please explain what services and supports are available to women and their children suffering from threats of domestic violence and abuse?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

1140

Hon. Helena Jaczek: As recognized by the minister responsible for women's issues, and through the leadership of our Premier, supporting women who have suffered from sexual and domestic violence is very important to our government. We fund over 200 agencies across the province dedicated to assisting women experiencing violence. In the last year, over 18,000 women and children were served at one of the 96 emergency shelters funded by the government. Over 49,000 women and children visited one of the 177 government-funded counselling agencies that provide crisis/support counselling, sexual assault counselling and long-term therapeutic counselling. Over 55,000 calls from women in need were answered by one of the provincial crisis helplines that are available 24/7.

As we reflect on the unfortunate examples of domestic and sexual violence and from my conversations with the staff of these hard-working agencies, we understand the impact these support services can have on an individual's life and the need for our work to continue.

FIRE SAFETY

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Fire Chief Cynthia Ross Tustin of the Essa fire department from my riding of Simcoe-Grey is Ontario's leading voice in support of the rural residential sprinkler campaign. Minister, I believe Chief Tustin has raised this matter with you directly.

As you know, rural firefighters face several different challenges than their urban colleagues, including longer travel times over greater distances and the need to bring their own water supply to put out fires in most cases.

Sprinkler systems in rural homes would improve public safety and the ability of rural firefighters to do their jobs.

Minister, will your ministry implement Chief Tustin's request to help reduce costs for rural Ontarians who want to install sprinklers in their homes?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for asking a very important question. He's absolutely right. I had a great opportunity to meet with the chief of Essa at the plowing match. She was very generous with her time and gave me a very good tour of a model home that demonstrated the different kinds of technologies that exist when it comes to residential sprinklers that could help, of course, in making sure that our homes are safe and communities are safe as well.

As a result of that conversation, of course, we've followed up, and we're working with the chief in looking into the matter and having a very engaging conversation to see what next steps we need to take to ensure that our homes are safe in our communities.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the minister: The rural residential sprinkler campaign builds on other practical and responsible public safety measures adopted by this House, like smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors. Chief Tustin has discussed with you the idea of establishing a tax credit or other incentives to encourage people living in rural areas to install a fire sprinkler system in their home on a voluntary basis. Such incentives could be similar to existing tax credits to encourage people to make their homes more energy efficient, for example.

Minister, on behalf of rural residents and their brave local firefighters, will the government take steps to reduce costs for rural Ontarians who want to install sprinklers?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member. He's absolutely right. I have to give credit to the chief from Essa for really doing her due diligence. She has done a lot of good work in that regard, and she has come up with very constructive solutions as to how we can enable homeowners to be able to put fire sprinklers in their homes. She has done tremendous work. We are very much engaged with her in ensuring that we find ways to prevent fires, to make sure that our homes are safe.

We are very proud of the fact that we have made sprinklers mandatory in multi-unit residential buildings and in care facilities as well. Perhaps this is the next step, and I look forward to working with the chief on this matter.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order, the member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Considering the use of the clock today, I would ask you to extend question period and allow us to do our question that we should have got in.

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

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Hamilton

Mountain has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Children and Youth Services concerning developmental health services for children. This matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

VISITORS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I just noticed that a very dynamic young man from my community of Ottawa Centre is in the House. I want to welcome Fritz Okrah to Queen's Park. Great to see you, Fritz.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the government—the opposition leader.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Well, I'll be in government soon. Three and a half years, folks.

Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent that the orders for second and third reading of Bill 16, An Act to proclaim Christmas Tree Day, be called immediately and that the question on the motions for second and third reading of the bill be put immediately without debate or amendment.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member seeks unanimous consent to move a motion on Bill 16. Agreed? I hear a no.

Mr. Todd Smith: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Actually, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to welcome a guest who is up in the lobby upstairs, one of the most exciting athletes to ever take the field in the Canadian Football League. Mike "Pinball" Clemons is in the House today. Welcome.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I only wish he had been playing for the Ticats last week.

DEFERRED VOTES

SECURITY FOR COURTS, ELECTRICITY
GENERATING FACILITIES
AND NUCLEAR FACILITIES ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR
LA SÉCURITÉ DES TRIBUNAUX,
DES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES
ET DES INSTALLATIONS NUCLÉAIRES

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court

security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014 / Projet de loi 35, Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics, modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui concerne la sécurité des tribunaux et édictant la Loi de 2014 sur la sécurité des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 35, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014.

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

The division bells rang from 1147 to 1152.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask all members to take their seats.

On November 25, Mr. Naqvi moved second reading of Bill 35. All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Hardeman, Ernie	Murray, Glen R.
Anderson, Granville	Hatfield, Percy	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hillier, Randy	Naqvi, Yasir
Arnott, Ted	Hoggarth, Ann	Natyshak, Taras
Bailey, Robert	Horwath, Andrea	Nicholls, Rick
Baker, Yvan	Hoskins, Eric	Oraziotti, David
Ballard, Chris	Hunter, Mitzie	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Jaczek, Helena	Potts, Arthur
Bisson, Gilles	Jones, Sylvia	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Kiwala, Sophie	Rinaldi, Lou
Chan, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Sattler, Peggy
Clark, Steve	Leal, Jeff	Scott, Laurie
Colle, Mike	MacCharles, Tracy	Sergio, Mario
Coteau, Michael	MacLeod, Lisa	Singh, Jagmeet
Crack, Grant	Malhi, Harinder	Smith, Todd
Damerla, Dipika	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Del Duca, Steven	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Delaney, Bob	Martins, Cristina	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Martow, Gila	Taylor, Monique
Dickson, Joe	Matthews, Deborah	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dong, Han	Mauro, Bill	Vanthof, John
Duguid, Brad	McDonnell, Jim	Vernile, Daiene
Fedell, Victor	McGarry, Kathryn	Walker, Bill
Fife, Catherine	McMahon, Eleanor	Wilson, Jim
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMeekin, Ted	Wong, Soo
Forster, Cindy	Meilleur, Madeleine	Yakabuski, John
Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.	Yurek, Jeff
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Norm	Zimmer, David
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Paul	
Gretzky, Lisa	Munro, Julia	

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 91; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 3, the bill is ordered referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

VISITORS

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

Mr. Steve Clark: Nepean—Carleton.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): — Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to invite all members to the front lawn. There are going to be members of the taxi industry from the city of Toronto there today, and I'm sure they'd like to hear from their representatives.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I would like to introduce a visitor who has just arrived here at the Legislature: my daughter. Her name is Claire Matlock, and she's a third-year student at the University of Waterloo.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1157 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Arthur Potts: They're not here yet because they're stuck in a lineup, but Zulfiqar Ali and Majeed Shidfar worked very, very hard on my campaign. They're taxi drivers who live and work in my neighbourhood. They're here with Christine Gail, Beck cabs, to see an introduction of a private member's bill. I welcome them, when they arrive.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JEAN BÉLIVEAU

Mr. Todd Smith: Yesterday, we lost a hockey legend. For anyone who grew up watching hockey in this country, Jean Béliveau stood as a monument to the game at its very best. There is only one Big Jean Béliveau.

Over the years, he came to personify the heights of character and heart in his sport while doing so for the franchise that dominated it, and I say that as a Toronto Maple Leafs fan.

Rising above the petty jealousies that are too often directed at dominant teams, fans of all stripes gave Béliveau only the highest regard and esteem. In this regard, in the pantheon of sport, he's matched only by Joe DiMaggio.

Jean Béliveau is remembered almost more for his unmatched class and leadership off the ice than he is for his play. That's quite a statement for the guy who, to this day, is the all-time leading scorer for the most storied franchise in hockey history.

Yesterday, a quote from former teammate Rejean Houle was the quote of the day at NHL.com: "When I came on the team in 1970-71, I came in the room and I said, 'Hi, Mr. Béliveau.' He said, 'Look, don't call me Mr. Béliveau. We're going to play together. You can call

me Jean.' I always had a problem getting his name to be Jean. For me it was always Mr. Béliveau."

I had the chance to meet Jean Béliveau on numerous occasions: once when he was doing his book tour—he signed a book for my dad, who is a big Jean Béliveau fan—and I interviewed him several times in my previous job as a radio broadcaster.

Losing Jean Béliveau was a loss for more than Habs fans; losing Jean Béliveau was a loss for the country.

BELLA LEACH

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Today I'm honoured to take this opportunity to acknowledge a very special woman in my riding who has devoted her life to helping others. With tomorrow being International Volunteer Day, I feel it's imperative to acknowledge Bella Leach and her many contributions.

This year, Bella Leach received a Volunteer Service Award from the province of Ontario, honouring over 50 years of dedicated service to St. Joseph's Health Care in London.

As a young girl, Bella dreamed of being a nurse, so when she was older, volunteering at the hospital seemed like a natural match.

Bella has volunteered in many capacities within the hospital, always giving everything she could to help people she saw going through difficult times.

An accomplished artist who works in many mediums, including pottery, stained glass, embroidery, doll-making and many more, Bella has always loved to share her talents with those around her. At the hospital, she would crochet multicoloured butterflies to adorn the incubators of newborn infants, as well as make finger puppets for young children and soft dolls for children to cuddle before and after surgery.

Always wanting to give more, Bella also volunteered with other patients in the hospital. She helped on the in-patient floors, assisted patients with walking, eating or personal care, all the while providing a friendly and encouraging smile to everyone she met.

Bella's passion and commitment to helping others is an inspiration to me and to all those who have the privilege of meeting her.

I would like to thank Bella, on behalf of all those she has helped in the past 50 years—and the years to come—for her kindness and generous spirit.

BABCOCK AND WILCOX

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: My riding of Cambridge is built on a foundation of manufacturing, and I rise today to speak about one company in particular which exemplifies the industrial heritage of my community.

Babcock and Wilcox Canada's Cambridge facility was established in 1844 and has grown from a small foundry, manufacturing industrial machinery, to a world leader in the design, engineering, manufacture, construction and service of steam-generation equipment.

For over 170 years, Babcock and Wilcox has been a staple of Cambridge's manufacturing sector. Today, they employ over 650 people at their Cambridge facility.

Speaker, last Thursday in Cambridge, I was pleased to be on the factory floor to see the signing of a long-term master service agreement between Babcock and Wilcox and Bruce Power. This agreement, which president John MacQuarrie called one of the biggest service contracts they've ever signed, will provide an anticipated value of over \$300 million and represents more than 100 new jobs at the Cambridge facility.

Speaker, I'm always pleased to stand in this House and highlight the robust manufacturing companies that we have in Cambridge and to speak about the positive success and growth in my community. As a matter of fact, advanced manufacturing in Cambridge has grown by 4% in the last couple of years. It was wonderful for the employees to hear so much praise for their high-quality workmanship.

TERRY SANDERSON

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'd like to take this moment to speak of the tremendous loss of lacrosse great Terry Sanderson. Terry Sanderson passed away on Thursday, November 27. Terry was an icon in the lacrosse world in Dufferin-Caledon, Ontario, nationally and internationally. His presence will be missed by the entire National Lacrosse League. The commissioner of the NLL, George Daniel, said "Terry Sanderson was a giant in the sport," and he was absolutely right.

As a player, coach and executive, Terry's influence on the game was instrumental. His successes included a national championship, three senior B titles, two Mann Cups and three Minto Cups. But more than these successes, since 1972, Terry turned the game of lacrosse into a lifelong passion. He inspired hundreds of players, coaches and fans throughout his career.

He was an obvious choice for the first inductee of the Orangeville Sports Hall of Fame in 2005 because of his legacy with Orangeville Northmen as a player and coach. He will also be greatly missed by his current team, the Toronto Rock.

Those who knew Terry understood his passion for the game. A former teammate described him best in our local newspaper as "Mr. Lacrosse."

I would like to offer my deepest sympathies to the Sanderson family for the sudden and tragic death of Terry Sanderson. He will be missed.

ARTS EDUCATION

Ms. Jennifer K. French: One of the most beautiful things about Queen's Park is the ever-changing art and culture on the walls and in the halls. Right now, visitors to Queen's Park can enjoy the incredible art of young Ontarians being showcased through the Youth Arts Program that was launched in 2012.

As we know, I am coming to the Legislature by way of the classroom, where youthful expression is always on display. Last year, my intermediate students had the opportunity to participate in an Ontario Arts Council program called ArtsSmarts. ArtsSmarts partners local artists and educators, and the goal is to reach all learners. Students can be engaged and be creative in exciting new ways.

My students worked with local photographer and artist Colin Burwell, and I am pleased to be able to welcome Colin to Queen's Park today. Colin came to our school and took photos to create a piece of art. He captured not only the students but their own creative representation of what hope looks like in their world. He shared not only their messages but gave voice to children from an underprivileged community with important things to say. Together, they created a striking canvas of black and white images of themselves and their messages. This canvas hangs at Glen Street Public School in Oshawa as a tribute to hope, creativity and resilience.

There is also a canvas that hangs in my office here at Queen's Park. It is both a beautiful piece of art and an anchor to the important reasons we are all here: the hopeful future of our province. My door is always open in the office. Come visit, come see my students and appreciate their enduring optimism and hope. And as we spend time here at Queen's Park, let's remember to take the time to appreciate the art, history and rich stories that surround us.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Last week, I had the privilege of travelling to Windsor on behalf of Minister Chan to attend two regional Minister's Employers Tables. While I was there in that great city, I had the opportunity to visit a number of organizations working to integrate newcomers to our province.

In Windsor, I saw the incredible work going on at the Mason Educational Centre, which is an adult learning centre for the Greater Essex County District School Board. I also had the pleasure of meeting the member from Windsor-Tecumseh's wife, who is a school board trustee there. The Mason centre runs adult non-credit English as a second-language programs for recent immigrants to Ontario, offering these newcomers an opportunity to earn a language certificate that can be used for their federal citizenship applications. One of the students at the Mason centre told me that it was an excellent school because, "Here, the teachers teach from the heart."

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I also visited the Windsor campus of Collège Boréal and toured their impressive facility. The college, which supports mainly newcomers from Congo, Haiti, Burundi, Rwanda and Syria, provides adult language classes, settlement assistance, employment programs and bridge training. I heard from one staff member and clients about the importance of this kind of one-stop shop, where new immigrants can learn English or French, get guidance on

opportunities for employment and even participate in practice interviews—all while their kids are in the day-care centre down the hall. They're also able to meet others who are all experiencing the same thing.

I'm proud that the government is funding, and continues to fund, these crucial programs, and I look forward to seeing more newcomer settlement agencies across the province.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION DAY

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm proud to help celebrate Wildlife Conservation Day. Wildlife Conservation Day promotes the conservation and protection of threatened species, specifically elephants, rhinos and tigers. It raises public awareness regarding the harmful security, economic and environmental effects of wildlife poaching and trafficking. Many populations consider some charismatic species as part of their natural heritage, and these species often provide revenues from tourism that not only contribute to local economies but also to the continuity of conservation efforts.

However, overexploitation puts the survival of many wildlife species at risk. Once these wildlife species have been wiped from their native towns and villages, these areas suffer terrible damages and experience a decline in their economies by becoming irrelevant wildlife tourism destinations.

Not only is wildlife being killed, but park rangers are also getting caught in the line of fire by the poachers that they are trying to stop. Once a poacher does escape, though, they traffic unscreened wildlife and wildlife parts across the world, which increases the risk of human health pandemics. Therefore, wildlife poaching and trafficking affects everything from biodiversity to park rangers to citizens across the world.

This global occasion, World Wildlife Conservation Day, provides everyone with the opportunity to learn more about wildlife conservation and to be part of the solution to wildlife crime in our future.

MILTON SOCCER ACADEMY

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Last Saturday, I attended an event in my riding to celebrate the incredible contributions made by parents, coaches, referees and other volunteers associated with the Milton Soccer Academy. The academy was originally founded in September 2004 as a non-profit organization by Uwe Samstag-Schnock, Dolly Pawlak and Michael Walter. It started with a small group of 24 players aged 9 to 11 and has since expanded to cater to an array of boys, girls, men and women at a variety of skill levels and age groups. Indoor soccer is even available through the winter.

My kids have been involved with this academy over the years, and it has since become an important part of our growing community in Halton. It keeps us feeling young, healthy and active. But perhaps most importantly,

it brings people together. Out on the field, we build new relationships, learn about teamwork and make new friends.

That night was really about celebrating the people behind the scenes: the people who have selflessly volunteered their time and their talents so that people can have the chance to get out, compete and play a sport that they love.

Making a difference through volunteering starts with one simple act: the act of deciding that you care and that you want to have a positive impact on your community. I think we should all be proud to live in a province where the spirit of volunteerism is so strong.

Speaker, I want to thank you for having us speak here today, and I want to thank the volunteers who were there that evening for coming out and showing their support for a wonderful club.

PAPAL AWARDS

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Last week, four Waterloo region residents were recognized by His Holiness Pope Francis with papal honours for their remarkable contributions to our community. They are among 15 people in our diocese to receive this very distinguished honour.

Joe and Stephanie Mancini, whom I've known for a very long time, were each awarded the Bene Merenti Medal for the Working Centre. This is a very unique facility in downtown Kitchener that was founded by the Mancinis more than 30 years ago. They provide a daily soup kitchen, housing, a job search resource centre, used computers, second-hand furniture, used bicycles for those in need and many other programs, all targeted at eliminating poverty.

The Bene Merenti Medal was also awarded to palliative care specialist Dr. Donna Ward for her commitment to dying patients. She has worked with a number of hospitals and local organizations, advancing palliative care programs, and she has also served at the Grand River Regional Cancer Centre from 1989 to 2009.

Finally, Shari Guinta received a papal honour for her work with affordable housing and for her profound contributions to the national council of the Catholic Women's League.

Mr. Speaker, I am so honoured to represent a riding that is home to such caring constituents, and I hope that their contributions to my community will inspire others there to do great things as well.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 21, An Act to safeguard health care integrity by enacting the Voluntary Blood Donations Act, 2014 and by amending certain statutes with respect to the regulation of pharmacies and other matters concerning regulated health professions / *Projet de loi 21, Loi visant à sauvegarder l'intégrité des soins de santé par l'édiction de la Loi de 2014 sur le don de sang volontaire et la modification de certaines lois en ce qui concerne la réglementation des pharmacies et d'autres questions relatives aux professions de la santé réglementées.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 25, 2014, the bill is ordered for third reading.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley: Before we introduce bills, a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Deputy government House leader.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was waiting for you to do that.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The House leader of the NDP was waiting for me to do this.

I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to do the proceedings in the following manner: Statements by ministries and responses, followed by petitions.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, that's what we usually do.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Sorry—following petitions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The deputy government House leader seeks unanimous consent to move a motion regarding today's proceedings. Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BANDIT TAXI CAB SAFETY AND ENFORCEMENT ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LES TAXIS PIRATES (SÉCURITÉ ET EXÉCUTION)

Ms. MacLeod moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to the transportation of passengers for compensation without a licence, permit or authorization / *Projet de loi 55, Loi modifiant le Code de la route à l'égard du transport de passagers moyennant rémunération sans permis de conduire, certificat d'immatriculation ou autorisation.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Shall the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This bill is being put forward today by me as a result of a decades-long issue in the city of Ottawa and other places in Ontario, where we have been dealing with bandit or so-called “gypsy” cabs, illegal taxi cabs that have on occasion resulted in sexual assault of and violence against women, and convictions to that extent.

This bill would amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to offences related to picking up a passenger for the purpose of transporting him or her for compensation without a licence, permit or authorization. The bill gives municipal law enforcement officers the power to stop motor vehicles, request the surrender of a licence, permit or authorization and request identification to enforce these offences.

The fines for the offences are increased. In addition, the bill provides for administrative impounds of motor vehicles if an officer believes that a person has picked up a passenger for the purpose of transporting him or her for compensation without a licence, a permit or authorization.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Notwithstanding what I believe will be support for the bill, I think the member may have used untraditional language in referring to bandit cabs by what I would consider an unfortunate ethnic representation.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I don't believe so.

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PETITIONS

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

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

“Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Soliris for patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome (aHUS), an ultra-rare, chronic and life-threatening genetic condition that progressively damages vital organs, leading to heart attack, stroke and kidney failure; and

“Whereas Soliris, the first and only pharmaceutical treatment in Canada for the treatment of aHUS, has allowed patients to discontinue plasma and dialysis therapies, and has been shown to improve kidney function and enable successful kidney transplant; and

“Whereas the lack of public funding for Soliris is especially burdensome on the families of Ontario children and adults battling this catastrophic disease;

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

“Instruct the Ontario government to immediately provide Soliris as a choice to patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding.”

This was just in the news; we have a situation in my riding that breaks your heart. I totally agree with this petition, and I'll send it to the desk with Joshua.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Whereas there are an estimated 100,000 to 300,000 unpaid internships in Canada each year; and

“Whereas youth unemployment in Ontario is over 15%; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Labour is not adequately enforcing the laws on unpaid internships;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take the following actions:

“(1) Proactively enforce the law on unpaid internships;

“(2) Engage in an educational campaign to inform students, youth, employers, educational institutions and the general public of the laws surrounding unpaid internships; and

“(3) Undertake a comprehensive review of the current laws surrounding unpaid internships in Ontario.”

I couldn't agree more with this petition, affix my name to it and will give it to page Ethan to take to the table.

CREDIT UNIONS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

“Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers' resources;

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

“Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario's economy and create jobs in three ways:

“—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

“—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

“—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries.”

I agree with this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Kelsey to bring forward.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

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

“Whereas patient care and services at rural and smaller hospitals across Ontario, including at Wingham and District Hospital, are being adversely affected by too low provincial funding for hospitals;

“Whereas too low funding is resulting in widespread service and bed closures and nursing and other hospital staffing cuts;

“Whereas the Wingham and District Hospital is not receiving appropriate funding to meet the needs of the community;

“Whereas to deal with provincial underfunding for hospitals, the Wingham and District Hospital is now cutting services and front line hospital staff;

“Whereas service and staff cuts at the Wingham and District Hospital will have a negative impact on patient care and threaten the future viability of our local hospital;

“Whereas broad policy shifts for health care are moving services out of smaller community hospitals like Wingham and District Hospital into larger hospital centres. This is forcing local residents to travel out of the community to access needed health services once available at their local hospital;

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

“(1) To stop the service and staff cuts at the Wingham and District Hospital;

“(2) To increase the level of funding to the Wingham and District Hospital so that the hospital can:

— maintain services that patients need;

— ensure adequate staffing levels to support quality patient care;

— continue to provide patients with local access to quality health services so they don’t have to go out of the community to access the health services they need.”

I’ll affix my signature to this petition and send it to the desk with Hannah.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas social assistance benefits in Ontario leave recipients far below the poverty line, struggling to meet the basic costs of living, and without any resources to handle emergencies;

“Whereas the provincial government recently cut the Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit;

“Whereas the Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit helped families pay for basic utilities in emergency situations and helped prevent people from becoming homeless;

“Whereas this program provided options for vulnerable people including women, children and people with disabilities to escape domestic violence and transition to safer housing;

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

“That the province of Ontario restore full funding for the Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit and ensure that it goes directly to those who need it.”

I sign this petition and give it to the page Moiz to deliver.

CREDIT UNIONS

Mrs. Cristina Martins: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

“Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers’ resources;

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

“Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario’s economy and create jobs in three ways:

— maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

— show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

— allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries.”

I couldn’t agree more with this petition. I’m going to affix my name to it and give it to page Mikaila.

LYME DISEASE

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

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

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

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

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

I totally agree with this petition, will affix my signature and I'll send it to the desk with Ethan.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Granville Anderson: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada; and

“Whereas scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe;

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

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verifiable tests for acute and chronic Lyme disease in Ontario, to provide all that is necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have all diagnostic and successful treatment protocols, including natural remedies, available to patients and physicians.”

I agree with this petition, and I will affix my name to it and give it to page Hannah.

WIND TURBINES

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

“In light of the many wide-ranging concerns being raised by Ontario citizens and 80-plus action groups across Ontario and the irrefutable international evidence of a flawed technology, health concerns, environmental effects, bird and bat kills, property losses, the tearing apart of families, friends and communities, and unprecedented costs;

“We, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to declare an Ontario-wide moratorium on the development of wind farms.”

I agree with this petition, and I will send it to the desk with Mikaila.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Whereas Alzheimer's disease is a degenerative brain disease that causes thinking and memory impairment. Alzheimer's disease is progressive, worsens over time and will eventually lead to death;

“Whereas there is an estimated 208,000 Ontarians diagnosed with Alzheimer's and related dementia today, and that number is set to increase by 40% in the next 10 years;

“Whereas Alzheimer's disease creates emotional, social and economic burdens on the family and supports of those suffering with the disease—over 25% of those providing personal supports to survivors of Alzheimer's disease and related dementia are seniors;

“Whereas the total economic burden of dementia in Ontario is expected to increase by more than \$770 million per year through to 2020; and

“Whereas Ontario's strategy for Alzheimer's disease and related dementia has not been revised since the implementation of a five-year strategy in 1999;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to immediately review, revise and implement an updated, research-informed, comprehensive strategy to respond to and prepare for the rapidly growing needs of those living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia.”

I fully support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Noah to take to the table.

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This is a petition on ending coal for cleaner air in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontarians have growing concerns surrounding climate change and the quality of our air, it is integral that more is done to provide Ontarians with cleaner air;

“Whereas the combustion of coal to generate electricity is conducive toward higher levels of carbon dioxide emissions, which pollute the air and contribute immensely toward climate change;

“Whereas the cessation of coal use as a means of generating electricity in the Atikokan, Lambton, Nanticoke, and Thunder Bay generating facilities will result in cleaner air for Ontarians, which will ensure the long-term preservation of our air, environment, and public health;

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

“That all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support Bill 9, the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act, to stop generating facilities from using coal to produce electricity, which will eliminate high levels of

carbon dioxide emissions and will in turn ensure cleaner air for Ontarians now and for future generations.”

I happily sign this petition, and I shall give it to Kelsey.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. Ted Arnott: I was pleased to work with the Alzheimer Society on this petition, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases of the brain that cause thinking, memory and physical functioning to become seriously impaired;

“Whereas there is no known cause or cure for this devastating illness; and

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias also take their toll on hundreds of thousands of families and care partners; and

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians today, with an annual total economic burden rising to \$15.7 billion by 2020; and

“Whereas the cost related to the health care system is in the billions and only going to increase, at a time when our health care system is already facing enormous financial challenges; and

“Whereas there is work under way to address the need, but no coordinated or comprehensive approach to tackling the issues; and

“Whereas there is an urgent need to plan and raise awareness and understanding about Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people it touches;

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

“To approve the development of a comprehensive Ontario dementia plan that would include the development of strategies in primary health care, in health promotion and prevention of illness, in community development, in building community capacity and care partner engagement, in caregiver support and investments in research.”

I’ve affixed my signature as well, Mr. Speaker.

VISITORS

Mr. Arthur Potts: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order: the member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Mr. Speaker, if you would indulge me, my friends from the taxi industry whom I introduced earlier are now in the House. They’re here with other representatives of the taxi industry to witness the introduction of a private member’s bill. We welcome you to the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would like all members in the Legislature to join me in wel-

coming Mr. Doug Reycraft, in the east members’ gallery, the member for Middlesex in the 33rd and 34th Parliaments. Welcome.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY

Hon. Michael Chan: Tomorrow, December 5, is International Volunteer Day. In 1985, the United Nations General Assembly designated December 5 as Volunteer Day, to shine a light on the contributions volunteers make locally, nationally, and globally. It’s a day for all of us to celebrate the positive impact that volunteering has on communities all over the world.

Giving the precious gift of time to help others is true generosity. In Ontario, more than five million selfless people give their time and energy to help their neighbours and communities every year.

Volunteers demonstrate the true meaning of citizenship. We are very lucky in Ontario to have a high level of civic engagement, and I take pride in recognizing the amazing work of our volunteers.

Our government has established a number of recognition programs, including the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards, the June Callwood awards, the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers and the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship. For example, in the 2014 volunteer service awards, we recognized more than 11,000 Ontarians.

It’s also important to nurture the volunteer spirit in our young people. They are the future. One way we do this is through ChangeTheWorld: Ontario Youth Volunteer Challenge. In 2014, more than 39,000 young people took part in more than 700 volunteer events across the province.

ChangeTheWorld is both a great way to earn the volunteer hours needed to graduate from high school and a wonderful way to start a lifetime of volunteering.

Another great opportunity for volunteering is the 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games. Some 23,000 volunteers will be part of an exceptional, once-in-a-lifetime experience, while receiving specialized training that will help build their careers.

Earlier today, Speaker, in the gallery we were joined by 40 of these volunteers, who will help make the games a memorable experience for 1.4 million spectators and 10,000 athletes and officials from 41 nations across the Americas and the Caribbean.

Welcome to the House. We love you.

We are also looking for ways to help Ontario’s newcomers use their experience and skills by volunteering. Almost 40% of newcomers to Canada come to Ontario, and when they volunteer, they can help a diverse range of people and connect to their community.

On this International Volunteer Day, please join me in thanking Ontario’s many, many volunteers for their

wonderful contributions to people and communities across the province.

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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: This coming Saturday is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. December 6 marks 25 years since the 1989 murder of 14 young women at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal by a man who claimed to be fighting feminism.

Red rose buttons have been distributed in memory of the 14 young women whose lives ended in an act of gender-based violence that absolutely shocked the nation. Today we take time to reflect on those last 25 years and commit to preventing gender-based violence in the future.

In addition to the 14 Montreal women lost, many other lives continue to be lost to gender-based violence. Today there are 1,181 missing and murdered aboriginal women in this country. We know that last year, too many women in Ontario lost their lives as a result of gender-based violence. They, too, must be remembered.

In recent weeks, violence against women has dominated media and public conversation, but this is not a recent issue. It's a long-standing one, and it crosses all cultures, classes and sectors. While progress is being made, transforming entrenched attitudes and behaviours takes time. Together we must recognize the inequality that women face and take action against it.

Gender-based violence takes place in homes, schools, workplaces, and across communities. It comes in many forms: physical, sexual and psychological. These are all preventable, and they must stop, with our collective commitment.

It's estimated that one in three Canadian women will experience sexual assault in their lifetime, and nearly half of Canadians know at least one woman who has been sexually or physically assaulted. These statistics are completely devastating and unacceptable. This could be a woman sitting beside you on the subway, a colleague or a family member. It could even be anyone here.

Violence can sometimes go unseen and unnoticed, devastating the lives it touches. We also know that violence against women is significantly underreported for a number of reasons. We must challenge the social norms that perpetuate this silence, and provide appropriate support to victims.

In Ontario, we are focused on working with our community partners and other government ministries to end violence against women. Over the past three decades, the Ontario Women's Directorate has played, and continues to play, an important role in effecting and influencing positive change for women's equality here in Ontario.

We have implemented many initiatives under our domestic violence and sexual violence action plans to prevent violence against women and strengthen support for victims. This includes public education campaigns in

diverse communities across Ontario, which equip those closest to a woman with the skills to identify the signs of violence and to intervene effectively. We have also trained over 37,000 front-line professionals and service providers to detect domestic and sexual violence and to support those victims.

As we mourn the loss of all women lost to violence, I challenge all of us to take action against violence against women and inequality in our own communities. By recognizing inequality and encouraging change, we can make a difference. Let's bring violence against women out of the shadows and into the light of day, where we can work together to end it once and for all.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Laurie Scott: I rise today to speak on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Exactly 25 years ago, on December 6, 1989, 14 young women were killed at l'École Polytechnique in Montreal.

These smart young women were engineering students. They were full of promise, preparing for interesting, challenging careers. Like previous generations of women, they were poised to make a difference in what had previously been a male-dominated profession. Tragically, these 14 young women were killed because they were women.

It is an occasion to remember the women murdered, and it's important for all of us to recommit to ensuring that their deaths were not in vain. As we mourn the loss of the students at École Polytechnique, it is important for us to be mindful that many women and girls have been murdered or abused since then. We know the majority of men do not use or condone violence, but most of the violence in Canada is committed by men.

The statistics are alarming. Statistics Canada reports that women are three times more likely than men to be killed, sexually assaulted or threatened with a weapon by a male partner. According to YWCA Canada, there are 460,000 sexual assaults in Canada every year. Only 33 of every 1,000 sexual assault cases are reported to the police, and 29 are recorded as a crime. These numbers speak volumes about how many assailants walk free and why women may be afraid to press charges against their abusers.

Violence against women continues to be part of our present, as we have seen throughout the media in the past several weeks. Because of these high-profile cases, we've all been forced to confront an ugly elephant in the room that has been ignored for far too long. Sexual harassment and assault is not an isolated occurrence. It's not something that only affects vulnerable women. It affects all of us. It's time that we acknowledge this fact and find a way to deal with it.

It is encouraging when more victims of sexual assault are finding the strength to speak up and share their experience. Each person who comes forward to tell their

story is lending their voice to those victims still silenced and tormented by such abuse. We need to continue to work to end violence against women and girls as part of our commitment to women's equality. It's important for all of us in this chamber, as policy-makers and community members, to participate in the critical work of creating a society where domestic violence is no longer viewed as an inevitable social ill. Together, we must take action to build a healthier society, to foster resilience and to prevent domestic violence before it occurs.

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's my honour to rise on behalf of the PC caucus to mark International Volunteer Day. It doesn't take very long for us to be in this chamber and listen to the 90-second statements that all of us give on a weekly basis, to learn very quickly that our communities thrive and our communities are unique and special because of the volunteer commitments that people make. I love the comment our Governor General, David Johnston, makes, that whether you give your time, your talent or your treasure, thank you for your volunteerism.

It's such an easy thing for us to give, and in this season of giving, I think it's very important that we remember that in our own communities it's the Kinsmen who put on the Santa Claus parades, it's the Lions who fundraise and ensure that we have service animals, it's the Rotary Club volunteers who are working so hard to eradicate polio around the world. We really do need to acknowledge and thank them.

I often am told, "I don't volunteer because I want thanks." Conversely, we as legislators, we as leaders in our community, need to acknowledge that the work they do makes our communities special, makes our communities grow. We need to encourage that volunteerism, because we're not all the same. Every one of our communities has special festivals and special programs in place. I think of my own with Family Transition Place: many, many volunteers helping women get out of abusive situations; volunteering in the schools to make sure our young people know that abuse is not the norm. We have to encourage that, and we have to continue to enable and foster it in any way we can.

It is a great honour to join the minister and say thank you to our outstanding volunteers.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Peggy Sattler: For every generation, there is a defining moment, a moment that is seared into our collective consciousness and shapes the way we see the world. For many of us in this Legislature, that moment was December 6, 1989, the day that 14 young women were systematically separated from their male classmates and murdered at École Polytechnique in Montreal.

I remember the shock and incomprehension as I heard the news, the anger and the sorrow as I realized how inextricably bound I was to these 14 women because of

my age, because of my gender, because of my belief in my right to full and equal participation in economic and civic life.

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In the aftermath of that horrific event, the Canadian Labour Congress issued the powerful call to action, "First mourn, then work for change."

In 1991, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women was established in Canada thanks to a private member's bill by NDP member of Parliament Dawn Black.

For 25 years, December 6 has become a benchmark for all of us because of what has changed and what has not changed in its wake. It is a day for us to join together and mourn the loss of those 14 young women and to remember those who continue to be injured or killed as the result of intimate partner violence and those who continue to experience sexual assault, sexual harassment and stalking.

Equally important, December 6 is a day for us to reflect on what we are doing to change the social, political and economic structures that perpetuate violence against women and children.

Every day in Ontario, women and children flee abusive homes to take refuge in women's shelters, but many remain trapped in violent relationships because of poverty, discrimination, lack of affordable housing, lack of child care and an economy that relies increasingly on precarious work. For those who are employed, too often the violence follows them to their workplaces. For aboriginal women, the reality of violence is much higher, with almost 1,200 aboriginal women murdered or missing in Canada.

For too long, this Liberal government has ignored recommendations on how to prevent intimate partner homicides. It has relied on a piecemeal, project-based approach to domestic violence and sexual assault, instead of advancing a comprehensive and integrated violence prevention strategy that recognizes ending violence against women as an economic and social justice imperative; a shared priority for every ministry, every sector, every community and every citizen in Ontario.

Twenty-five years later, on this December 6, let us commit to real change that will finally put an end to the scourge of violence against women.

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I am so pleased to rise today to speak to this important item. Tomorrow, December 5, is International Volunteer Day, a day when we pay special tribute to those who selflessly give of their own time to make a difference in our communities and the lives of others locally, nationally and globally.

United Nations Volunteers founded International Volunteer Day in 1985. Since then, governments, the UN system and civil society organizations have successfully joined volunteers around the world to celebrate this day every 5th of December.

I especially look forward to celebrating the major milestone of IVD's 30th anniversary next year.

Volunteering and community engagement empower people to change the world from the grassroots up, and it's so important that we take the time to recognize those efforts and thank those who go above and beyond every day.

I also want to share a few hidden secrets that volunteers around the globe already know. Volunteering is good for you. It connects you to others. It's also good for your mind and body. It can help combat depression and help you stay physically active. It brings fun and fulfilment to your life, and it increases self-confidence. There is the science to prove it, as well, according to a special health report published by Harvard Health Publications. Helping others kindles happiness, as many studies have demonstrated.

When researchers at the London School of Economics examined the relationship between volunteering and measures of happiness in a large group of adults, they found that the more people volunteered, the happier they were, according to a study in Social Science and Medicine.

While many people cite lack of time when it comes to volunteering, I challenge you to try volunteering as a family. While it might be a challenge to coordinate everyone's schedules, volunteering as a family has many worthwhile benefits. Children watch everything you do. By giving back to the community, you show them firsthand how volunteering makes a difference and how good it feels to help other people and, more importantly, enact change.

Tomorrow, I will take a moment to shine the light on the tireless efforts of the volunteers in my community, and I encourage each and every one of us in this chamber to do the same.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

COMMERCIAL FILL

Mr. Granville Anderson: I move that, in the opinion of this House, since commercial fill poses unique challenges for the sustainability and safety of our watersheds, the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change should compile the relevant data and consider the development of a strategy for disposing of it in a sustainable and environmentally conscious fashion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Anderson has moved private members' notice of motion number 15. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Today it is my intention to shed light on commercial fill, an issue faced by many rural communities such as the ones I represent in Clarington, Scugog and Uxbridge.

Since coming into office, I have had the opportunity to sit down with constituents from each of these municipalities who have concerns regarding the disposal of commercial fill and its potential effects on the environment. I have made sure to speak with some of my colleagues here at Queen's Park and have come to realize that these concerns are common across the province primarily, as I have said, in rural areas.

For those unfamiliar with commercial fill, it is often referred to as excess soil that has been excavated predominantly from construction sites in urban areas. If there is no room on the current site for storing the soil, or if it has no functional use, the fill is relocated. These relocation sites can be pits, former quarries, farms or other designated areas. This process is accomplished with the use of large trucks; in some cases, hundreds per day, depending on the amount of fill, across rural highways and roads.

Residents of rural communities are also sometimes offered the fill for their own private lands, as a way of adding to landscaping and levelling out of their properties. I begin to see an issue with this process when the fill has not been tested properly for contaminants and dangerous chemicals. Residents are concerned that gasoline, heavy metals, hydrocarbons and other pollutants can come saturated in the fill and end up unnecessarily at distant fill sites, seemingly without forewarning. This poses a risk for those who come in contact with the fill, especially in instances where it has been offered to a private landowner with a home or a farm.

The risk is especially pronounced when we can see the impact that these pollutants could have on our water. Rural Ontarians rely heavily on groundwater for their wells and irrigation. The pollution of such a necessary commodity would have a significant impact on our communities. These transplanted chemicals have the potential to leak into the water table, which affects not only those in the vicinity but those in a much greater area who may share the common watershed.

Without proper testing, it is possible that landowners will find out too late that the fill they have received has been contaminated. A concern arises before the contaminants are dealt with. A labour-intensive process begins to test and remove the fill as necessary, and an appropriate place for disposal must be found. As it stands, residents have to rely on the word of the company moving the soil that it is safe, and municipalities, given fiscal and other resource constraints, are simply not equipped to alleviate these concerns.

While some municipalities have bylaws in place, such as site-alteration bylaws, to regulate what can and can't be added to sites within their borders, most do not have either the resources or staff necessary to monitor the practice. I do not feel they have the jurisdiction to ensure that what is being brought into their area is not tainted.

Unfortunately, several examples of concerns around commercial fill come from my own riding across all three municipalities that I represent. One of them comes from Newcastle in Clarington at a fill site known as Morgans

Road. From 2010 to 2012, hundreds of trucks drove through Newcastle on their way to a dump site off Highway 2.

1400

To the knowledge of the residents, there had been no warning that a fill operation would begin. The residents were subjected to the noise and dust brought by these trucks and the discomfort of not knowing the origin or nature of the fill. They worked with their local municipal councillors, their government representatives and the Ministry of the Environment to learn more about the situation, and testing that was done on the soil.

When a portion of it was found to have exceedingly high levels of contaminants, the re-excavation of some of the fill began, and the residents of the area were again subjected to the process in reverse. This occurred several times, with the new fill added and removed after being tested, and the residents have expressed to me that they still do not feel that they have a full understanding of the status of the fill now in their community.

Another example comes from Greenbank in Scugog. The Greenbank Airport is a small grass airport just northwest of Port Perry. Over the last several years, hundreds of truckloads of fill have been sent through Scugog and neighbouring municipalities to a location that was initially nondescript—to the residents in the area, it appeared simply to be a fill site. Then, however, it was announced by the federal government that the construction of an aerodrome was to eventually begin and that the fill was necessary to prepare the site. However, the fill in question had failed inspection standards on at least two occasions before this announcement, but the residents of Scugog were now told that the matter was under federal jurisdiction. Reports of trucks onto the site still abound while there seems to be no ongoing construction of an aerodrome.

I share the concerns of my constituents that the fill being used in this site needs to be properly tested within the proper jurisdiction but that we need to work together to ensure that jurisdiction is properly established and clearly laid out and that the sustainability and environmental integrity of this area and all areas in Ontario are protected.

I would like to commend the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change for its ongoing work in this area. The Management of Excess Soil guide is a step in the right direction. It has a lot of great pieces and clearly lays out ways in which brown fill and soil must be transported, regulated and evaluated. The minister has made it clear to me that there are intentions in place to deal with these situations and that his staff is working diligently on a plan.

I am bringing this motion before the House because a lot of work is still to be done on ensuring that soil is tested properly, that the specificity of commercial fill is managed within this plan and that we work side by side with our municipal partners, both rural and urban, and our federal partners to ensure that our precious water resources remain protected, and that those who rely on

them—that is, all Ontarians—can rely on that resource to be protected.

It is my intention, by raising this today, to shed some light on the need for our government and the appropriate ministries, as well as municipalities, to ensure that we take a hard look at how we manage the environmental integrity of the landfill that is being brought to these communities.

Our current strategy on sustainability that is coming from the ministry is admirable and covers very important issues. There are implications for certain oversights here that extend beyond commercial fill alone, but if we work together, we can create some efficiencies to ensure that we are all on the same page so that tainted fill is not ending up in our communities.

This is a complex, multi-faceted issue that will take some time to address, but my intent is to keep it at the attention of all parties so that we can start working together to promote the safety of all Ontarians.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm very pleased that the member for Durham has taken on this responsibility. We certainly heard from his predecessor, my good friend John O'Toole, who led the charge for quite some time on this issue. So I want to congratulate the current member for Durham for picking up this rather gritty problem and making sure it stays in the forefront of public attention.

One of the reasons why I feel strongly about it, of course, is that I have constituents who have faced similar issues. It's a very difficult question to find a way to respond, because there are designated landfills, there are processes that are in place, but there are too many opportunities for getting around those rules and regulations. Some of them are the problems of the lack of oversight. Some of them are the fact that people in the neighbourhood look the other way. "It isn't quite in my backyard, so I don't think I want to do anything at this point." So there are all kinds of reasons why this simply gets left to percolate that much more.

The other problem is a practical one. Somebody has a truck full of fill that needs dumping. I recall looking—well, driving, actually—along Bloor Street a couple of seasons ago, and the dump trucks were all the way from the conservatory, almost at Avenue Road, all the way back past St. George. You couldn't help but wonder: Where is all that going? How is it being treated? Who is there to monitor?

We have some legislation, but not enough. We have the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt, which are protected from development, but they've become a bit of a back-door destination for illegal fill. So we need very specific regulations that track, assess and enforce the movement and disposal of commercial fill.

My constituents have eyesores sitting outside their windows. They have pools of water, and material in those pools. The value of their property is declining as we speak.

This is a very important issue that does require all of our attention. Thank you for giving us that opportunity.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much for bringing the motion back to the House. I remember Mr. O'Toole talking about this issue at length—and I kind of miss him.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: So do we.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I know. I kind of miss him. I never thought I'd say that, but he could talk about almost anything, this man. He really could.

The NDP agrees with the member from Durham that there should be a comprehensive regulation on the disposal of commercial fill. We've actually agreed with this for a long time, and so it's good that you've brought it back.

The government has done, quite honestly, an abysmal job at regulating soil disposal, so there's room for improvement. Obviously, because this is a long-standing issue, Ontarians have been at risk of exposure to contaminated soil. This is a problem; there are solutions. We look forward to the passing of this motion and then action on this issue.

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For quite some time, the government has lagged on the issue of safe disposal of commercial fill. There is little government oversight with respect to where soil is disposed of. There is inadequate oversight of private contractors and what they do with the excavated soil. There is no clear definition of clean soil. There is no tracking system for the soil. There are few rules about where soil can be dumped. Private developers, you may be interested to know, are allowed to hire so-called "qualified persons" to test the soil they plan to dispose of, but there is no regulation of the plans for disposal, and the government only steps in if something goes wrong.

Obviously this is not a sustainable plan. This is an inadequate plan, because contaminant tests are not always immediately accurate, so we oftentimes end up picking up the pieces after the fact. We do need, in the province of Ontario, a proactive plan to deal with contaminated soil instead of a reactive one. Quite honestly, this is actually an emerging theme here at Queen's Park. It is not appropriate to wait until something goes wrong to deal with potentially harmful soil.

For some time now, municipalities have actually been attempting to pick up the slack in regulation of soil disposal, but they cannot regulate the disposal of commercial fill that crosses municipal borders. That is why a provincial regulation is actually needed. Toxic soil is being spread on otherwise good farmland because there isn't adequate regulation of where it can be disposed of.

According to the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario, there are 50 million tonnes of dirt excavated in Ontario construction projects in peak construction years, at a cost of \$1.7 billion. I think we should all acknowledge that this motion from the member for Durham is quite timely, because there is more excavated soil than ever before, due to the Pan Am Games, and more contaminated soil than any other project before.

Once again, the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario says that about 7.5 million tonnes of dirt is contaminated and should be going to approved landfills and sites. Because of a lack of regulation, it is wholly unclear how much of this contaminated soil is actually going to proper landfills. The government obviously does not have a clear picture right now about where the contaminated soil is going, but clearly much of it does not end up in approved sites. Contaminated soil has been dumped on prime farmland in Ontario.

I think it's always helpful to peel back the layers of an issue like this and tell you how it's actually affecting regular people in the province of Ontario. It's true that when contaminated soil is dumped on unapproved sites, this is often discovered accidentally.

This case is from the Toronto Star: Sheep farmers Ruco and Kimberly Braat found "polyaromatic hydrocarbons and heavy metals like barium, cadmium, copper and lead" in supposedly clean soil delivered by a company called Green For Life. The Braats say that 700 truckloads were dumped on their land. They've had to sell almost 100 of their 450 sheep to pay for legal costs.

Green For Life—the private garbage collector for the city of Toronto; also of interest—has said they are not to blame, and that it is the fault of their so-called "qualified person." That's another missing part of the oversight, if you will, and the enforcement. The Ministry of the Environment charged GFL and a soil broker called Earthworx, and it is currently in front of the courts—something we hear a lot about here at Queen's Park.

Toxic soil can obviously impact our food and drinking water. Carmela Marshall, of Lakeridge Citizens for Clean Water, said to the Toronto Star, "How many years before it gets in our groundwater? Five years? People are afraid." As development happens, as big, major mega-projects like the Pan Am Games happen, soil obviously needs to be placed elsewhere across the province, and in many jurisdictions the aquifers are becoming more and more stressed. In Waterloo region, our aquifer in certain parts does not have the integrity it once had. This is something we have to be cognizant of.

There is a list of recommendations that I hope can actually help with the issue of disposal, if this motion goes forward—I suspect that it will, because it should—can actually help with the issue of disposal:

—Requirements for testing of excavated fill at specific minimum frequencies: That needs to happen.

—Documentation of where all excavated soils are transported must be included in the record of site condition.

—Qualified persons—actually, really qualified persons—must sign off on the quality and the quantity of the soil excavated and removed from the brownfield site.

—Documentation from the receiving site indicating acceptance of the soils must also be included.

The city of Toronto recommended to the government that they should "enact regulations to ensure that excess soil placement is provincially regulated in a manner that is consistent across the province and in accordance with the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act."

The RCCAO has also recommended a more complete strategy for the disposal of contaminated soil. They recommended “that the province establish a pragmatic, risk-based and affordable framework that distinguishes excess construction soils, particularly those from municipal roads and rights of way, from historic industrial hazardous wastes which are the primary focus of laws such as Ontario regulation 153/04.”

The Ministry of the Environment has a guideline of best practices, as the member from Durham will know, for disposal, but they are generally unenforceable. This is the missing link.

More excavated soil, obviously, is moving around the province. It should be of note for the people of this House that TO2015 has hired Green for Life to dispose of 200,000 tonnes of contaminated soil to an approved landfill, but so far only an eighth has made it. It is unclear where the rest of the soil has ended up, and even Green for Life, the company, is not sure.

There are obviously environmental consequences for not having the appropriate enforcement, for not having the appropriate oversight, to ensure that contaminated soil is placed safely in an approved site. I think that many environmental groups agree that the government is not doing a good enough job with respect to contaminated soil. The NDP agrees. For the protection of Ontarians and Ontario’s farmlands, we must do better and we should do better, but the missing piece is the oversight and the enforcement.

I look forward to listening to more of the debate on this important issue.

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

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I’m pleased to stand in support of this motion and to join my colleagues from York–Simcoe and Kitchener–Waterloo. I’d like to thank the member from Durham for bringing forth this motion and shedding light on a topic that can affect us all, Mr. Speaker.

This issue is rarely talked about, but it is a conversation that is worth having. Sometimes, as we all know, simply raising awareness about a problem can help, in itself, to find a solution.

The problem of commercial fill being dumped onto rural properties has the potential to cause significant environmental and ecological damage. I think the members opposite have noted that. We must make sure that we do everything possible to minimize its inherent risks. Ensuring that hazardous or toxic soil does not get redistributed to other areas is something that I think we can all agree with. Collecting data and forming a strategy to deal with the issue is an important step and safeguard.

As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, I understand, perhaps in a particular way, how much it is our responsibility as parliamentarians to protect and maintain the environment for future generations, and it is a responsibility that this government takes very seriously.

Most people probably don’t think about or even realize that the soil and other matter that is removed

during construction and development needs to be relocated. It is a practice that is taken for granted. The reality, however, is that this material is often transported long distances and has the potential to contain many harmful or hazardous components in addition to just soil.

Large urban municipalities are most often unable to accommodate the volume of commercial fill produced within their boundaries, so the burden falls upon nearby rural communities. By collecting and analyzing the data on these types of transactions, we can help both sides better understand the risks and the benefits. Clean fill is something that could be used in many applications for the benefit of a community, such as helping in the rehabilitation of exhausted aggregate resource sites, so we should encourage them to use it to their advantage.

Developers may not even be aware of the potential hazards contained within the soil they remove, so we must help them understand and manage these situations when they occur, which they invariably will. Without careful observation and management, this issue has the potential to become very serious, and it is something that many municipalities are facing already, including my community, the city of Burlington.

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Many communities that contain valuable agricultural land are finding themselves faced with difficult choices. Farmers who are having trouble making ends meet are offered money to accept soil dumped on their property, an offer that they sometimes find difficult to refuse. These individuals, these farmers, often do not know where this fill is coming from or what it may contain. They do not have the resources or knowledge to have this material tested, and so something must be done to ensure that they are not putting themselves or others at risk of serious harm.

Agricultural land is extremely valuable, as we all know, both to the economy and to our food security. Once this land is damaged by toxins, it’s very difficult—nearly impossible, in fact—to reverse the impacts. Our province is blessed with some of the best agricultural land in the country, but we must not take that for granted. Protecting this resource is of the utmost importance, increasingly so as ensuring our food supply becomes more difficult, and removing risk factors like contaminated soil will play a key role.

This motion will take some important steps towards mitigating these risks and help to safeguard communities and families in areas where this is becoming a problem. Food security is becoming an ever more important issue, so we must make sure that our farmland is protected in every way possible. The agricultural and agri-food sector is a significant contributor to the economy of Ontario, and harming it in any way would be irresponsible.

The dumping of commercial fill can have other impacts on the economy too. Residents exposed to hazardous material could become ill and unable to work, reducing their positive impact on their local economy and potentially putting additional stresses, Speaker, on our health care system. There can also be significant costs

associated with cleanup once contaminated soil is dumped in a location.

These types of operations, in addition to their costs, can take extensive amounts of time to complete, and are often unable to turn the land back to its original state. We simply cannot afford to put Ontario's economy at risk by allowing commercial fill to be dumped anywhere, without first taking into account all of the risk factors and doing what we can to reduce them as much as possible.

Polluted soil can also have effects on wildlife, threatening the habitat and health of species in a given area. Consideration must be given as a priority to protect their well-being when we think about dumping potentially harmful material. Flora and fauna are often very sensitive to the environment around them, and subtle changes can have serious and lasting effects. Introducing foreign toxins into these habitats can decimate populations of birds, mammals, aquatic life and even insects.

Ecosystems maintain a careful balance, and disturbing a single species can have a ripple effect that is felt throughout. This is especially true of species at risk and endangered species, which already face mounting pressures from every corner of society. Adding additional stress could be what pushes them over the brink into extinction, a possibility which is all too real and one which is clearly unacceptable. Creating a plan that will take the safety of local residents into account will have the added effect of protecting the habitat of local wildlife, helping to ensure their survival and removing pressure from those species most at risk.

In addition, watersheds and local groundwater are relied upon heavily by residents of all areas, but those in rural communities are often the most sensitive. Even small amounts of pollutants introduced into a system can have long-lasting, pervasive and devastating effects on residents in the area, including health problems and negative economic impacts.

Beyond the impact to people in these areas, watershed issues can also adversely impact wildlife, including endangered species, as I mentioned, and add further pressure to already weakened and declining populations. Water, like food security, is something that we must do everything within our power to protect.

For the reasons I've cited, and so many more, I would like again to thank the member from Durham for bringing this very important issue to light and helping us to ensure that we protect our environment for generations to come. Our government is committed to protecting the health and well-being of all Ontarians. Initiatives like this will make a positive contribution to that commitment. I would encourage all members of this House to support this motion, given its potential to safeguard our environment, our watersheds, our food security and our economy.

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to rise to speak to this particular private member's initiative because I want to underscore the importance of soil management in

all of Ontario. Presently, commercial fill is unregulated, it's rarely checked, and when it is, the consistency and the capacity of the qualified people making the decisions on the soil is often questioned; and at the end of it all, the soil's final destination is often unknown.

With this, the compounding issues in relation to the booming construction in the GTHA has led to increased issues: the increased dumping of commercial fill into rural areas and the increased incidence of contaminated or compromised soil being dumped under the guise of clean fill.

Speaker, action must be taken on this issue, but frankly, this action should have already happened. This is not a new issue, and as you know, it has been raised in the House many times before.

Since 2011, my colleague John O'Toole did a wonderful job standing up and representing his particular riding on this issue. I'd like to also give a nod and my appreciation to the member from Wellington-Halton Hills. He has done an outstanding job representing his concerned citizens on this issue as well. You couple their initiatives, dating back to 2011, that this government ignored, turned a blind eye to and voted down—all of their actions were captured by the media, dating back to 2011, 2013, and again this year.

If this government was truly interested in addressing this issue, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing should be working together to table meaningful legislation, as opposed to just the nudge that this particular initiative represents.

Again, I commend the member from Wellington-Halton Hills. He arranged a meeting with the Environmental Commissioner, Gord Miller, to allow his concerned citizens to further explore what their options are as they see compromised soil, which very well could be contaminated, coming in truckloads, literally, to their community around the Erin area.

What we find on the order paper today—really and truly, when you peel away the layers—is just a recommendation. It's a recommendation that the government should compile relevant data. Well, Speaker, I suggest to you, based on the real-life examples we've seen and read about in the news recently, we need to be developing a strategy, as opposed to just compiling relevant data. And we have to go on from that, because we know this is a sizable issue.

We've heard earlier that the RCCAO finds that, on average, 25 million cubic metres of excess soil is excavated annually from sites across Ontario. In peak construction years, up to 50 million tonnes of dirt was excavated in Ontario projects, most from the GTA region, with experts estimating 15% of that soil—as much as 7.5 million tonnes—was contaminated and en route to approved landfill or remediation sites.

I want to talk about those remediation sites as well. It underscores the importance of having an action plan.

My community of South Bruce undertook, in the last three years, a huge infrastructure project with water and

sewers, and the soil that came into the community this past spring was compromised. People were looking forward to walking on their green grass again, and lo and behold, they were finding sharp objects in it. Up on the hill, they were literally collecting Baggies full of foreign objects out of the soil. This should not be happening in Ontario.

We also note that the construction of the athletes' village for the Pan Am and Parapan Am Games saw 500,000 tonnes of soil removed. And guess what, Speaker? The government, this Liberal government of the day, can only account for 134,000 tonnes. That's unacceptable.

Speaker, we talk about this initiative—nudging the government to compile relevant data. Well, I think it's clear the issue already is in existence. So I encourage this government to step up and develop an action plan and meaningful legislation. I want to implore this government that we want an effective solution to this problem and provincial action across Ontario.

If the government was really concerned about this issue, this motion would not be needed and you would instead be seeing a Liberal government spending its time putting forward legislation to fix this problem, not wasting our time and taxpayers' time with a nudge.

This motion does not force the minister to take any action on the issue of contaminated soil or excess soil management.

So while, yes, I do support this motion, I believe more than just a nudge is necessary. I sincerely hope this government will take this issue seriously.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's a pleasure to rise in this House—I apologize for my rusty throat—and speak on this issue that the member from Durham brought forward regarding disposal of contaminated soil.

Everyone I've heard so far has agreed with this motion. What makes this motion unique is it was initially proposed by a previous member for Durham, who was a Conservative. Conservatives are traditionally seen as anti-regulation, but this is a case where the Conservative Party agrees that this issue, the issue of contaminated soil, needs more regulation.

The member from Durham—the current member from Durham—has proposed this, and I've heard all the Liberal members speak on this and say that this should be done. It leaves me somewhat perplexed, Speaker. It truly does. Because I've listened to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, and he's obviously—obviously—passionate about the environment. We've watched this government in action in this last session, and they are certainly not afraid of pushing legislation through this House—some that's fairly egregious, in our opinion. But this stronger environmental control on contaminated soil is a no-brainer. This is something that we don't need a motion for. The government could do this, and the Conservatives would agree with it, because they proposed it. What's the problem?

We all agree that this is a huge issue. It's an old issue. I can remember when I was on the board of Dairy Farmers of Ontario, and a farmer came and he had contaminated soil on his land. He drilled a well into it. He didn't know it was from the Ministry of Transportation. It was asphalt, and his cows died. This isn't a new issue; it's an old issue.

I don't understand why the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change doesn't move on this today—today. It isn't an issue for today. It was an issue a year ago, two years ago, 10 years ago. Now with the Pan Am/Parapan Games—the first time I've said that in the Legislature—it's a huge issue. If this government was really concerned—if the former Minister of the Environment was really concerned, he would have moved on this, instead of talking about these motions.

This is one where no one is going to disagree. The Conservatives are going to agree to more regulation. Look at that. And the Liberals should agree. But the Liberals have a majority. They've pushed everything else through this House, yet they're unwilling to push actual relevant environmental legislation.

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

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm pleased to rise and speak in support of the spirit of the motion put before us by the member for Durham. I haven't heard, and I would never have expected to have heard, any contrary discussion to this motion in the House today, because it really is a fundamental issue that needs to be looked at, to be dealt with. As I said, I'm pleased to support the spirit of the motion.

I've heard from my residents. On a number of occasions, I think, when I've been speaking in the House, I've talked about how important the Oak Ridges moraine is to the residents of Newmarket–Aurora. I'll continue to speak to that, because when I knocked on doors, many, many people told me how important it is to protect the moraine, which really is the rain barrel of southern Ontario.

You can imagine the horror that struck Aurora a few years ago—two years ago, I believe; it will be three years this spring—when an owner of a piece of vacant property proceeded to punch a laneway from Yonge Street onto the property and cut down hundreds of trees and trucked in hundreds of truckloads of soil, right on top of the Oak Ridges moraine, without permission from the region, from the municipality of Aurora or from anyone else. Our concern, as residents of the area, was about what was in the soil that was coming from wherever it came from.

It's an interesting observation, because a number of people from towns to the north of us—East Gwillimbury and Georgina—have talked about the impact of fill on farmland in that area and their concerns about what is contained in that soil. I know a number of them contacted us to talk about the need for regulation and the need to make sure that the soil heading north is clean. They told me that when Toronto announces a subway project, a chill runs up and down their spine because they know

that that's going to mean an awful lot of fill moving north. They just want to be sure that it is clean fill that's being used.

As a speaker said earlier, a lot of the time, that fill is put to good purpose. A lot of low-lying areas—under the supervision of the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority—that fill is placed appropriately. It's clean and it's used to enhance the viability of marginal agricultural land and to turn it into more productive land. So there is a place for clean fill to be used appropriately.

But going back to our property in Aurora and the boldness, I think this is what is so frustrating for residents. It's not just necessarily the proper regulation or enforcement. We had a lot of that in place in our town and in our region, and yet when officials confronted the owner of the property and ordered them to stop dumping truckloads in—they were doing it at nighttime and they were doing it on the weekend. Finally, only because a number of citizens and a certain councillor with the town of Aurora threatened to chain themselves across the laneway, the region moved in and put a tandem wheel dump truck across the illegal laneway to stop the owner of that property from dumping more soil, only to find out the next day that they had pushed it out of the way with their bulldozer and had brought in yet more soil. So the town got to play. It brought its dump trucks in and parked them. We had a security camera set up and security guards on-site.

That's what made everyone so angry: that even when you have rules, even when you have enforcement, if you have an industry that can act that way without getting into too much trouble—or so they thought—they will get away with it. I can say that in our neck of the woods, I believe things have ended happily. The province, the region and the town have had the soil removed, hundreds of truckloads. The land has been reshaped, topsoil put down and trees replanted. It was a lengthy process, quite frankly, and it was a real scare because we were never sure what was in all of that soil that was being dumped. We had no assistance whatsoever from the owner of the property.

But I know things haven't gone well to the north of us, in municipalities to the north of my riding. I think it behooves us all to take a closer look at how we regulate and how we enforce the transportation of those soils, be they clean or not so clean.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: It's interesting to hear the consensus that seems to be emerging around this issue on this debate.

I want to commend the member for Durham for bringing this private member's resolution forward today. He is following very effectively in the footsteps of his predecessor, John O'Toole, the former member for Durham, who, as I'm sure you know, was very vocal on this issue over a number of years while he was still serving in the Legislature, before his retirement.

This is an issue that has affected my constituents as well. I think it was around two years ago that I met with a

number of concerned residents in the town of Erin who brought their concerns to my attention about the fill that was coming into their area. I listened, and I investigated some of the facts. What they were telling me was correct. I wrote a letter to the Minister of the Environment of the day and urged the appointment of an inter-ministerial committee involving senior civil servants from the various ministries that have an interest in this issue, and I've followed up on a couple of occasions. I think that would be another reasonable approach to trying to come up with a comprehensive provincial strategy to deal with this issue.

But it was just over a year ago that, working with the Environmental Commissioner, we came up with the idea of using the Environmental Bill of Rights mechanism to request a comprehensive review of the issue of the disposal of fill. I'm pleased to say that the Minister of the Environment of the day, the member for St. Catharines, agreed and launched a full review of the issue. We're now, I think, about 12 months into that review. We were told the review would take between 12 and 18 months. So again, I want to thank him.

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We also asked for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs to review the issue. Again, we believe that they have a significant part to play in terms of developing the strategy. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs chose not to launch the review, but we continue to call upon that ministry to assume some responsibility for this issue in terms of working towards a solution.

I also want to compliment and thank our environment critic, the member for Huron–Bruce, who has taken a real keen interest in all of the issues affecting her riding, as well as those involving her critic responsibility in the time that she's served in the Legislature. She's doing an outstanding job, and I want to thank her.

Also the member for York–Simcoe, I know, had brought forward an initiative like this a couple of years ago and has shown real leadership towards trying to find a way to come to a solution that ensures that this compromised soil, as we call it, is disposed of safely and not just dumped in rural Ontario in such a way that will compromise the environment for, perhaps, generations to come.

I think this is a very important issue. I do want to, again, commend the member for Durham. I think it's likely that this motion is going to pass, and so we would call upon the various ministers of the government to take it seriously and not just sort of assume that it's a done deal: "It was passed by the Legislature, and now we can forget about it." Hopefully there will be follow-up from the government, and I would encourage the member for Durham to continue to work with his colleagues to push the relevant ministers from within the government caucus to do the right thing and get moving on this issue to ensure that compromised soil is, in fact, disposed of safely.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now turn to the member for Durham for his response.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I'd like to thank the members from the opposition: the member from Huron–Bruce, the member from York–Simcoe and the member from Wellington–Halton Hills for supporting this motion and for their very kind words. I would also like to thank the members from the third party: the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane for their support as well. From my colleagues on this side of the aisle, I would like to thank the MPP from Burlington and the MPP from Newmarket–Aurora. I very much appreciate all of my colleagues who have spoken on this motion today for their insights and opinions, and for helping me to bring attention to this issue.

We are being diligent in ensuring that our way of living is sustainable, and that our environment is protected and secure for current and future Ontarians. Our government and the Ministry of the Environment are making every effort to move forward in a conscious and prudent way. We must pay special attention to issues, such as commercial fill, as we develop and grow the province, so that the process is equitable for all Ontarians. The movement of commercial fill is part of this process and we must ensure that our precious resources remain protected, and that our rural residents are comfortable with the soil in their communities.

Ensuring that we have the requisite information and data to have a full understanding of the impact of commercial fill is what I'm bringing attention to today. Having a plan and strategy for dealing with this—one that co-operates with all parties from residents to municipalities to government officials—is my goal.

Thank you again to all of my colleagues for aiding me in this effort. Please support this motion. I look forward to working with my constituents.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote on the motion at the end of private members' public business.

RESPECTING PRIVATE
PROPERTY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE RESPECT
DE LA PROPRIÉTÉ PRIVÉE

Ms. Jones moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 36, An Act to amend the Trespass to Property Act / Projet de loi 36, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'entrée sans autorisation.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's my honour to rise today to debate my private member's bill, Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act. I believe my bill will provide benefits to all Ontarians. It will institute a system of fairness and equity that currently does not exist when it comes to the problem of trespassing on private property.

I'd first like to provide some context as to why I brought forward this bill. I've heard from constituents

who have complained about uninvited trespassers on private property, especially on farmland. For example, I'd like to read an excerpt from correspondence I received on this issue: "Too often, farmers and farm properties are host to uninvited trespassers who hunt or ride on farm fields on ATVs, damaging crops and property, disturbing animals and even posing a threat to the farm's biosecurity."

I believe that this is a fair concern to be raised in this chamber. Many of us here know farmers or have family members who own a farm. When you speak to them, they will understand the threats posed by trespassers, but even if you're not a farmer there are still legitimate concerns regarding trespassing on private property. I don't think anyone here would want their property that they have worked hard for and take care of to be intruded upon and potentially damaged in the process.

Unfortunately, the Trespass to Property Act as it's currently written does not address this issue adequately. This is the reason I've introduced Bill 36: to update the Trespass to Property Act to enable it to better deal with issues like this.

To start, obviously the Trespass to Property Act prohibits the unlawful entry of a premise without the permission of the occupier. It is considered trespassing when someone enters on a premise that is prohibited under this act or engages in an activity on a premise when the activity is prohibited under the act. It is also considered trespassing if a person does not leave the premises immediately after he or she is directed to do so by the occupier of the premises or a person authorized by the occupier.

When someone is caught and is deemed to have trespassed, the act sets out that they are liable to a fine of not more than \$2,000. The problem, Speaker, is that there is no minimum fine set in the act, so often what ends up happening is that no fine, in fact, is levied at all. This ends up reinforcing the dangerous notion that anyone can trespass without repercussion.

In addition to this issue, the Trespass to Property Act also states that if someone is convicted of trespassing and the property was damaged, the owner is entitled to sue for compensation. The problem is that in these cases the property owner may only receive a maximum compensation of \$1,000. So let's think about that for a moment: If someone trespasses, causes \$10,000 worth of damage and is convicted of trespassing, the owner of the property can recoup, at a maximum, \$1,000—and that's the best-case scenario. In effect, the owner would be out of pocket for any additional damages. I don't think that's fair, and that's why I've introduced Bill 36.

I'd like to draw everyone's attention to an interesting statistic: In 2009, there were 33,423 charges received under the Trespass to Property Act. Every year since, that statistic has grown. This is an issue that is clearly happening across Ontario. I think it is safe to assume that the reason why trespassing still occurs in our province, and has increased, is because the current act is insufficient in curbing trespassing.

In its current form, the Trespass to Property Act does not go far enough in providing fair compensation for property owners, and does not send a strong message to individuals who choose to trespass. We must find a way to discourage trespassing on private property and create a system of fair compensation for individuals who experience damage on their property as a result of trespassing.

People who trespass on farmland, for example, can end up damaging fencing, crops, livestock and other parts of the property. This can quickly add up to thousands of dollars in damages. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has stated that more needs to be done in regard to trespassing on private property.

I want to read another excerpt from the correspondence I've received from a Dufferin–Caledon constituent. It reads, "The Trespass to Property Act should be amended to protect landowners, deter unwanted visitors and compensate farmers fairly for damage." My bill, the Respecting Private Property Act, will do just that.

The Respecting Private Property Act will make necessary changes to the Trespass to Property Act. It will create a minimum fine of \$500 for trespassing, and it will increase the maximum compensation for damages to \$25,000. Increasing the limit on compensation for damages allows property owners to be fairly compensated for destruction of their property; and a minimum fine will also send a message that trespassing is a serious issue and will not be taken lightly.

1450

In light of my private member's bill, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has come out in support. I would like to read the endorsement from their vice-president, Keith Currie, into the record. I'm sure many of the members in this chamber know that the OFA has been calling for these changes for quite some time. So the initial idea came from them, and I do appreciate their support.

"The Ontario Federation of Agriculture is proud to support Sylvia Jones MPP's Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act. The OFA has been working with government and policy-makers to amend the Trespass to Property Act for many years. We need this act updated to reflect the severity of trespassing and the damages that result from thoughtless or reckless behaviour."

I was proud to receive this endorsement for Bill 36, because the OFA has been dealing with this issue for years with their members. They know the problem, they are familiar with the causes, and their endorsement is something that I think speaks to the effectiveness of Bill 36 in curbing the issues I've spoken about today.

Dufferin–Caledon is consistently growing, and as of 2011, there are more than 40,000 private dwellings, with some areas experiencing large spikes in residential development.

Trespassing on private property should be a concern to all of us and to anyone who owns a piece of property that they have worked hard for.

I want to read out another piece of correspondence I received after I introduced Bill 36: "Trespassers are a big

problem on my property and the police are called several times a year. No trespassing signs, or the fence stops people from entering. I have been laughed at and told trespassing is no more than a parking ticket.... Something must be done for people to take trespassing seriously. I am in 100% support of increasing the minimal fine to \$500."

Speaker, people are powerless to stop individuals from trespassing. In addition, there is clearly little or no action being taken to prevent trespassing and hold accountable those who do it. We need to discourage trespassing. I believe this can be effectively done through the establishment of a minimum fine.

I've also received an endorsement from the Peel Federation of Agriculture: "The private member's bill regarding the increase in trespassing fine is fully supported by the directors and members of the Peel Federation of Agriculture. Since the creation of the greenbelt over 10 years ago, some of the members of the public have the misconception that greenbelt has become public property. Our members are seeing an increase in trespassing, both on foot and on motorized off-road vehicles. Crops are damaged, animals have escaped from gates left open. All the garbage left behind is left for us to clean up. There is also an increased risk in liability to our members, if injury occurs on their property. We fully support this bill, it will encourage deterrence from exposure to such cases, and we thank you for all your efforts."

Speaker, I believe these letters of support speak to the problems I have raised and attempted to address with Bill 36. We cannot expect property owners to foot the bill when a trespasser causes damage. It's not fair, and it's not right. We need to ensure there is equity in the system.

Many of those who experience damage to their property are, in fact, farmers. When their property is damaged, it takes a toll on their livelihood. This is not right, and \$1,000 in compensation doesn't come nearly close enough when the cost of damages can potentially far exceed this. Particularly when you consider the risk of vandalism in a more urban setting, the risk of damage occurring as a result of trespass does exist, and the owner shouldn't be responsible for footing the bill; the trespasser should be.

We need to ask ourselves if the current fine structure is fair and equitable. That's why I've brought forward Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act. It addresses the concerns with the current law and will establish what I believe to be a fair and equitable system.

I sincerely hope all of my colleagues here today will vote to support Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act. We need to ensure that property owners are fairly compensated for destruction of their property. We need to send a signal that trespassing is a serious issue and will not be taken lightly.

I wanted to share with you a very brief story. Many of you will be familiar with the Cheltenham Badlands. It's a much-loved, highly sought after, day trip tourism destination that I'm sure a lot of people in this chamber have either seen pictures of or visited themselves.

There is a friend of mine who lives very close to the Badlands. She told me a story last week that, over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend, a large family was having a picnic on her front lawn. They believed that because they'd visited the Cheltenham Badlands and they were having a great afternoon in the country, they would take their picnic lunch and their portable barbecue, which they literally set up on the front lawn of this woman's property.

As you can imagine, she was not pleased and was extremely frustrated when she tried to explain to the trespassers that this was not public property and they were not welcome to have a family dinner on her front lawn. The response seemed to be, "We're in the country. We're enjoying the lovely weather, and we're enjoying the fall colours. Why can't you leave us alone?"

Clearly, there needs to be a lot more education, but we also need to put in the deterrents that will prevent this kind of abuse, because there is no other word for it. Private property is, by its very nature, private property. We have to have laws and legislation in place that will deter that kind of activity, and I believe Bill 36 will do that.

I'm going to listen with interest to the debates, and I hope I can count on support from all three sides.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: Today, I'm pleased to speak on my colleague's Bill 36, An Act to amend the Trespass to Property Act.

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm having trouble hearing here, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I have some order in the House, please? Those having conversations, please go outside.

Mr. Paul Miller: The damage caused by trespassers and the time and expense required to seek compensation are major concerns for rural Ontarians. Trespassing on private farmland can result in damage to crops, livestock, fencing and other parts of the property. Too often, farmers and landowners have no effective redress for this damage. This bill seeks to change that.

I know that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has been strongly supportive of this bill, and I fully understand why. At present, the courts may impose a fine of up to \$2,000 for trespassing. The bill before us proposes to impose a minimum fine of \$500 where there is currently none and, therefore, instruct the courts to impose a fine of between \$500 and \$2,000 for the offence of trespassing on private property.

I'm supportive of the rights of landowners against trespassers, and I'm also supportive of some level of minimum fine. The objective of this bill to increase the limit for court-ordered compensation is a very worthy one and, in my opinion, the most important aspect of the bill before us today.

Currently in Ontario, if a trespasser damages property, the courts can award only up to \$2,000 in compensation

for damages caused by the trespasser. To recover damages over \$1,000, you have to file a separate and additional lawsuit in court. One thousand dollars is far too low and means that farmers and rural Ontarians are placed at a real disadvantage by the people who trespass and cause damage to their properties. It's too much of a burden to ask landowners to hire a lawyer and file a lawsuit if they want to recover \$1,200 or even \$3,000 for damages caused by this trespasser.

I'm a steelworker from Hamilton, not a rural landowner, but it would infuriate me to see trespassers driving snowmobiles across my land without permission, knowing that they can effectively get away with tearing up my property.

If someone causes damage to my property that I have to pay for, I shouldn't have to file a lawsuit to get compensation. I shouldn't have to pay for someone else's antics and negligence, and I shouldn't have to hire a lawyer and go through the whole process. It's expensive. These trespassers know it, and it enables them. We have enough problems with access to justice in this province without that.

I strongly support increasing the amount of damages that a court can order without the landowner having to file a civil lawsuit. Twenty-five thousand dollars seems to me to be a reasonable cut-off point.

On the other aspect of the bill, I'm also supportive of imposing a minimum fine. But I would like to make some constructive comments on this bill, and I hope that my colleague can enlighten the House on this point and potentially address this in committee.

I would like to know the logic behind setting \$500 as the minimum fine. It is the job of judges to consider the gravity of the offence when determining the appropriate sentence.

1500

A blanket minimum fine of \$500 may not be fair and proportionate in every circumstance. I wonder what my colleague would think of building a little flexibility into this bill. We might consider, for instance, allowing the landowner to ask the court not to impose the \$500 fine, but only charge to the trespasser the landowner's legal costs and expenses of coming to court, as well as the damages. That would be a more than sufficient deterrent. We were all young and foolish once, and landowners will recognize that.

I understand that a minimum fine will act to some degree as a deterrent to trespassers, and that it's something that is certainly in the interests of rural Ontarians. However, if my colleague is seeking to prevent judges from imposing trivial or nominal fines, why was the level of \$500 chosen instead of, say, \$100 or \$200?

The province of Prince Edward Island currently imposes a minimum fine of \$200 for this offence, which I believe is the highest in Canada by some distance. Newfoundland and Labrador have a minimum fine of \$10, which doesn't strike me as very much of a deterrent.

The reason I am questioning this point of the bill is that it would make Ontario something of a leader, but

also an exception and a standout in Canadian law. Like Ontario, most Canadian provinces do not currently impose a minimum fine for trespassing. For example, British Columbia, Alberta, Nova Scotia and Manitoba do not have mandatory minimum fines for trespassing.

The value of a minimum fine is a very significant decision, and if we're proposing to go far above the norm in other Canadian jurisdictions, it seems to me that this aspect of the bill should be examined and justified in committee. I would hope that my colleague is open to that possibility.

I'm supportive of landowners against trespassers, and I'm supportive of some level of minimum fine. But I would like to make sure that whatever minimum fine we do impose in the province is chosen after professional input and justified by evidence. So, I would like to see the evidence and logic more clearly before we settle on this particular value.

This worthy bill addresses two of the concerns that many Ontarians have had about trespassers: first, the weak deterrent effect of our current laws, and second, the great difficulty that our current laws create for farmers and landowners just trying to get rightful compensation for damages caused by trespassers.

I have rural landowners in my riding, and I'm going to talk to some of them to see what their thoughts are on this bill. I'm interested in their comments and suggestions, and I will most certainly bring them to the attention of the committee that considers this bill.

For a little bit of a sideline here, I'd like to remind the House that there are other concerns not addressed here, and which may be considered by members of the government at some future date.

We may wish to debate and examine the Occupiers' Liability Act, to be reassured that this is properly achieving its objectives. I know that many homeowners, farmers and landowners are concerned about the legal consequences if a trespasser is injured on their property. Ontarians should be reassured that there are exemptions to the basic duty of care they owe to the users of their property. Specifically, rural trespassers are responsible for their own safety. Non-paying entrants to a rural property are responsible for their own safety when using rural property for permitted recreational purposes, and of course, people who enter for criminal purposes are considered to have assumed all risks, although that does not mean we can set traps and create hazards that deliberately risk, injure or kill.

In conclusion, Speaker, I commend my colleague for this bill. I'm happy to recommend it, and I will lend my support to it.

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

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I'm happy to stand up today to speak to the Trespass to Property Act, designed to give property owners clearer control over the entry to and use of their property. Trespassing involves unauthorized entry to property or engaging in an activity that is banned or refusing to leave the property immediately after being

told by an owner or someone who controls the property. For example, a tenant can be banned entry to a property by issuing a notice orally or in writing. Signs can also be posted on a property to indicate that entry is not permitted or is banned.

It is an offence to trespass, and I can understand why my colleague from Caledon would present this bill, coming from a rural area like Caledon, which actually neighbours Brampton–Springdale. It is an offence, and if a person is charged and found guilty, the person can be fined up to \$2,000, and in addition, a court can order a person found guilty of trespassing to pay for damages to the property.

What the member from Caledon has introduced is an amendment to strike out "'a fine of not more than \$2,000' in the portion after clause (b) and substituting 'a fine of not less than \$500 and not more than \$2,000'". However, many trespass charges are laid for minor infractions such as hanging out in a mall or blocking pedestrian traffic. The government does not believe that a minimum of \$500, as proposed by the bill, is appropriate in such cases. We prefer to let the judge levy the right fine for the circumstances before the court.

Much of the problem with the law of trespass in rural areas is enforcement. It is not possible to have police officers patrolling every field, woodlot and trail in the province. For that reason, the act already authorizes property owners to arrest trespassers and to hold them until the police can arrive to lay charges. Bill 36 does not touch this provision, which may be useful in these particular cases.

The government is considering the desirability of making changes to the Trespass to Property Act in response to consultations on strengthening the Ontario Trails Strategy held by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport with stakeholders including the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Trespassing is going to be difficult for everybody. We understand the damages that it could cause to rural property. It makes it difficult for the owners. They do have the provisions in the act to be able to arrest those people and to hold those people. If we were a lot more strict in enforcing the laws and the rules of trespassing that are currently in place, that could help some of the issues that the rural community is facing in Caledon and across the province. So we're hoping that we can work on that.

We're hoping that we can look at the act, definitely, to amend it, because the maximum fine for the offence that we were looking at needs to be reconsidered, considering it was set at its current level in 1989. We're definitely open to revisiting the idea; it's just that we may have some differences on how we want to revisit the idea. There is a great problem with trespassing, especially in the rural area, but we need to balance it out with the fact that people who have minor trespassing charges and are found guilty shouldn't be fined at the same level.

We understand that when there is damage caused, the person is, right now, held liable for the damage that they

are causing to the property. That should continue. I believe that continuing to actually charge those people and have those charges taken care of, have the costs taken care of, is only in fairness to the rural community, to our farmers and our agricultural community, but we also need to consider where there is no damage.

The fines and the prices—although we need to revisit them, we need to look at how we're going to revisit them and what the cost of revisiting them will be, what the fine should be set at, and take a look at the legislation. It is a great idea to revisit it, considering the date and the last time that we did look at it; it has been a long time. There have been many changes. It is a danger for all of our rural community, the damage that it may be causing for them. However, a lot of the trespassing charges are minor infractions, so we do have to take that under consideration. We'll continue to look at that.

"The act is amended by striking out 'for an amount in excess of \$1,000' at the end and substituting 'for an amount in excess of \$25,000,'" right now. That is extreme. With the previous act—it is extreme. We need to find a way that it is less extreme, but we can still resolve the issue of trespassing.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: As opposition critic for agriculture, food and rural affairs, we wish to reiterate our support for this legislation and for the Ontario Federation of Agriculture's request to amend the Trespass to Property Act.

As we've just heard, currently there is no minimum fine for trespassing on farmland. There is a maximum of \$2,000. The Trespass to Property Act currently has a limit of \$1,000 in compensation. Our member for Dufferin-Caledon is proposing that we establish a minimum fine of \$500 for trespassing and increase the level of compensation to \$25,000.

As farm owners, we all have stories. Every spring we see, oftentimes, people picking trilliums in my father's woods across from my place—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: That's supposed to be illegal.

Mr. Toby Barrett: It is illegal—running ATVs up Crabapple Creek that runs for about a mile up through my farm, hunting without permission in our gullies, other stories of drunken driving in cornfields and soybean fields, burning barns, stealing fuel, stealing tractor batteries. Torching stolen cars is a big issue down my way; stolen cars and pickup trucks and SUVs.

1510

I was elected in 1995, and somehow at that time I came up number one for private members' business. In my first week in this Legislature—it was September of that year—I introduced Bill 11 to restore property rights to the province of Ontario. It passed first reading, it passed second reading and it went to public hearings before the Standing Committee on Justice. Again, the purpose of the bill was to restore property rights to the province of Ontario—not just on farms but all property.

Given that property rights are part of our heritage—people have come to this country, to this province to own property, something they may not have been allowed to do in their home country. Private ownership, the development of property, is a key incentive for economic growth and prosperity.

There is a strong historical tradition in the western world of protecting property. Property rights go back to the year 1215, the Magna Carta: the foundation of our common law in Ontario and Canada. The recognition, through the Magna Carta, is very straightforward.

Some 50 years ago, the 750th anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta was marked at a ceremony in Langton in my riding. This coming June 15, next year, will be the 800th anniversary of the Magna Carta, and I will be commemorating that ceremony in the village of Langton.

In 1689, these rights of property were affirmed again in the British Bill of Rights. In 1948, Canada signed the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which affirms that no one be arbitrarily deprived of property.

In 1960, the Canadian Bill of Rights also affirmed the right to the enjoyment of property. My grandfather always had that up on the wall at the entrance to his home. I've had a number of people ask me, "Don't we have property rights now?" The answer, very simply, is no. We're not prohibited from buying or selling or possessing private property, but we have no written protection against that right being infringed upon at some point. And as we would all know, in 1982, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms omitted any mention of property rights.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour, as the NDP ag critic, to be able to stand and support—I hope my voice gets better sometime this afternoon. Pardon me.

It's an honour to be able to stand in this House as the NDP ag critic and support Bill 36, An Act to amend the Trespass to Property Act. I know that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has been pushing for something like this for a long time. On their behalf, as the other rural members have said, I think it's a good piece of legislation.

It might sound a bit odd for someone from northern Ontario, because in northern Ontario we have a lot of crown land, which is basically the land of the public. In certain areas where I live, it's all private; it looks a lot like rural southern Ontario. We have our problems, because people have a hard time differentiating between crown land and private land.

I would like to dispel the image that people in the agriculture business don't want to—that we are against anyone else enjoying the countryside, because that's not true. I'll give you an example. Across my property, we have the "A" snowmobile trail of the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs. They are very good to work with and have always been good to work with, but there came a point when we, and they, had a lot of trouble with

people abusing their rights on the trails and, as such, were crossing our land in places where they weren't actually allowed. With our climatic conditions, if you cross an alfalfa field and pack the snow down, you'll kill the alfalfa.

It came to a head, and we sat down with the Federation of Snowmobile Clubs and said, "Look, unless this is fixed, we're closing the trail." We worked together with the snowmobile clubs, and they worked together with their members to contain the people who were abusing the system.

This type of legislation would hopefully do the same thing, because the vast majority of people understand and respect each other's property and each other's property rights. But it's the minority who tend to ruin it for the majority. The minority, when they know that there are no real repercussions to their actions, tend to abuse other people's rights even more. Legislation like this, where there actually are repercussions if you wilfully damage or wilfully use another's property without permission, would be a step forward.

Now, if and when—and hopefully—this bill gets to committee, we can always look at amending something to make something a little bit better, or change it for someone's whim or fancy, but the idea that there should be stronger repercussions when someone wilfully uses or damages another piece of property—we've had it on our farm. We always check on the Ski-Doo trail. The Ski-Doo club does a fantastic job of making sure there is nothing left on the Ski-Doo trail, but we have had occasions when the snowmobiles left the trail, and sometimes they'll leave a lunch bucket or something; and when that goes through your Discbine, it's not pretty. It causes damage.

It's at times like that when you feel like calling up the Federation of Snowmobile Clubs and saying, "Look, that's it," but because they're so good to deal with, we know that they're trying their best.

When you can work with a group like that, it's really good, but when the legislation from the province doesn't really support what both of us are trying to do, it causes a roadblock and, in the long term, it causes problems.

I would really like, in closing, to express our support for this type of legislation. We hope that it goes to committee and we hope that it eventually comes along.

The only thing I have to say about this in closing, for the member from—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Dufferin–Caledon.

Mr. John Vanthof: —Dufferin–Caledon, my final compliment: I wish it was mine. Thank you.

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

Mr. Arthur Potts: It is a tremendous pleasure of mine to speak to Bill 36, An Act to amend the Trespass to Property Act. I'm particularly pleased to be able to go after the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

During our debates earlier yesterday, the wonderful riding of Beaches–East York got characterized somewhat as an agricultural riding and a rural riding. One would

think that maybe the provisions we're discussing here today would have immediate application to that great agricultural riding, but I want to assure the House that it hasn't been a rural, agricultural riding since about 1902, which was when the last Liberal was elected in Beaches–East York, almost 112 years ago—1902.

In those days, there was corn and alfalfa—cash crops—in Beaches–East York, but now it's a very different situation, so you will appreciate that the kinds of concerns that the member from Dufferin–Caledon is raising are not concerns directly associated with the residents, the constituents I deal with on a day-to-day basis. However, there are other issues attached to the Trespass to Property Act which do apply, principally around private properties—malls, stores, and even parks, schoolyards and such—where misdemeanours and things are happening, which also have to be taken into consideration as we move forward in discussion with this bill.

I'm also delighted that the member from Haldimand–Norfolk started with a bit of a historical lesson on the rights of property, going back to the Magna Carta. I also want to talk a bit about a great philosophic mentor in my own personal life, the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Those of you who have studied some philosophy will remember that Jean-Jacques Rousseau spoke at length about how all men are born free, but everywhere are in chains. That was his famous slogan.

1520

That concept of being born free, but shackled, spoke directly to property tax rights. In his First Discourse, he talked about how when society went and put fences around common property, that was the source of all social evils, because once you claim this as your own then you want to protect it as your own, and that's when people took up arms against each other: to protect those rights of property.

Now, we've moved way past the gentle philosophic musings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. We do respect property rights because things are happening on people's private property for which there is value. We on the government side, I can assure you, take very seriously that when there is damage to private property as a result of trespass, it's a serious offence and it needs to be taken care of.

It was 1989 since the fines in this particular act were adjusted, and I can assure all members of the House that our government has taken a very close look at issues around the fines structure. There probably is movement; it should be adjusted in order to reflect the realities of modern society.

Now, as those of you who may have read some of my personal biography work, I'm a great flyfisher—

Ms. Catherine Fife: I didn't get that. I didn't get that.

Mr. Arthur Potts: You didn't get the piece? I'm a flyfisher. Nothing gives me more pleasure, as a member of a downtown urban riding, than getting out into the beautiful countryside and into the member from Dufferin–Caledon's own area, the Forks of the Credit. What a beautiful, beautiful part of Ontario. It does give

me great pleasure as a flyfisher to go up to the Forks. One the great challenges I often find is getting access to the river, because of private property rights. I'll drive around and find a bridge crossing the Credit. I'll want to park the car and, "No fishing here" and "No trespassing here." I mean, access to the river is a real, real big issue. Being on the river, that's public property, and there's no issue if I'm on the river, but I can't get to the river unless I sort of jump over the bridge or maybe hang a rope ladder of some sort to get down and spend some time fishing in the river.

I can assure you that as a flyfisher I have a very gentle approach to the trespasses I might occasionally have indulged in in the past where I'm just trying to get to the river. I'm not damaging anything. There will be those times I'll be walking down the river after an hour or an hour and a half and catching some of those beautiful brook trout and speckled trout and browns, and I'll have to come out. I'll be in the middle of private property, trying to get back to my car, where walking along the river isn't really accessible.

So it's absolutely important that we take a more holistic view sometimes to how people manage, that we chill out a little bit about, "This is mine. Thou shall not go." But the issue of the damage associated when people do go should be taken very, very seriously; and I know our government will do so.

Now, the bill does not speak to enforcement issues. I mean, clearly, that is a serious, serious issue. We take it very seriously. We have been doing work with the Ontario Trails Strategy. We are reviewing issues around access because we know people are violating, and it is a serious concern, as the member notes. It's a question of how to address those.

It is very disconcerting to all of us, as we know the frustrations experienced by rural property owners. After a time it is just so frustrating that we talked about traps or snares and stringing cable across trails to stop people going where they're not supposed to go. We all know that's totally unacceptable, but it deals with that incredible frustration that I'm sure so many people in rural Ontario feel that people aren't respecting—and it's not about just being on my land; it's about being on my land and doing damage.

I'm very encouraged by this bill. I'm pretty confident we will send it to committee and take a hard look at it. I've got to tell you, though, that a minimum fine of \$500 for what could be just a simple nuisance is probably excessive. I take from the member from Hamilton East and his comments that you still have to give judicial discretion around what you're going to charge someone for doing a simple trespass; and \$500 may be too much. But raising the upper end, particularly on the compensation part of the file, I think is a very important consideration. Because it's important that if there has been serious damage, a judge should be able, without having to go to the necessary expense of a long civil suit, hiring lawyers—we all know exactly how difficult that process is. In fact, in my experience, suing anybody for less than

\$10,000 or \$20,000 is just not worth your time any more. It's unfortunate because the damages people sustain are real and there should be some kind of incentives or sticks in the enforcement to ensure that people are not taking advantage and are respecting the trails and respecting rights of farmers.

Those of us in the downtown sector are not as conscious, maybe, of the damage we may be doing to an alfalfa patch by inadvertently walking over it, as others aren't as conscious when their dogs are peeing on our front lawn and ruining our rose bushes.

So we will be sending this to committee, and we look forward to making adjustments as it goes forward. It's a great bill. Thank you for bringing it forward.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm happy to speak on Bill 36, a bill which seeks two important amendments to the current Trespass to Property Act.

As it currently stands, there is no minimum fine for trespassing on farmland in Ontario, and farmers are entitled to claim up to a mere \$1,000. Bill 36 would impose a minimum fine of \$500 for trespassing, address farm safety and biosecurity concerns related to trespassing, and increase the limit on compensation for damages from \$1,000 to \$25,000.

Ontario farm fields are enticing, wide-open spaces for rural neighbours and visitors straying from designated trails or adjacent land. It's not uncommon for these uninvited trespassers to ride around farm fields on their ATVs, damaging crops and property, disturbing animals and even posing a threat to the farm's biosecurity. Biosecurity is becoming an increasing concern on farms, where the spread of plant and animal diseases is a continuous threat. We've all filled out the forms at the airport where we're asked if we're bringing food products or seeds or animal products into the county, because of concerns. And for farmers, of course, this is their livelihood, and they've invested a lot into it. When unwanted visitors enter farm property on foot, they could be bringing a lot worse than just \$1,000 worth of damage. It's not just about footprints on alfalfa; it's much bigger than that.

This is an issue that has risen, not decreased, over the past decade. Trespassing on Ontario farms has become far too common, and the low level of enforcement when offenders are caught and charged means farmers are often on the hook for damages. It's my hope that adding minimum fines and increasing damage awards will elevate the seriousness of this trespassing situation with regional law enforcers and dissuade potential wrongdoers from picking on our province's bread-and-butter workers. Increasing compensation for farmers would go a long way to replacing livestock, crops or any other kind of damages.

You know what? Even though I don't live in a rural riding—Thornhill is really part of the GTA—we have all gone up into cottage country; my dad is up on Lake Chemong, just north of Peterborough. We have had

trespassers who have been fishing—just as the member from the Beaches mentioned before—and just wandered on to your property. They've decided that they needed to come on to dry land for a spell.

I think it's something that people don't necessarily address enough. We have really done a great job educating people that people's bodies are their own and you cannot touch people or touch their personal property; say, their purse or car. But I think we have to address the fact that people's land is not crown land, that it could be private property, and if you're not sure if it's crown land or private property, you should assume that it's private property. You shouldn't say, "Well, I thought it was crown land." If there's no sign suggesting that it is, then you should assume that it's not.

The other issue is insurance. People are liable if somebody comes on their property and gets hurt. We've all heard the tragic stories of people going for a dip in somebody's pool without permission and then, when something happens to them, the property owner is not able to fight by saying, "I did not give this person permission."

So I'm happy to support the member from Dufferin-Caledon's efforts to address this inequity and I hope to see this bill progress quickly.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the member from Dufferin-Caledon's bill, the Respecting Private Property Act, 2014. This has been brought forward and mentioned to me several times also by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, asking for amendments to the Trespass to Property Act that would see minimum fines for trespassing and an increase in the maximum limit for compensation.

1530

I'll read one quote here from Keith Currie, the vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. It says: "The Ontario Federation of Agriculture ... is proud to support Sylvia Jones MPP's Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act. The OFA has been working with government and policy-makers to amend the Trespass to Property Act for many years. We need this act updated to reflect the severity of trespassing and the damages that result from thoughtless or reckless behaviour."

There's no question, we've heard some stories here. I think we're going to hear one more story this afternoon.

It is more prevalent that trespassing occurs. Maybe it is a minority of people, but the minority of people is growing. They kind of disrespect private property owners. We've talked about farmland and the damages that can be done.

We have ranch land that I don't see very often, but I can tell you that other people are seeing it more than I am, because I can see the fences down—in this case, ATV tracks, I'm sure. There are other people on that land. You can't see it all the time. It's not that well-travelled a road.

By increasing fines in this situation, which the OFA is asking for—a minimum fine of \$500 for trespassing on

farmland, and the second amendment, to increase the limit on compensation for damages to \$25,000.

There are valuable crops on these lands. Even footprints in alfalfa fields are damaging and can cause a lot of damage. Replacing fences: My heavens, has anyone priced out fencing lately? It's expensive.

This act needs to be updated. I fully support this member's private property act coming forward. I hope all members do, and I hope the government actually acts and does something about it.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I want to just add a real-life example of the kind of reasons why we need to have more-secure laws with regard to trespassing.

It was a few years ago, at night. My husband and I were coming home, and we could see that there were what appeared to be flashlights just outside and around the barn. I was quite nervous, because there were just the two of us; it was in the dead of night. I had no idea how many people were there or what they were doing. Anyway, it turned out to be worm pickers.

I tell the story because not only were they trespassing—and they were our worms—but more importantly, from a safety point of view, there were about 25 head of cattle that were resting around that barn, including a bull. Quite frankly, they were in a lot of potential danger, had those animals been disturbed by them sufficiently to get up and start realizing that there were people they didn't know.

I tell that story because it demonstrates the importance of introducing stronger limits and fines on trespassing and, quite frankly, respect for people's property.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for debate on this item. We return to the member for Dufferin-Caledon for her two-minute response.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I appreciate the feedback from members from all three sides.

I'm going to just raise one issue, because I know there were a couple of people who talked about, and had concerns with, the \$500 minimum fine.

As part of the research for this proposed legislation, I think it's important for the members, particularly on the Liberal side—in 2009, when your own current Minister of Agriculture was a private member, he introduced a private member's bill that would—wait for it—impose a \$500 fine for picking or interfering—

Laughter.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: —I'm glad you see the humour in this—with the Ontario trillium. I am not an exception to suggest that a minimum fine would be appropriate.

Finally, I've said it before, but it bears repeating: We have a lot of people who assist us when we stand in this chamber. In my own office, the standing joke is that there is no lack of ideas that come out of this brain, but we do need staff and people to help us implement those ideas. To Chris and Kevin, I just want to say thank you very much for all of the background, the research, the prepara-

tion you put into getting Bill 36 to the second reading stage.

I look forward to the vote in a short time.

MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT
(ELECTION OF CHAIR
OF YORK REGION), 2014
LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS
(ÉLECTION DU PRÉSIDENT
DE LA RÉGION DE YORK)

Mr. Ballard moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 42, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 to provide that the head of council of The Regional Municipality of York must be elected / Projet de loi 42, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités pour prévoir que le président du conseil de la municipalité régionale de York doit être élu.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I rise in the House to reintroduce this act to elect the head of council for the regional municipality of York.

I first wanted to start off by thanking my colleagues from the ridings of Richmond Hill and Oak Ridges–Markham for previously presenting this bill and for all of the hard work that they have put into developing the bill. I'm hoping that third time is lucky and that we can finally pass this bill.

I want to say that it has been a pleasure to see the mayors and councillors assume their new duties this week, and I wish the best to Mayor Dawe of Aurora and Mayor Van Bynen of Newmarket and their respective councils. I look forward to working with them to serve our mutual constituents.

This bill embodies an idea that has been a topic of many discussions in York region: discussions about democracy; discussions about fairness, openness and transparency; discussions about accountability. For reasons I'll get into later, I believe the time is now to make the most powerful political position in York region directly accountable to the people whom the chair represents.

First, let me tell you a little bit about how the selection of the chair of York region is currently conducted. York region, as many of you might know, is an upper-tier municipality, comprised of representatives from the lower-tier municipalities that make up the region. The lower tier is comprised of the individual councils of the nine area municipalities—the town of East Gwillimbury, the town of Georgina, the township of King, the city of Markham, the town of Richmond Hill, the city of Vaughan, the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and, of course, the towns of Newmarket and Aurora, which make up my riding.

The upper tier—that is, York regional council—is composed of 21 members. These members include the

nine mayors and 11 regional councillors who are elected at the lower-tier municipalities.

The 21st member is the regional chair and CEO, who is not elected but is appointed by the other 20 members of regional council.

The number of representatives that each municipality elects to regional council ranges from only the mayor, in the smaller municipalities such as Aurora, and up to four regional councillors in the larger ones.

Mayors and regional councillors are elected in a double direct format where successful members are elected to both local council and regional council. The only requirement to hold the position of chair is that the selected individual be a permanent resident of York region.

Heading the regional council, as I said, the chair is currently appointed by regional councillors at the inaugural meeting of the newly elected councillors, and that appointment is at the heart of my bill, because an area that is growing as quickly as York region deserves to have a chair who is directly accountable to the people.

Since the creation of the region in 1971, its population has grown dramatically. In just over 40 years, the region's population has increased more than sevenfold, from 169,000 in 1971 to more than 1.1 million people in 2014.

1540

During my time as councillor in Aurora, I was always in support of seeing the role of chairperson become an elected position.

I have been told that the inaugural council meeting to select the new regional chair will be held on December 11. I'd like to thank the outgoing chair, Bill Fisch, for his work on behalf of the region of York, and I'm looking forward to working with the new chair.

I want to emphasize at this time the fact that the proposed legislation will not impact the selection of the next chair on December 11.

It's important to note that my hope is that over the next four years, until the next municipal election in 2018, residents of York will have an opportunity to cultivate and perhaps identify candidates for nomination for the position of chair, because I feel that it's time to bring York region into the modern democratic age.

I must thank the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for her dedication to see this change made. During our discussions, I not only learned that few people in York actually know the name of the chair, but only five individuals have held that position in its 43-year history. That means that, over almost half a century, only Garfield Wright, Bob Forhan, Tony Roman, Eldred King and Bill Fisch have held the powerful position of chair of York region. This bill does not in any way diminish their accomplishments, which are many. However, it's time for a new selection process for the office of regional chair. This bill is about moving forward in a democratic fashion to ensure accountability to the people of York region. The office of the chair has evolved, and it's time for us to move on.

In a region full of growth and expansion, York region deserves to have a direct say in the election of the chair. This is something I firmly believe in, and many of my constituents agree. In fact, I took the last several months since being elected to talk to as many people as possible across York region about this concept, and I would say that, universally, the reaction was positive.

In fact, across York region, as I said, the idea of an elected chair is spreading. In recent editorials in both the *Newmarket Era* and the *Aurora Banner*, the newspapers said that the idea of an elected chair should receive strong support. Both said that it's a move in the right direction.

My constituency office, as well, has heard from many residents who have given me their support in moving ahead with Bill 42.

Let me make this point clear, Mr. Speaker: If passed, this bill will bring more accountability to the office, along with more stature. This bill is about democracy. It's time for the most powerful position in York region government to receive a mandate from the people the chair represents.

During my time as councillor in Aurora, as I've said, I quickly learned the mechanics of regional council, and I must say that the chair and CEO was directly involved in the decision-making processes. There's no confusion about this fact, and that's why I was excited to see initial work being done by the MPPs from Richmond Hill and Oak Ridges–Markham.

I've been supportive of the changes since major discussions started in the mid-1990s.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that it has been quite frustrating to see the bill die on the House floor because of an unnecessary election, but it does bring me some satisfaction—besides the fact that that election allowed me to be here—to continue the work of my colleagues and bring forward Bill 42.

I believe it's high time that the position of chair and CEO of York region, as the role is currently entitled, is far too powerful an office for an unelected individual to hold. Mr. Speaker, let me tell you why I and so many of my constituents feel that way.

Let's go over just a few of the powers that the regional chair and CEO currently appointed is responsible for. The regional chair oversees a budget of nearly \$3 billion, including overseeing the debt of the region. He or she would make appointments to regional council committees. The chair has an immense amount of power over how the business of the region is conducted.

The chair, as the only full-time York region council member, is responsible for the operation of services provided by the region of York. The tax-supported services provided by York region are vital to our everyday lives. They include regional planning, transit, community services and housing, court services, emergency medical services or land ambulance, public health, long-term care, employment and financial support, waste management, forestry, roads, provision of water and sewage disposal. Additionally, the chair plays a critical role in

setting the strategic course of the region. Among other initiatives, the chair oversees the implementation of the York region official plan, the transportation master plan and the York region sustainability strategy.

One thing I learned very quickly as a member of the Aurora town council was the impact that the region played on our planning. Some may think that when we're elected to a lower-tier municipality we have significant say over what takes place in our town regarding planning, but that's simply not the case. The region has an awful lot of authority to be able to, whether we're willing or unwilling, help us shape our development. Time and again we heard complaints and concerns from residents of our towns that the region was exercising that authority perhaps against the will of the people who live there. Perhaps a direct election of the chair will go to making that position a little more sensitive to what the people want in their communities.

There are all these plans, as I mentioned, that directly impact the residents of York, including my constituents in Newmarket–Aurora. Something that resonates with me is that the individual in that position gets to wear the chain of office. It's funny how many people assumed that the regional chair was an elected official because they wore the chain of office. The chain, in their mind, denotes a measure of assumed responsibility. Along with the chain of office come certain expectations.

This bill lends legitimacy to the office of chair and CEO. If passed, the chain of office will mean that the individual has received the mandate from the voters of York region. Like mayors and regional chairs across the province, York's chair would face the expectations of York region's electorate.

This demand from York region residents to give the regional chair and CEO a mandate is not a new demand, and more and more regions are converting to this model. The region of Waterloo, for example, has elected its chair for the past 17 years, and the region of Halton has elected its chair for the past 14 years. In Durham region, which has appointed its chair since 1973, it just recently directly elected its first regional chair and CEO in this past 2014 municipal election.

It is time for York region to join other members of the GTHA and assure citizens that they're able to execute their democratic right by directly electing the regional chair and CEO. After bringing this bill to the floor three times now, it's clear that the residents of York region are demanding change. In the past, this bill has received all-party support, and I hope that will happen again today. York region deserves the right to join other members of the GTHA in practising democracy and accountability when electing their regional chair and CEO.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased once again to be able to make a few comments about the suggestion, the initiative, we're looking at here today about a municipal amendment to create an elected chair of York region.

I have to say that I've seen this before. I believe that the first person who initiated it was Frank Klees when he

was the member for Newmarket–Aurora, and then the member for Richmond Hill, Reza Moridi, and then Minister Jaczek. So we've seen this movie before, but it demonstrates the fact that regardless, as time passes, people are still thinking that it's the right way to go.

It has passed second reading before, but it was never called to committee. So I'm pleased to speak to this bill once again, this time introduced by the member for Newmarket–Aurora. I believe that this bill should receive the attention and support of the House.

In the last municipal election, Roger Anderson became the first Durham region elected chair, and there has been a trend of regional chairs becoming elected representatives. Waterloo region started electing its chair in 1997, Halton region in 2000.

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When you look at the size of York region and realize that it is larger than some provinces of this country, it gives you a sense of the complexity and, quite frankly, the incentive to have a fully representational senior, upper-tier government, and with modern technology, direct election is just that much easier than it has been in the past. I look at my own constituents and the complexity of the service delivery in the region and municipality, and the concerns that people have about that complexity and the lack of accountability.

York region is one of Canada's fastest-growing municipalities. When established in 1971, the population was 160,000; York region today has a population of over 1.1 million people.

I hope this bill moves forward and that we are looking at some of the issues further. In my riding, there is a significantly smaller population than in the southerly parts of York region, so my constituents would certainly want to feel that their voices are going to be heard from the northern part of York region. We have a lot of issues in York region of underfunding at the provincial level of the high-growth areas. Again, I would want to make sure that we're going to have that strong elected voice to address some of these issues.

I will certainly support this bill and hope for its passage once again. Otherwise, I'll gladly support it for the fifth time.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you to the member opposite for tabling Bill 42, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 to provide that the head of council of The Regional Municipality of York must be elected. I appreciate having the opportunity to speak to this bill today.

What we are really speaking about today is democracy. We are speaking about enshrining into law a mechanism that will ensure that the voices of the people of York are heard.

Winston Churchill once said that "democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others"—and there are some days in this Legislature when I see how he might have come to that conclusion. But, in all

seriousness, I am reminded every day of what this building represents, and that is democracy in action—the voices of all Ontarians represented in this room as we come together to try to make our province a better place. As New Democrats, we know that more democracy is always better, so I am happy to speak in support of this bill today.

As we all know, the role of regional chair has changed drastically since it was first conceived. What was initially a much smaller role has now grown to oversee a budget of over \$3 billion in York region. That is a lot of money, and that is a lot of power. It is important for the people of York to feel that whoever is filling the role of their regional chair will be held accountable for their actions.

Across the province, we have seen a shift away from the appointment of regional chairs to their election at large by the general public. In my region, this was a decision that was made in 2010. On October 27, this year, the region of Durham elected its first regional chair.

In Durham, it was a debate that went on for a number of years and was finally settled by a referendum during the 2010 municipal election. The question posed to all residents of Durham was as follows: "Are you in favour of the council of the regional municipality of Durham passing the necessary resolutions and bylaws to change the method of selecting its chair from appointment by members of regional council to election by general vote of all electors in the region? Yes or no."

It presented a straightforward question and ensured that not only would voters be allowed to choose who their regional chair would be, but also whether it was a change that they even felt they needed.

Ultimately, nearly 80% of those who made it to the polls voted in favour of electing the regional chair, which represented a pretty resounding show of support. Though the result was not technically binding, as voter turnout was less than 50%, council still acted on the recommendation of the referendum and passed a bylaw on April 4, 2012, to change the method of selection to a general vote. Of course, this raises the question of why York region has taken the approach of provincial legislation instead of a local bylaw, but ultimately it will lead to the same result.

This is also a bill that this Legislature has seen a number of times over the past five years, as we have heard, and hopefully we are able to resolve this issue once and for all.

I understand that residents have been surveyed, and the majority have stated their preference for an elected chair as well, though the referendum approach does provide a more official view. Regardless, the opinion of the general public has been taken into account and ensures that the individual in what is often referred to as the highest office in the region is held to account as well.

So far, I have spoken quite a bit about Durham, as it is the piece of the puzzle that I know the best, but a number of other regions have also gone through the process of shifting from an appointed to an elected regional chair. Halton and Waterloo have both made the change, as did

Hamilton-Wentworth before the eventual amalgamation of the municipality. The only regions that continue to select their chairs via council appointment are Peel, Niagara and, of course, York.

As I said earlier, the role of regional chair is one that has changed and evolved over time. As their power has grown, so has the need for greater accountability. Unelected chairs tend to remain in office for an unusually long time, which is even more reason why it is important for the public to have its say.

Seeing as I am coming from the classroom, I figured I should also provide a quick history lesson as well. We have spoken quite a bit about the reasons for this change, but sometimes it can be useful to have that historical context. When Ontario's regional designations were first established in the 1970s, the first regional chairs were appointed by the province with the intention that, going forward, we would follow the county model and allow for appointment by council. But of course, a lot has changed since the 1970s. As the province has grown, so have the powers of the regional chairs. So today we are making sure that the selection of a regional chair evolves along with the role.

As I said earlier in my remarks, what we are really speaking about today is democracy. Democracy is not always easy, and sometimes it can be loud and messy. But it is the foundation of all the things we love about our province and about our country. It is the embodiment of the principle that as a whole we are greater than the sum of our individual parts, and it is why we are all here today. For this reason, I offer my support to this bill, and I ask that you all join me as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'm pleased to stand in the House today to speak in support of Bill 42, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 to provide that the head of council of The Regional Municipality of York must be elected, introduced by my colleague the member for Newmarket–Aurora.

As has been said, I presented this bill as Bill 16 in June 2013, and my colleague from Richmond Hill presented this bill as Bill 60 in August 2012. So this is the third time in three years that this bill has been brought forward, which clearly demonstrates our constituents' support for a regional chair who is directly accountable to his or her electorate. Passage of this bill will bring more representative democracy to York region, which, frankly, is absent in regard to the selection of the chair of York regional council.

The idea of electing a chair for York region has been the subject of discussion since at least 1995, when the topic was addressed as part of the York regional council governance review, of which I was project manager. However, it is not surprising that since it was only regional council members who partook in that discussion, no consensus was reached and no action was taken, which is hardly surprising, as it would require regional councillors to give up their exclusive power to select the chair.

I had the privilege of serving as medical officer of health for York region from 1988 and commissioner of health services from 1997 until my retirement in 2006. Both of these roles provided me with the opportunity to witness the tremendous changes that the region has experienced in relation to the growth of the population, the budget and service delivery. In order to reflect these changes, I believe an appropriate governance structure is needed.

At this point, I would like to make sure that all members understand the great deal of power that the York regional chair and CEO has in regard to the business of the region. For example, the chair sets the direction of council, has control over the agenda of council meetings and sits as an ex officio member on all committees. In fact, the chair is the only member of council who works full-time on regional business, as the other councillors must attend to the business of their area municipalities as well.

The responsibilities of the regional chair have increased dramatically as York region has grown. Today, the regional chair is responsible for a budget of nearly \$3 billion. It is quite astonishing that responsibility for these taxpayer dollars is vested in an unelected official. Furthermore, the regional chair is the official spokesperson for the region and frequently has a role in representing the region on the national and even international stage. As York region's website suggests, its economy, at \$43 billion, is bigger than four Canadian provinces, and an elected chair would give added legitimacy in this circumstance as well.

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I would like to acknowledge, however, that this bill does not in any way diminish the accomplishments of the five individuals who have held the position over the last 42 years, specifically Garfield Wright, Bob Forhan, Tony Roman, Eldred King and Bill Fisch. I've known them all. Unfortunately, three of these gentlemen have passed away, but I can personally attest to their hard work and the important contributions they've made. Moreover, I would like to take this moment to acknowledge the current chair, Bill Fisch, who, after 17 years, has decided to retire. I'd like to personally thank him for his years of service and tireless dedication in helping to build York region.

However, at this point in time, I believe it is time to join other regions of the GTHA and modernize the selection process for the office of the York regional chair. Often, I'll ask my constituents if they know the name of the current regional chair. With the exception of some municipal employees and a few others, it is rare to find anyone who does. By contrast, the name of their local mayor is almost universally known.

Allowing the citizens of York region to elect their regional chair will help underscore the importance of this position. If the chair of York regional council is elected by citizens, the individuals who seek election will likely develop a platform that outlines a vision for the region. Upon election, accountability to the electorate will be

clear. At the subsequent election, the electorate can judge whether the incumbent deserves re-election. This is representative democracy and this is the direction York region must go.

The passage of this bill is important to me, to the more than 240,000 constituents in my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham and to all the residents of York region. Next Thursday, I will be attending the inaugural meeting of York regional council for the ninth time. I hope that when the following inaugural council meeting occurs in 2018, it will be in the presence of a directly elected chair.

I ask my colleagues from all sides of the House to support the member for Newmarket–Aurora in passing this bill.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm delighted to speak today in favour of Bill 42. I haven't been here for all of the other presentations of this similar bill since I was only elected this past year, but I've been a resident of York region in Thornhill for over 26 years.

I think that one of the important points that maybe isn't getting through today is that so many people in York region aren't even aware that there is a chairperson of York region. A lot of people, especially the newcomers, are unaware that there's an entire level of government. Toronto used to have Metro—I think people remember that. We're not going to talk about whether or not the city should have been amalgamated. It does come up for discussion every now and then in York region—whether there should be the city of York region. I'll have to ask the member from Newmarket–Aurora if he hears about that every now and then as well.

We do have this level of government in York region, the regional government, and other regional governments have moved towards making the chairperson an elected position. Right now, in case people watching at home don't understand, what happens is that the regional council is made up of regional councillors, of course, and the mayors of six cities in York region. It's not exactly evenly distributed by population how the numbers work out for representation on the council. I live in Vaughan, and Vaughan has three regional councillors and one mayor who sit on the council, and they represent a population of over 300,000 people. There are much smaller communities which are perhaps a quarter or a sixth of the population of Vaughan but have significantly more representation per person, if you work it out. If we're talking about democratic principles, it's not very democratic just on that principle, if I can say it that way, that these regional councillors and mayors of the various cities are choosing the chairperson.

Just for the record, the chairperson of York region is a very desirable position. The salary is higher than in the city of Toronto. Bill Fisch recently retired. I would have liked to have gone to his retirement dinner. I'm sure the minister was there, but my invitation must have gotten lost in the mail.

Interjections.

Mrs. Gila Martow: A little dig there, yes, in case you didn't know that small people had claws.

But the point is that it's a very desirable—and, can I say, even lucrative—position. It's a big responsibility, and I'm not saying that there shouldn't be good remuneration for it, but right away we are waiting until after the recent municipal election to talk about who the next chair is going to be. Who are putting their names forward? People who have just been elected within months, within weeks. They've just been elected in expensive elections, and they're putting their names forward—wonderful candidates.

I know John Taylor fairly well, because when I did a talk show on Rogers he was my guest a couple of times. He's putting his name forward, as is, I think, the mayor of Stouffville, and regional councillor Jim Jones, whom I have a lot of respect for, in Markham. What happens when one of them is inevitably chosen? It means that we have to have a by-election in an entire city, because for regional councillors and the mayor it's not a small ward; it's the entire city of Markham, Vaughan or Newmarket—or Stouffville, King City or Aurora. I'm sorry if I'm missing something in there.

But this, to me, is a waste of taxpayers' money. If we're going to appoint a chairperson—which we have to, because we just had the election—why couldn't it have been done before the election? That's number one.

Number two is that the regional council has a lot of say on our regional roads. I'm often talking to people in Thornhill and across York region about the rapidways that are being built on regional roads. This is something that the regional council decides, and I feel that, if the chairperson was an elected position, he would feel a little more uncomfortable with choosing to go forward with a project that the residents are so much against.

Obviously, I support this bill. I'm unsure why this has been debated for so many hours in the House. It's sort of like having elections over and over again, and by-elections; it's very expensive. I think that it behooves all of us to respect the taxpayers' money and respect all of our time and the taxpayers' time, so I hope to see this go through and that, at the next municipal elections across Ontario in four years, York region will be electing a chair for the York region council.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I rise today to speak to Bill 42, the Municipal Amendment Act (Election of Chair of York Region), 2014. The role of the regional chairs has evolved dramatically over the years. In this particular case, for York region, the position that we are talking about oversees a budget of more than \$3 billion, which of course has been mentioned by several of the MPPs. That's probably a significant piece as to why this bill was brought forward: because a budget of \$3 billion should equal accountability and transparency. I think that's what the member who introduced it in the House and members before him have stressed. It's important that people feel that their tax dollars are being used

wisely, and that the person representing that fiscal budget is elected.

We are taught from a very young age that the best form of government is one that the people elects, where citizens participate in the process by voting for their choice of representatives. But here we have an instance in York region that escapes that direct application of democracy through appointment, instead of electing their chair.

Currently only Peel, Niagara and York regions continue to select their chair through council appointment. However, it should be noted that Niagara does have a policy on the books that requires that the chair be an elected member of council, while Peel and York do not.

We are seeing greater and greater calls for transparency and accountability at all levels of government. The more we continue to operate in the shadows, the less trust we inspire in those we aim to represent. This bill is an important step in the right direction.

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It shows the people of this province that we can adapt outdated forms of governance to become democratically accountable and to truly reflect their will. Given that direct democracy allows citizens the most control over their government, electing our regional chairs should be seen as the best method of selection. In fact, representatives who depend on re-election to keep their jobs must reflect the will of the people who voted for them and not their own personal or political agendas.

Also, I have grave concerns regarding the fairness of the appointment process. We know that women make up 48% of the workforce in Canada but account for only about 16% of board members of Canada's FP500 companies. In fact, out of 448 companies that responded to a recent government survey, 57% have no women directors, 53% have women in fewer than 10% of their executive officer positions, and none of this speaks to the lack of representation of people of colour and other marginalized demographics in our community.

If we look back to where this process of appointment began, it will take us back to 1849, when the system of local government was established by the Baldwin Act. That's a long time, Speaker. The head of the county council was called a warden, and the warden was selected by the county councillors for a one-year term.

When Ontario regions were created in the 1970s, the first regional chairs were appointed by the province, but the system going forward was meant to be like the county system, in that regional chairs would be selected by councillors.

However, over time, regional chairs were given greater leadership and abilities than wardens, because regional chairs are selected for the full term of council. Over time, there has been a movement from selection and secrecy to popular election of regional chairs. It's also important to note that unelected regional chairs tend to remain in office for an unusually long time, suggesting that the position depends more on political favours than democratic legitimacy. We have seen the movement and a push toward greater accountability for several regions,

including Halton, Waterloo, Hamilton-Wentworth and Durham.

I have a sense that appointed officials who serve at the pleasure of local municipal officials are concerned less with voters' rights and turnout and more with administrative burdens, costs and security. While those are important issues to consider, when any appointee is responsible for a \$3-billion budget, we must defer to the people. They must have a seat at the table through a democratic process, and what better way to achieve this than by giving voters exactly what they voted for?

Now it's time for Peel region to follow the lead of other governments, and it is up to all of us here to ensure that we help them get there. The legislation can help to make that vision a reality, and I encourage all members of the House to support this bill.

Obviously, the government side has brought this bill to this Legislative Assembly more than once. Perhaps any bill we could speak to, we can say what our feelings are, but moving it forward sounds like the right thing to do, and helping it along so that the people of York region are served in the best capacity with an elected official, with a budget of \$3 billion, and have that responsibility and accountability, as we all should as elected officials when you have the public purse, and do the right thing.

I thank you for the time that I was allowed to speak on this bill, and congratulate the member for bringing it forward. I hope he's successful this time around.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 42. First and foremost, I want to thank a few people. I want to thank the MPP from Oak Ridges–Markham and also the MPP from Richmond Hill for introducing the bill previously. Of course, I want to thank the MPP from Newmarket–Aurora for bringing the bill forward again—of course, a differently numbered bill.

I supported this bill before, and I'm very, very happy to see it reintroduced. As MPP for Markham–Unionville, I represent 136,857 people. That's a lot.

Interjection: Maybe someone was born since then.

Hon. Michael Chan: With a baby born last night, it would be one more.

They have elected me as their representative since 2007. The local council of Markham has eight councillors and a mayor, all of whom are democratically elected. Markham also has four regional councillors, who sit on both the local council and also on the regional council. These, as well, are all elected positions.

At the centre of Bill 42 is the spirit of democracy and accountability. It seems odd to me that the regional chair, who leads the regional council, is not elected. The chair is the face of the entire region but is accountable only to the council. Now that our region is one of the fastest-growing areas in the country, it's time for a change.

Accountability is a virtue in our democracy that Canadians value. The residents of York region are no different. The chair directs the vision for the region. Cur-

rently, those on the council appoint the individual who sets that vision, not the people of York region.

Across the province, electing the chair of the region is a very common trend. The region of Waterloo, as mentioned before, has elected their regional chair since 1997; along with Halton region, which has elected their chair since 2000. We recently saw Durham region, which has appointed its chair since 1973, elect the first regional chair in the 2014 municipal election. It's time for York region to do the same.

Passing Bill 42 will allow York region to join other members of the GTHA in practising democracy and accountability when electing the regional chair; the citizens of York region will be able to determine what vision they want for the future. Through elections, the residents of York region and the 136,857 constituents I represent will have more choice. We are doing the 1.1 million residents of York region a disservice by not providing them with the ability to choose their regional chair. As outlined by my colleagues from Newmarket–Aurora and Oak Ridges–Markham, the chair of a region holds a great deal of power and needs to be accountable to the residents and not just the 20 members of regional council.

Across the country, accountability and transparency are important parts of our democracy. York region is facing an accountability and transparency deficit with the selection of the regional chair. Bill 42 seeks to fix that.

Once again, I would like to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for bringing this bill to the floor yet again, and the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for supporting this bill. When Bill 42 has been introduced in the past, it received all-party support, and I hope to see that repeated. I gladly support this bill, and I hope the members of this House will do the same. So far, what I have heard is that they are going to support the bill.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the Municipal Amendment Act, and I want to congratulate the member from Newmarket–Aurora for bringing this bill forward—we keep hearing for the third time, but I believe it's the fourth time this bill has been before the House. As critic for municipal affairs and housing for the Conservative Party, I want to say we will be supporting this bill.

This bill would allow the chair of York region to be directly elected by the people he or she represents. It would increase accountability and democracy. Currently in York region, after each election, the council appoints a non-elected person to be chair. That means the most senior municipal regional representative doesn't receive a single vote from the people he or she represents. Mr. Speaker, it would be like having the mayor of Toronto appointed by Toronto city councillors instead of being elected by the people.

This system has evolved from the county system, where a warden is chosen by council. But one important difference is that the warden is chosen from the elected members on council, which means that they have already

been democratically elected in their own area. Of course, then they maintain that seat during the term that they are the warden. I had the privilege of being one of those. For three years I was mayor of South-West Oxford and at the same time I was the warden of Oxford county, which for all practical purposes was the region of Oxford county.

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In fact, as I said, the fourth time it has been here, and it has been unanimously supported all three times it was here. It highlights a problem with our system. Since this bill was first introduced in April 2012, we have gone through a municipal election where this change could have been implemented. In fact, given that the previous chair was retiring after five terms this past election, it might have been an ideal time for the change to occur. Now, even if this bill is passed quickly, the people of York region won't have the opportunity to vote for their chair until the 2018 municipal election.

That's part of the problem we have with private members' bills. Regardless of how much support they have, they have difficulty getting to third reading. I can attest to that, having gone through five years with a private member's bill: five times introduced, five times unanimously supported, but it still took five years to get it passed, and it just passed this year.

We all agree that this bill would increase the accountability and make the system more democratic, and the people of York region want the change. It's hard to understand why we have debated it three times.

Again, I want to commend the member from Newmarket–Aurora for bringing this bill forward, but I want to encourage all the members who so courageously stood up today and supported the bill to keep the pressure on the government House leader and the House leaders from the other two parties to not only agree with this bill today, but bring this bill forward for third reading and get it passed so in 2018 we can have true democracy with the chair in York region.

Thank you very much for allowing me to say a few words to this bill.

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

Mr. Granville Anderson: It's an honour to stand in this House today alongside Minister Jaczek and Minister Chan in support of Bill 42. I applaud my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora for reintroducing this bill.

As the MPP from Durham, I can attest to the growing demand for the regional chair and CEO to be an elected position due to the great deal of power it holds. In Durham region, the regional chair and CEO is responsible for a \$1.3-billion budget and over 6,000 employees. The demand for this position to be elected is evident in the recent change in Durham region to elect our regional chair and CEO.

I am proud to say that in the 2014 municipal election, the region of Durham elected its first regional chair and CEO. This election sparked new public intrigue and we saw six candidates run for the position.

Although the region took a different approach implementing this transition, it is evident that citizens are

realizing that it holds a great deal of influence and responsibility. These citizens want to hold their regional chair and CEO accountable. In order for that to happen, she or he must be elected.

I am happy to see that York region aims to follow in the footsteps of Durham region and other regions in the GTHA. I commend the member from Newmarket–Aurora for bringing this bill forward yet again. Hopefully, this time we can pass this bill.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: The only concern I have about this is that the only people who can afford to run for these offices are rich people. They're usually Conservatives—I just say that. But the rich people are the people who can afford to run, and regular people can't afford to run. That's my concern about these regional chair elections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? No further debate?

The member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Very briefly, I want to thank the MPPs from York–Simcoe, Oshawa, Richmond Hill, Thornhill, London–Fanshawe, Markham–Unionville, Oxford and Durham for their—oh, I've left one out, the minister and the Chair of Cabinet; I'm sorry—words of support for this bill.

I think it has all been said, that really what we're talking about here is fundamental democracy. When the region of York was set up under the warden system, it was simpler times—certainly smaller budgets and less responsibility for that position. But, as we've all said, times have changed, and the position of chair needs to evolve so that the residents of our towns and cities will have direct representation.

I just wanted to take a few seconds, as well, to thank the members who have filled the position of regional chair over the years. Their names have been spoken of, and I know that my fellow member has worked with and knows most of them and speaks quite highly of them. I don't think, frankly, that the region would be where it is today if it wasn't for their stewardship and guidance and hard work.

Once again, I just wanted to reiterate that this bill in no way takes away or diminishes from the hard work of past regional chairs. It's just that the time has come. The people have spoken. They truly do want to see some change. From some conversations I've had with recently elected regional councillors, I know they understand that change is coming, and they look forward to a new way of doing things. We'll see that soon, I hope.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for private members' public business has expired.

COMMERCIAL FILL

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 19, standing in the name of Mr. Anderson.

Mr. Anderson has moved private members' notice of motion number 15.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

RESPECTING PRIVATE PROPERTY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE RESPECT DE LA PROPRIÉTÉ PRIVÉE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Jones has moved second reading of Bill 36, An Act to amend the Trespass to Property Act.

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): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, I would like to refer Bill 36 to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. Agreed? Agreed.

MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT (ELECTION OF CHAIR OF YORK REGION), 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS (ÉLECTION DU PRÉSIDENT DE LA RÉGION DE YORK)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Ballard has moved second reading of Bill 42, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 to provide that the head of council of The Regional Municipality of York must be elected.

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): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is referred to—

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'd like to refer the bill to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. Agreed? Agreed.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the

Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in her office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following is the title of the bill to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to enact the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, to repeal the Day Nurseries Act, to amend the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007, the Education Act and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts / Loi édictant la Loi de 2014 sur la garde d'enfants et la petite enfance, abrogeant la Loi sur les garderies, modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les éducatrices et les éducateurs de la petite enfance, la Loi sur l'éducation et la Loi sur le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités et apportant des modifications corrélatives et connexes à d'autres lois.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AGRICULTURE INSURANCE ACT (AMENDING THE CROP INSURANCE ACT, 1996), 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'ASSURANCE AGRICOLE (MODIFIANT LA LOI DE 1996 SUR L'ASSURANCE-RÉCOLTE)

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 3, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Crop Insurance Act (Ontario), 1996 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 40, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'assurance-récolte (Ontario) et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): At the conclusion of the last session, the member from Haldimand–Norfolk had the floor.

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Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker, and I do appreciate the opportunity to pick up where I left off during that one hour allotted to me to discuss Bill 40, the Agriculture Insurance Act.

I left off discussing the need for this province to help our beekeepers by adopting bee insurance programs, which we're seeing in the western provinces. In fact, during question period yesterday, I specifically asked Premier Wynne, "Why have you not implemented a Manitoba-type insurance model to help our Ontario beekeepers?" It has been 11 years. We know that Manitoba has a working program. The province of Alberta has a working program.

I had a supplementary question, and I put the question: "Will Ontario at least consider the pilot project Saskatchewan has in place to provide risk insurance ... to help our beekeepers in Ontario?"

I'll be attending the EBR session next Tuesday—that would be December 9; it commences at 1 p.m.—at the

Lamplighter Inn in London. I know my seatmate, Lisa Thompson, will be there. We're going to hold a media availability at 12 o'clock. So that's a good thing. At least there are three meetings being held with respect to neonics.

I fully support hearings on this particular legislation. As legislation that affects rural and farm Ontario, I think it's very important that we have a standing committee travel the province on this particular piece of legislation, Bill 40.

I recall a number of years ago, when we were in government—at that time, we brought in the Nutrient Management Act. But even before we brought in the legislation, former MPP Doug Galt, who was, I think, ag critic at the time—I was environment critic. We travelled the province, holding hearings, east and west, with respect to nutrient management. We brought in the legislation. Second reading referred it to the justice committee, which I chaired at the time. We travelled the province again and held hearings on nutrient management. The legislation passed. Then it was time for regulation. We travelled the province again and talked to farmers, spent a week, or maybe two weeks, discussing regulation.

Citizen participation and public consultation of that order, I feel, is very important, especially with respect to some of the agricultural bills that we have seen come through this Legislature.

I'll move from bees to hogs. I want to talk a little bit about our hog industry. I understand hog farmers are interested in this production insurance program. They have asked for it.

The member for Perth–Wellington isn't here. He knows an awful lot about the hog industry. He has been hauling hogs all over North America for many years. I'm more of a sheep man myself. The member for Perth–Wellington, Randy Pettapiece, and his hog industry, trucking industry, they refer to sheep as winter hogs. I've never thought of sheep as winter hogs—you know, woolly things.

I'm just looking at some figures. For 2013, Canadian hog numbers: 12.9 million. That's down from 14.7 million in 2003.

I have maybe limited experience with hogs. I know on our home farm, my great-grandfather's farm, we have a pigpen: six sows. There were always six sows. They had their own little apartments, kind of little condos, with a common corridor and then everything went outside. Hogs are very, very clean animals. I can attest to that.

So you've got six sows. That's still 300 offspring every year. It kept us busy. We still have that pigpen. My sister and brother-in-law fixed it up. We gather in that pigpen. It's got a woodstove now and a bar, and we get together there, certainly on St. Patrick's Day every year. So it continues as part of our complex of farms.

I know my parents, on our home farm, we always had two pigs every year. This was when I was very young. Every year there were always two pigs. We'd feed them all summer. One was named Dale. One was named Chip. They were always together. Chip and Dale: Those were

the two pigs. I was very young at the time. I never really thought about it, but they disappeared in the fall and then two more would arrive in the spring. We'd feed them again—Chip and Dale—and this went on for years and years. I never really put two and two together, being fairly young at the time.

I've helped castrate pigs. That's not my favourite job. Like I say, I'm a sheep man.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: That doesn't sound like a good job.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I beg your pardon?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: That doesn't sound like a good job.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, it's an important job. It's not inhumane. I'm not talking humans; I'm talking pigs, okay? But I can tell you, now that we're getting into this, that my specialty is castrating sheep. I can castrate 300 lambs in a little under 10 days, and I can dock the tails at the same time. There are good reasons for this. I don't want to get distracted. It's the nature of farming.

But there is something very serious in the hog industry: the disease porcine epidemic diarrhea—the short form is PED. It has hit our hog industry. It's hit the hog industry in my home county of Norfolk. It's a virus that cannot be transmitted to humans, but it does cause the death of piglets. It causes weight loss in older animals. Then something else came up: the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. It's been a tough year for the hog industry.

I know that this summer I had a pork barbecue. I know this sounds inhumane; anyone here who does eat bacon, maybe we could argue that's inhumane. But I had a pork barbecue this summer. It was pretty well attended. We advertised it. We sent the word out to people: "Come out to our pork barbecue and send Putin a message." That's just our small way of trying to communicate on the international stage down in Dunnville.

We held it at the Dunnville Airport. The Dunnville Airport, believe it or not, has six gigantic Samsung turbines on it. You'll never see another airplane come into the Dunnville airport. It's very unfortunate. I don't know; money changed hands and things happen.

Back to PED, the pig disease: It's a viral disease. It's associated with vomiting and diarrhea. High death loss: As I recall, we've lost 30% of the herd in Ontario's pork industry. It comes from the coronavirus family and infects the cells lining the small intestine. It's very bad news for the little ones, the piglets. Millions of baby pigs have passed away in the United States over the past year. The first case showed up in Ontario, as I recall, in Middlesex county in January. Very soon afterward, I recall it being at a Norfolk county farm. It's a very difficult virus to contain. It's an infectious disease.

I know that the pork producers had their regional meeting down my way at the Greens at Renton, just up Cockshutt Road from where I am. Much of the discussion did centre around PED and the concern about assistance and funding for farms devastated by this disease.

Both the federal and provincial governments did step up; credit for that. The federal government immediately allowed a vaccine that was undergoing preliminary testing in the United States to be imported into Canada to be used as a precautionary measure. The Ontario government—credit for this—pledged \$2 million to help boost biosecurity and stop the spread of the virus.

Again, it can be transmitted by a dirty tread on a work boot or an infected loading chute on a tractor-trailer. Our American counterparts have been very helpful on this front. Both sides are working together. They recognize that we have very strict biosecurity in the province of Ontario.

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I visited a hog operation a few years ago, operated by the Bartels brothers. Compare going into a hog barn to going into a hospital. You're not allowed into a hog barn unless, first of all, you take all your clothes off. You walk into and have a hot shower, and then you're given another set of clothes. This is called biosecurity. Compare that to the security in a hospital. Then, when you leave again, you exchange clothes, you have another shower and then put your clothes back on—very strict biosecurity. Farmers go into a hog barn and they stay there all day. They have, in this operation, a full-blown kitchen: cupboards, stoves, everything. I wonder why our hospitals don't run that way, quite honestly, given the infectious diseases that come out of some of those institutions.

So I understand there are about 64 confirmed cases on farms in Ontario. Exports are so important for our Ontario hog market. We export far more to the US than we bring in. The flow of animals goes south; the trucks return empty. The trucks are probably where the virus came up, even though they're washed, disinfected and dried at cleaning stations before they would come back to Ontario farms.

I see my time is running out. I'd like to switch quickly to the cattle industry, beef cattle. We all recall the BSE contagion a number of years ago. It was out west. Here is an industry that also could benefit from the kind of proactive measures that we are debating in this Legislature today. I had the good fortune to grow up with cattle, both beef and dairy. We had dual-purpose Polled Shorthorns. "Polled" means you don't have to cut their horns off; genetically, they arrive without horns.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: We raised horned Herefords.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Horned Herefords: I just heard that mentioned.

It's a breed not as popular now. Dual-purpose: You raise them for beef but you milk them at the same time. It's one of those older English breeds. I know our family had raised them for generations. Oftentimes we see cattle now on some of the gully land or the rocky land; you certainly see it up in northern Ontario. There's a lot of potential to move beef into northern Ontario. Over the last 10 years, Ontario has lost half the herd. I know in Haldimand county, down my way, half the head of cattle

are down there now than there used to be. Essentially half the beef farmers switched over to cash crops.

Let's see. In 2002, the Canadian beef industry was worth about \$8 billion, and in 2003, 17% of the fed cattle in our country were here in Ontario. We're the second-largest producer after Alberta.

Before that BSE outbreak, half the Canadian beef production was intended for export; the vast majority of live animal exports were headed to the United States. Meat exports were 70% to the Americans, with the remainder split between Mexico, Japan, South Korea, certainly. A number of years ago I was the parliamentary assistant to agriculture. We would have meetings in Toronto with the Korean beef buyers. This would be further down Bloor, around Christie Pits. There's a famous Korean restaurant down that way. We'd get together down there.

With the BSE, obviously the prices plummeted. You didn't really see it at the retail level. This is an age-old concern of farmers, where the middleman reaps much of the profit and we don't see the benefit for the consumer in the grocery store. It was estimated that at that time the Canadian beef sector was losing something like \$11 million a day because of BSE trade bans. Fortunately, with pork, with PED, we're not seeing the trade bans, even though we're so dependent on exporting our pork. The Canadian Animal Health Coalition in June 2003 pegged the total economic impact of a four-month trade ban at \$2.5 billion, and it kept building up over the years. After two years, Canada lost something like \$7 billion. There was no production insurance, no mortality insurance—everything was ad hoc—the importance of what we're talking about today.

It even hit the dairy industry. It's not their bread and butter, but dairy producers, dairymen, sell their older animals for beef. In the abattoir, every animal counts. In the abattoir, they don't just sell steaks, they sell everything—everything coming together to make a profit.

I mentioned that we always had sheep. Somebody in the family, since then, has always had sheep. We used to have Shropshires—small, little animals. They kind of got bred out of existence in the show ring: Putting wool over their faces and around their tails is not a good idea.

If there's a good reason to have Bill 40, to have agricultural production insurance for sheep or goats—I used to have a few goats. I'll never do that again. You come home with a brand new car, and you come out the next morning and the goats are standing on top of your brand new car. I cannot handle goats. If you want training to be an elected representative, get a couple of goats. It will teach you how to deal with issues.

If there were ever reasons for this kind of livestock insurance for sheep—I'll mention a few: sheep nasal fly; blowflies; there are about 25 different parasitic worms that can infect sheep—stomach worm disease, for example, very serious, long worms; coccidiosis; blackleg; malignant edema; I can't pronounce this one—I don't think we ever had it—enterotoxemia; even tetanus or lockjaw.

There are several reasons why our sheep producers should be watching what we're doing in this Legislature. It's all to the good: transferring the principles of crop insurance to livestock insurance. I think it's a good idea.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk for his very educated talk on farming. The member is very knowledgeable.

I understand that we are the only province that does not allow for production insurance for the broader range of agricultural products, and the member from—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Huron–Bruce.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes—so my colleagues from the Conservative Party are absolutely right. Sometimes it's very strange that Ontario is so behind things, especially with the agriculture area. We all agree how important it is that we have a sustainable, strong agricultural part of our economic growth, yet sometimes we need to make sure that as we promote that. We want to have buy-local and have healthy agricultural farmers contribute to our society; we need to support them. This legislation is making that change where it's expanding the coverage so that it's not just about the crops; it's also including livestock.

This is a step forward, and I know that farmers will embrace it, because as the member from Haldimand–Norfolk mentioned, he talked about the tragedies in some of these areas, the pig farmers and the cattle farmers, and how that can affect their livelihood. What affects their livelihood also translates back to the consumer. So it's important that we have support systems for farmers so that they can deliver healthy products to consumers such as ourselves.

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

1650

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thanks to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk for his discussion on this bill and his support. It's always a pleasure listening to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, who is so passionate about the agricultural industry and so knowledgeable. He distills that knowledge to this House in such an affable way, and it's just a delight to listen to. I'm always now going to be looking over to you, knowing that at some point in your life you were associating with Chip and Dale. I think it's just fascinating that you could relate those great stories from your past—maybe a wolf in sheep's clothing at times, nonetheless very knowledgeable.

You talked—and I listened very intently—earlier in your speech about premium holidays. I think that's a good discussion that we can have at committee as we hear from other people; and the ease of filling out forms. These are very important considerations. We have a lot of experience in this province with crop insurance. I can assure you that the Agriculture Insurance Act—those form-filling programs will be equally as accessible, as they've been developed over the years. That's very important because as people enter into the program, we

want to make sure it's accessible and the ease of entry is there, but also at the same time to make sure that all the best management practices are followed, so that we're insuring people for the right reasons.

Now, we've talked about three key areas. I think you were discussing bees, pork and beef, all of which are obviously under consideration. Should this bill get passed, those will be the discussions that we'll be having with each of the industries, through Agricorp, in order to determine what is the best program, what it should be addressing, but particularly with bees and the neonics. The member keeps talking about what we're doing now with neonics is a ban, and it really isn't. Let's be clear to the public: This is an aspirational target. We've identified that something like 20% of where it's used it's really effective and it needn't be used prophylactically across the province. We're going to monitor that very carefully, but it is bee health and I'm sure bees will be considered another one of the areas to be covered by agricultural insurance. So thank you for your comments, member.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? The member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock

Ms. Laurie Scott: Excellent, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. It's a hard riding name at times.

I'm pleased to rise today to make comment on my caucus colleague, the member from Haldimand-Norfolk, who gave extensive and very detailed knowledge of his farm history and his family's history on the farm—very proudly so. That's the type of information the government does need to listen to: people who have the experience in the fields.

He mentioned that he was PA when the previous government was doing the nutrient management plan and the fact that they travelled the province. They listened to the input so they could get it right. Then the bigger part that I wanted to highlight is the fact of the regulations, which sometimes don't get consulted on enough, to make sure those kinds of details of how it's actually going to work—the legislation's framework, the regulations or the details, to make sure you get those details right, especially in agriculture. We're in the city, here in Toronto at Queen's Park, and a lot of the staff just aren't as in tune to the people who work the land and deal in the agricultural business as much. I thank him for making a highlight of the fact: Don't stop consulting as legislation evolves, for sure.

He brought forward questions this week about the bees and neonicotinoids, which is a very topical issue that's facing the whole province, the whole country: bee mortality. Listening to solid science advice is always the most practical and reasonable way to tackle an issue. The fact that this program expands the Agriculture Insurance Act to other commodities is something I think that we and the agricultural community have been saying for a while too.

We're happy to support this bill and even happier to be able to have it in committee and to listen to some comments to shore it up a little more stably, if it needs to be.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to be able to address the comments made by my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk. It was actually quite interesting to listen to some of the personal anecdotes. I wouldn't have thought that I have any personal anecdotes when it comes to farming, but my father is making a foray into chicken farming and is entertaining the idea of raising goats, so I will have to pass along the goats on the cars piece of that.

This is obviously an important piece of legislation. It might be 10 or 11 years behind, but it's a step in the right direction. As we can see, it's an enabling piece of legislation, allowing the government to proceed and make changes to allow the government to expand coverage to products like livestock.

The member from Haldimand-Norfolk reminded us and talked about PED, which is a disease affecting our pigs and piglets. Interestingly, for PED to have followed on the heels of a sow reduction initiative had huge ramifications and obviously posed huge challenges for our pig farmers and the pork industry specifically. There are a few pig farmers in the area that I was connecting with, and they were talking about the struggles and challenges they face on a basis that I think the government needs to factor in. Farming is an ever-changing field—no pun intended. I'm certainly hoping that they're doing any of their policies and any of their pieces of legislation in close consultation with our farmers.

We know how important farming is, of course. My colleague from Welland spoke the other day about food bank use. We know that people need to be fed, and we need to ensure that that happens.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Haldimand-Norfolk, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I do appreciate the comments, and I find the debate interesting. I just think it's so important. We have quite an opportunity here to get this legislation right. We see so many safety net programs across the country; they come and they go. There used to be GRIP and NISA and on and on, and they change and change again. So we can get this one right.

The reason I say that is because in Ontario and Canada and the United States, we have quite a history with a specific program, the crop insurance program. Crop insurance goes back to 1938, when it was first established in the United States by the federal government to provide some stability with the dust bowl and the Depression. I know they did update it. It was first set up by the Federal Crop Insurance Corp. It focused on the major crops. They revised and expanded it. In 1980 they expanded it again, and in 1994. They're still taking a look at it because, gosh, a year ago something like \$14 billion went to farmers for safety nets in the US—this is who we're competing against. This past year, it's down to \$6 billion.

I feel that we can get this right. I think we should take the time. We support the bill. I think my specific request is, this is brand new legislation. This isn't a reintroduced

bill where the government got behind because of a minority government. It's brand new legislation. Let's not time-allocate it. Let's take the time to debate it, get it to a standing committee and get it out for public hearings. You will be amazed at what you're going to hear from farmers—the knowledge and wisdom that's out there across rural Ontario. I think it would be rewarding for all of us—certainly, to come up with good legislation.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to rise in this House and express the feelings of the NDP caucus and my leader, Andrea Horwath. Today it's a special honour for me because we're talking about an agriculture subject. As a farmer, I never thought I would ever stand in the Legislature and talk about agriculture, so it's an incredible honour for me.

Before I begin on Bill 40, it's been a fairly agricultural day here in the Legislature. We've discussed contaminated soil on farmland, something the government could act on, on Monday. We've discussed trespass rights, property rights, something that the government—maybe not Monday, but Tuesday.

But I really, really want to stress the one on contaminated soil. That's one that needs to be acted upon. There's no political animosity to stop it. The only thing that's stopping action on contaminated soil is whether the government has the will to do it. That's the only thing that's stopping that issue.

1700

Mr. Han Dong: We'll have to time-allocate it.

Mr. John Vanthof: You've time-allocated everything else. You've time-allocated everything else, so what's stopping you?

Hon. James J. Bradley: You won't be reasonable.

Mr. John Vanthof: The minister without portfolio, who I really respect, says we're not being reasonable, but the government hasn't given the other parties a chance to be reasonable.

But let's return to the project at hand, which is Bill 40.

Je vais commencer par lire le titre du projet de loi 40 : Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'assurance-récolte et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

Je vais continuer avec la note explicative :

« Le projet de loi modifie la Loi de 1996 sur l'assurance-récolte afin d'en étendre la portée. La Loi s'applique actuellement aux récoltes de produits de la culture et aux plantes vivaces; le projet de loi fait en sorte que la loi s'applique à tous les produits agricoles que le ministre désigne par règlement.

« Le titre de la loi est modifié pour tenir compte de l'extension de sa portée. »

The English version of that—I'm going to actually read from the Hansard from the minister's opening on this, and he explained part of it very well. This is from Minister Leal:

“As we all know, Ontario farmers grow and harvest a diverse range of crops and livestock. When unforeseen challenges such as pests, weather and disease strike,

production insurance is there to provide coverage for losses and yield reductions. In Ontario, production insurance is currently available for nearly 90 different agricultural products, but Ontario farmers grow and raise more than 200 commodities. This leaves some farmers' products ineligible for production insurance.

“If passed, the proposed”—and here's where I have a bit of a problem, this next sentence. And before I go any farther, we support this legislation, very much so. I said in my opening statement when I responded to Minister Leal a few days ago that the one thing about this legislation was that this legislation was actually at least 10 years too late, because the actual impetus for this legislation was passed at the fed-prov agricultural ministers' meeting of 2003. The parliamentary assistant to the minister said that this was moving forward “with haste.”

Mr. Arthur Potts: We already addressed that question.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, we're going to address that question again. “With haste,” the parliamentary assistant said. “With haste” is 11 years. Well, this government has been in power for 11 years.

In response, the parliamentary assistant said, and once again I'd like to quote from Hansard:

“I particularly want to address the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane. It's fantastic that he has pointed out that it has been 12 years. I'd like to point out, of course, that in those 12 years there was a different member for Beaches–East York. As he notes, the great agricultural riding of Beaches–East York was commented on earlier. Maybe that was the big change in the last 12 years in this government, that there's a different member from the wonderful riding of Beaches–East York. I would celebrate that it has only been a scant six months since I had the pleasure of being elected to this House following the last election and being appointed as the parliamentary assistant to agriculture. Maybe that is the key ingredient as to why we're finally able to move forward with this....”

Well, when I was in another life, when I was working with Dairy Farmers of Ontario, when I was working with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, I had the honour of working with many Ministers of Agriculture—Steve Peters, Carol Mitchell, Leona Dombrowsky, the Premier, the minister who I believe is now the Minister of Municipal Affairs—and I bet you they would be surprised to learn that it's the member from Beaches–East York that is the only reason this government is now bringing this forward: the man who doesn't know the difference between an alfalfa field and an alfalfa patch.

Laughter.

Mr. John Vanthof: This isn't funny. This is why many farmers have trouble believing that the government actually understands them when they see statements like this. We all know that it's not one member or another member. The real reason that this legislation, in our opinion, is being brought forward now—10 years too late, but brought forward nevertheless—is because, yes, the government is taking a bit of heat on the neo-

nicotinoid issue right now. I'm going to speak to that. I've got 53 minutes left. I will get to that eventually, but that's the real reason: The government is looking for a win, and this is a good issue.

I'd like to go back to the minister. I agreed with his first statement—if I can find it here; I don't usually read my speeches. From the minister—not from the parliamentary assistant—from the minister: “If passed, the proposed Agriculture Insurance Act would give farmers who produce agricultural products other than crop and perennial plants access to the insurance they need to safeguard their investments.” That's actually not accurate, Speaker. What this legislation does—it's enabling legislation. What it does is, it changes words so that this could happen. It changes it from the Crop Insurance Act to the agricultural products act, I believe. That needs to happen in order to proceed, but that doesn't guarantee that other products will actually be covered. It's changing the wording. It's an important step, but a very small step. It's a step that could have been taken at any time in the last 11 years. I'm sure, having listened to the agriculture critic from the Conservative side, that it would have been easily passed at any time in the last 11 years.

It's worthy to note that Ontario is the last province to actually move in this direction. We sometimes hear that Ontario is a leader in—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, climate change. I'm going to get to that too, if I don't run out of time. “We're a leader in climate change,” the government says, “and we're a leader in this.” They're certainly, absolutely not a leader in agriculture production insurance. They're not a leader, they're a laggard, and that's important to note.

As much as we support this legislation—and one thing about this legislation: At least it doesn't have the usual fancy Liberal title, but I'm fairly positive that we're going to see big news releases that this is going to be a big change for farmers.

This legislation in itself is not going to be that change. There is a lot of work and consultation to be done. This is a step—an important first step, but it is merely a step.

I've got to go to page 2. I'm going to give a little 101 on how production insurance works from the governmental side—how we see it working—and how it works from a farmer's perspective. In this introduction, we're going to find out why farmers can't access this as easily as the minister and parliamentary assistant are telling us.

The cost of production insurance is shared by three partners: farmers, the provincial government and the federal government. It's shared 40% by farmers, 24% by the province and 36% by the feds, and there's the issue, because there's no money on the table. We waited 11 years for a word, but there's no money on the table, and that's really important, Speaker, because we know that there's no money in a lot of places. In fact, a lot of places are losing money.

1710

There is another program where farmers worked together with previous Ministers of Agriculture. It's a risk

management program. The production insurance that we're talking about today covers the actual production: how many tonnes of crop you get from a field, how many bushels of potatoes, how many—okay? Risk management covers the price you get. With risk management you can insure yourself to make sure that—because crop prices go up and down, so it can kind of even it out. Agricultural groups, with the provincial government, got together and they did a really good job. They created a risk management program bar none for the province of Ontario. It was bankable; it was predictable. That's what agriculture needed. Then this government capped it.

It was estimated that for this program to run efficiently and to make sure that the agricultural sector, the base production sector, which actually drives the agri-food industry in our province, which creates, I believe, \$30 billion or \$34 billion in economic activity and fuels 740,000 or 750,000 jobs—that's all based on the primary producer being solid, bankable and predictable so he can go to his bank and say, “I need to borrow X so I can plant my crops.”

That's what we had with the risk management program. Then this government capped it, so it's no longer bankable or predictable. Does it help? Yes. Are the commodity organizations going to chastise the government? No, because at the end of the day, it's the government. But, in all reality, Speaker, for that risk management program to work, the cap has to be raised close to what it was when the program was originally designed, which is between \$175 million and \$200 million.

Why that's important—before I lose my voice—and why that has something to do with production insurance is because for the production insurance to be moved over, or for the umbrella to cover more commodities, the money is going to have to come from somewhere to pay the province's portion. That hasn't been identified.

Until that's identified—because it could very well be that they could take another \$25 million or \$30 million out of risk management and put it into crop production insurance, and that really wouldn't help anyone. That would actually be a step backward. That is a very important thing to realize, because until we start talking about how the dollars are going to work, we are all just talking. That's very, very important.

We've waited 11 years, because I'm sure after that fed-prov meeting in 2003 the commodities that weren't covered were pretty excited, because Ontario was going to move in the right direction. They have waited 11 years for a word. Who knows how long we are going to have to wait until we actually have the regulations in place and the money. That's very important.

That's how it works from the government side. A farmer puts 40% in, the province puts 24% of the premium in and the feds put 36%. That goes into a pool, and if there is a loss, then the money comes out of the pool. The idea is that enough farmers participate so the pool is big enough and the risk is put over enough acres and over enough commodities that there's enough money in the pool to pay out those who have the misfortune of

having crop loss due to pests, due to weather, due to disease. That's how it's supposed to work.

For the large part, crop insurance is a good program. It has its hitches. All programs have their hitches. I hope that AgriCorp doesn't go to the same program that they're using for ODSF, because we'll have a lot more hitches.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: But there was a glitch a little bit ago.

Mr. John Vanthof: There were a few glitches, but we are not going to advance our argument by complaining about AgriCorp, because overall, AgriCorp is not the problem.

But there is a problem—I'm looking for a way to word this. I'm going to go back to the minister. Here was where I was very disappointed with the minister's statement, because he didn't focus on a lot of the things that are concerning farmers right now. I was surprised, because this government makes lots of noise about being focused on these issues. In his statement—I'm going to read the same statement again, a part of it: "As we all know, Ontario farmers grow and harvest a diverse range of crops and livestock. When unforeseen challenges such as pests, weather and disease strike, production insurance is there to provide coverage for losses and yield reductions."

Now, I was expecting him to spend quite a bit of time talking about pests—that's what the neonicotinoids issue is about—and weather, because we hear "climate change," and we are not climate change deniers. I know on my farm in northern Ontario we grow crops now that we couldn't grow 15 years ago, partly because of better genetics in the crops but partly because we're getting more heat units. But the weather is more unpredictable. We've heard the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change—I keep thinking he's only the Minister of Climate Change, but he is the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, which is kind of the same thing—speak in this House about increasing food prices and how it's going to be much more unpredictable. Obviously, the ministers don't talk, because that is going to impact crop insurance immensely.

I'll give you an example in my riding for this year and last year. The way crop insurance works, it works a lot like other kinds of insurance. So if you have a claim, your premium goes up. It's a pretty simple concept. The reason that is, and I understand it, is because sometimes farmers get a bit adventurous and they grow crops—you know, you grow corn where you know the corn is not going to yield too good. If you keep doing that, sure you'll collect crop insurance once, but your insurance will go up, and that stops you from doing that in the future.

I don't have a problem with that concept. Where that runs into trouble, though, is where, due to climate change, a whole region can't get its crops off. So that whole region, not due to any fault of the farmer, will have a hike in their crop insurance. If that happens again, they'll have another hike in the crop insurance and they won't be able to buy crop insurance because it will be too

high. Do you know what happens, Speaker, when you can't buy crop insurance? You can't get a loan to put in your crops, because for many, before the bankers—and I don't blame the bankers; I'm not anti-bank—will extend credit to a farmer to put in a crop, they want proof of crop insurance.

In my case, in Timiskaming–Cochrane, last year we had a pest that we've never had before. It is called the swede midge.

1720

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: What's it called?

Mr. John Vanthof: The swede midge.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Never heard of it.

Mr. John Vanthof: Neither had we. Timiskaming–Cochrane grows more canola—or grew more canola—than anywhere else in Ontario. We're the canola capital of Ontario. Why? Because our temperature's a little bit cooler, we had ideal conditions for canola, and quite frankly we could make pretty good money growing canola, so we all grew canola. Then comes the Swede midge.

Now, I'm not a scientist, but what the Swede midge does is it goes for the growing point of the plant. It kills the growing point, so the plant compensates by growing around it and starting over. But as a result, the plant never matures; it just keeps growing and growing and growing, and never produces a crop.

We sprayed and we sprayed, and we sprayed some more, but a lot of the fields were a total writeoff. That was not this summer, but last summer. The ones who were crop-insured got crop insurance, but their premiums went up because of that pest. Everybody with me now?

So this summer, a lot of people didn't grow canola, because the Swede midge is going to stick around for at least four years. A lot of people didn't grow canola, so we grew other crops: corn, soybeans.

This was the worst summer we've had, the old-timers tell me, since 1965—the coldest, the wettest—so a lot of our crops didn't get off. Now, for those farmers, that's hit number two. It's not their own problem; it's not their own cause. It wasn't bad management; it wasn't cutting back on fertilizer; it was purely weather, and if I'm listening to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, it could very well be climate change. But now those farmers are behind the eight ball because they'll have two claims in a row.

Even on a personal level—not my person, but I'll take an example. We have some fairly big farms in Timiskaming–Cochrane. Some of these farmers are cash croppers, elevator owners and custom farmers, so they'll come and custom-combine your grain. Like I said, usually we have snow in—around now it starts. We've had snow for a month. I remember the member from Haldimand–Norfolk was talking about snow beans; ours should be blizzard beans, because we haven't seen them for a while.

A good friend of mine; he's not alone, but he's a good friend of mine, his family. Some people here might even know Norm Koch and his kids, Rob and Chad. If you

ever drive through the TransCanada Highway and go through Earlton, you've got the town of Earlton on one side and Koch Farms on the other side, and they're both about the same size. It's a big farm—a family farm, but a big one.

Norm does a lot of custom-combining, and Norm is a good custom-combiner. Norm treats your crop like his own. This year, Norm didn't get a lot of his own crops off because he saved a lot of other people; he got their crops off. Now Norm is going to pay the price, and I think that's something that we have to look at. That wasn't mentioned at all: what climate change is going to do to crop insurance, what pests that we've never seen before are going to do to crop insurance and what they're going to do to the commodities that the government is proposing to cover.

Once again, we're totally in favour—no problem at all about supporting this bill—but we were extremely disappointed that the minister didn't take some time and actually recognize that if there are going to be huge changes in the climate in the future—in fact, I think the change is happening, because it's getting pretty dry in here. It used to be that the climate was only going to get hotter. I think it's going to be more erratic, because that's what we're experiencing. There's going to have to be some kind of mention of how that's going to impact agriculture and how that's going to impact individual areas.

I know in Timiskaming–Cochrane—

Mr. Chris Ballard: Where there are big alfalfa patches.

Mr. John Vanthof: Actually, they're fields in Timiskaming–Cochrane; not patches.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Is that what they're called?

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. We don't have alfalfa patches. We have alfalfa fields.

All jokes aside—and I'm sure it's not the only place in the province, but I know my friends and farmers very well in Timiskaming–Cochrane. They're going to have a really tough winter. And it's going to get tougher next spring, because it's going to be hard for some of these people to get affordable crop insurance, not because of lack of management ability, but purely because of pests and weather conditions that they have never experienced before. It's a good example for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. I was extremely disappointed that the Minister of Agriculture or his parliamentary assistant didn't even bother to mention that. It's really important.

I don't begrudge people who don't have an agricultural background for not totally understanding our sector. I don't totally understand other sectors all that well sometimes. But we do expect that ministers of the crown take the time to truly understand what's going on. I truly hope that, going forward, we actually have a working relationship and don't hear too many more cracks about how it took a member from Beaches–East York to bring this forward, because that won't go over well in the farm community. We all want to work together. This shouldn't

be a politically divisive issue, but it could very well become one.

Another issue I'd like to touch on is an issue that has been in the news a lot of late: the use of neonicotinoids. Again, I'm going to talk about this on two different levels: from the legislative level and from the dirt level, the people who actually plant.

Is there a problem with neonicotinoids? I don't think anyone is going to deny that. Can they affect pollinators? Yes. It is a pesticide. It's not rocket science to think that a pesticide could affect insects.

There was an issue with acute poisoning of bees, and that happened because of the dust coming off the treated seed, and the equipment that farmers use created more dust. The agricultural sector, the equipment sector, the seed companies and the chemical companies worked together to solve that problem. I think the acute poisoning problem from dust has been largely, if not eliminated—you can't honestly say that it has been eliminated, but it has been largely controlled. I think we can be safe to say that it has been largely controlled.

1730

The government has made an announcement on this issue. We are left with the case that there could yet be systemic problems with neonicotinoids, and from our party's position, we're not going to stand here and say, "Well, that can't be," because there very well could be systemic problems with neonicotinoids.

I'd like to back up a step to where these problems actually started. I'm going to go back even before neonicotinoids.

Over the years, agriculture has evolved and we've changed. I remember when I started farming, I mouldboard-plowed everything. Then that was a no-no because, "We need conservation tillage," so we went to conservation tillage. Then we went to no-till. No-till doesn't really work well in my area, so we went back to conservation tillage. So we made lots of changes.

When I started farming, there was lots of public research to help you. Over the years, the government has backed away from public research, and companies have taken up the slack. I don't blame them. I really don't. The federal government, I think, has been guiltier of trying to push science away and trying to push it to other people, but the province, as well, has backed off considerably on agricultural research. As a result, all the research that was done was private, by private companies who are out to make money, as I was when I farmed.

It's no surprise that farmers use a lot of chemical products for insurance. That's basically what neonicotinoids are. Some areas of farmland need them; some crops need them. Not all crops need them. But no one was actually paying for the research to see exactly where they were needed. That's one thing the government should be doing now. If you're serious that there are some places that don't need neonicotinoids, help us find ways to actually test accurately, to know when and where.

Where that comes back to the crop insurance issue is, if you're going to restrict the use of something that is

used everywhere else, there are going to be yield impacts, and they're not going to be divided—the yield impacts aren't going to be the same all over. Some farms are going to be hit much harder than others. Some crops are going to be hit much harder than others. That's going to impact their crop insurance. So if your crop goes down because you can't use a chemical, then you'll get a payout for one year, maybe, but you won't the second year, and your premium is going to go way up.

Where that's even a bigger problem—fields are fairly big now. At least in my part of the world, they're fairly big, and they are not that uniform. So you could have three or four different types of soil on the same farm. One type of soil might be more prone to soil-borne insects than another type of soil. So to say that we can't use something because—how do you do that? If you have a 100-acre field and 20 acres in the middle of it needs protection from wireworm or whatever and the rest doesn't, how do you get around that?

I know how I got around it on my farm. I didn't have a big farm. I farmed about 500 acres. On my final 500-acre farm, I had 300 acres, of which I have about 250 left: beautiful soil, the kind of soil where after it rains, you could still go on there and not make mud. Just beautiful soil. But in the middle of that farm there were 40 acres of the clay like they made the pyramids from. It didn't matter what you did, that soil was always ready two weeks later, and if you touched that soil a day before it was ready, all you had was parking lot.

I was a smaller farmer. My bigger cash crop neighbours around me kind of laughed, but I had a 100-acre field that was split into two triangles and a straight stretch in the middle. I did that was because, as a smaller farmer, I could compensate for that. But bigger places can't. They can't come back and make those changes, and that's something we have to realize. Those are just a couple of examples.

The government has made this announcement of an aspirational goal—and in this case, I like the word “aspirational.” Most times I get a little bit leery from the word “aspirational,” but this time I hope they truly mean that, because the agricultural sector really wants to work. It's not in a farmer's best interest to destroy the environment. It's not in a farmer's best interest to destroy the soil. It's not in a farmer's best interest to hurt other species of animals. But a farmer needs the tools to operate his farm profitably, and if the government is going to take those tools away, then the government has to take steps so that the farmer can still compete with other areas, because otherwise the base of the agricultural sector on which this province depends won't be healthy and we won't be able to create all those jobs.

It gets even trickier when the province is making pronouncements on things that are actually a federal responsibility, so then some of our provincial counterparts, which farmers have to compete against, will have access to products that we won't have access to. In effect, you're creating an island, and when you create an island—I have a cottage on a lake and I have friends who have a cottage on that lake, but they're on an island.

Everything is harder to get to the island. When you create an agricultural island, it becomes more difficult. That's the government's decision to make, but the government has to realize the ramifications of creating that island. You have to step up to the plate if you're going to do that, and crop insurance is one place where that will rear its head.

If we can look ahead on the neonicotinoid file, we need to spend a lot of research and time—public research—to find ways where we can test where we need it and where we don't. It's really important. We can't just say, “We have to use ‘this much less’,” and that's it.

I'll give the government credit; there is no aspirational target on canola because canola really needs it. I grew canola for a long time and before neonicotinoids we used organophosphates to kill the bugs, and organophosphates were way more dangerous. They were dangerous to use.

That's something else that you have to realize: If you don't look at the whole picture, you can ban one thing but you have to make sure that you know what's going to replace it, because some of these crops aren't going to grow without those tools. You have to look at the whole picture and I really hope that on this issue the government takes the time to actually listen to farmers and work with farmers for the long term, and to their credit, on the acute problem we have with neonicotinoids, I think the government recognizes the work that the farmers have done, and I hope that they will continue to work with agriculture. But they're going to have to realize that to really come up with viable tools so we can produce using fewer pesticides, we're going to need research dollars and we're going to need public research. I don't see why anybody is surprised, when you leave all the research to the people who make the chemicals—if you expect them to do the research—that you don't end up using more chemicals. That's not rocket science.

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Something else: A lot of people bunch the neonicotinoids problem with genetically modified, GMOs, and you can have your own views on GMOs, but actually, because of GMOs, we use a lot less pesticide than we did 20 years ago. The people who want to ban GMOs and ban neonicotinoids—you can have your own views. I perfectly respect people who want to buy organic. I'm not a big believer. I don't, but if people want to buy organic, it's perfectly respected.

There's a reason that organic should be more expensive, because by and large, you don't get the yields from organic that you do from—I don't know what you would call it. The word isn't “commercial.” What's the word? When you're not organic, what are you?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Conventional?

Mr. John Vanthof: Conventional; that's the word I was looking for.

Organic crops are harder to grow. Usually, with organic field crops, you use a lot more fuel, so for the people who want us to use less fuel—when I was a kid, before—what's the chemical? Roundup. I farmed before there was Roundup, and Roundup kills a lot of things.

Roundup is actually a very safe product. It's safer than table salt; table salt is more poisonous than Roundup.

Before there was Roundup, our worst weed in my part of the world was quackgrass. Quackgrass is a killer weed. It's a grass, it's a perennial, so it's got miles and miles of roots, and if there's quackgrass, nothing else grows. Before Roundup, there were all kinds of things we tried, but what my dad did for quackgrass is we'd pick whatever field had the worst quackgrass and we would summer fallow. Summer fallowing is basically you cultivate that field, so you keep it black all summer.

That was my job. I was a little kid, and I was cultivating that field. So you don't grow a crop on that field; you just keep it black all summer. You don't see that anymore, and that's not really that good for the environment, because you use a lot of diesel fuel. Then, while I was cultivating, you'd have to pull out the cultivator and pull all those quackgrass roots off the cultivator, and you'd have to do this every week, the whole summer. We used all kinds of diesel fuel, and we didn't really kill the quackgrass either. We just kind of set it back.

Then Roundup came, and Roundup was a wonder product, but it also has a problem. I can remember when Roundup was first commercialized, when we first started using Roundup—it was expensive back then; I think it was \$40 a litre when I started using it. Everybody told us that nothing is ever going to be resistant to Roundup. You know what, Speaker? There are now lots of weeds that are resistant to Roundup. So you have to be careful how you use a product. I think that's the lesson for neonicotinoids too. You have to be careful how you use a product because if you use it too much, eventually the things you were going to try to control will develop resistance. I'm not a scientist, but I farmed for a long time, and Roundup is my example. When I started, Roundup wasn't going to have any resistance, and now there are lots of things resistant to Roundup.

Do we need to do things about neonicotinoids? Yes. Is the government's announcement the answer? No, not by itself. What we've called for—and I think the government is a bit late on this. You need a licence to spray in this province. You have a commercial licence. I have a farmer's licence to spray in this province, and commercial applicators have a higher level of licence. We could have done this last year: that you need that sprayer licence to be able to handle neonicotinoids. It would have made a big difference, and it would have increased people's confidence, because not just anybody can use it. It's a pesticide, so you should be licensed. Most farmers are licensed; not all. That would have been an easy step that we could have done already. Would it have been a big headline? No. But it would have been a step—just like nutrient management plans. They were a huge step.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Pest management training courses.

Mr. John Vanthof: Pest management training courses—that's how you got your licence.

Those are things we have to do. Those are programs that are in place.

One thing we haven't done—and this government has done a very poor job at it; and not just this government, but even agriculture itself—is telling people what actually happens with agriculture in this province, how strictly it's regulated. That's another problem.

They haven't announced a ban on neonicotinoids—but it very well could be.

Once you create the island, you're still having people come on and off the island with boats. So if the issue is that you don't want to have products that have neonicotinoids, you're going to have to do a lot more than ban neonicotinoids in your own little part of the world.

I'll give you an example, Speaker. I'm a dairy farmer so I like talking about it. I was a dairy farmer.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: I always will be. When the people of Timiskaming—Cochrane get sick of me, somebody will probably hire me to milk cows.

We're going to talk about another issue that was a huge issue about a decade ago, and it was something like neonicotinoids: rBST. It's called bovine somatotropin. It's something that you can inject into a dairy cow and you'll get more milk.

Mr. Bob Delaney: John, you're the cream of the crop.

Mr. John Vanthof: I won't respond.

In America, this was all the rage. It comes from Monsanto. It's easier to milk cows when you have BST. You can give them a needle. It's a complicated story, but you don't have to breed them as often, and you can give them a needle and get a lot more milk. But if you think about it, injecting steroids, basically, into cows—is that good for your milk? Not really. Well, you know what? We never used it in Canada, because we have a unique system to supply milk in Canada—supply management—and Canadian farmers never wanted it. Why? Because they didn't think that people would accept it. But we didn't need it because our milk price was protected. We got a fair price for our milk, so there was no desire, because we didn't really have to compete with milk coming in from other places. As a result, consumers benefited. They benefited not only from a stable supply of milk, but they benefited because they never had to deal with BST. Now they use a lot less BST in the States, too, because people just didn't like it. So that's how, if the government does something, you can control what's used and not used.

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But with neonics it's different, because the farmers who don't have access still have to compete with farmers in Quebec, farmers in Manitoba, farmers in Michigan. They are going to be at risk. So the government has got to recognize that and look for ways that we can see where we need it and where we don't, and look for ways it's going to impact things like crop insurance. Because for certain farmers, if they don't have the access and if we put rules in place that actually—because we have a tendency to do that. We have a tendency—the government has a tendency—to put rules in place that sound really good here but don't work on the ground.

If we're going to put stricter controls on neonics, which we agree with, we have to make sure that the programs are in place on the ground to make sure that it can be accurately identified where neonics can be used and can't, and that in places where neonics can be used, the farmers actually have access. Because when it's time to plant and you're going through six months of regulatory process to get the ability to use them—you can't plant in October. That's a big issue.

So can we regulate? Should we regulate neonics? Should we have stronger regulation? Yes. But those regulations have to make sense from the ground.

In closing, Speaker—it's going to be a six-minute-and-19-second closing.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm going to have to check my notes to see what I missed—neonicotinoids, next steps.

In closing, I'd like to say, once again, we are in favour of this bill. Absolutely. Should this bill be travelled? Quite frankly, I'm not sure, because this bill is just a change of a few words. I don't think I could find a farmer in Ontario who is opposed to this bill. Oh, I could find a couple; farmers are a contrary bunch. So I could find a couple who would be opposed to this bill, but by and large the farm community is going to be in favour of this bill.

I have spoken to many people in the farm community. Actually, I got a technical briefing from the ministry, and as I was walking out in the hall, Matt Bowman—is Matt president of the Cattlemen's yet?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: No, not yet.

Mr. John Vanthof: He should be. He's on his way. He's in my riding, and he's an excellent farmer. He's a big representative of the Ontario cattlemen.

I met him in the hall just outside the Legislature on that day. He said, "John." I said, "Matt, what are you doing here? I just got a technical briefing about the new production insurance." He said, "Well, it's about time." And I agree with him. It's about time.

I've talked to the pork producers, Amy Cronin—I believe she's the chair of the pork producers. Great lady.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yeah, and she's very in favour and very capable of representing her industry. So I think there's pretty well universal acceptance for this bill.

Where we're going to have to be careful, and where this bill is going to need extreme scrutiny, is when we actually get to the working parts and where the money is going to come from, how the programs are going to be developed. That's going to be crucial, because we all know what happens when we don't take the time to develop the programs right.

One of the things, hopefully, that this bill will change is that we won't need as many ad hoc programs, because ad hoc programs can be a disaster. I'm sure we have all been contacted by the—I can't remember the name of their organization, but they're young pork producers who

didn't qualify for the program when there was the disaster program for pork. They're very diligent people; I commend them. They're right—they were starting their careers and they got zippo, and people who were ending their careers got a bunch of money. That's what happens when you have an ad hoc program, because it's put together quickly. Because the government is trying to react to a crisis, you make mistakes. Unfortunately, that happened eight years ago, so those mistakes will likely never be remedied. Hopefully this program will make less need for ad hoc programs.

It's going to be very important how it's put together because if you look at the Risk Management Program that was developed by the pork producers and the beef producers, that then was capped by this government. We very well might still have the need for ad hoc programs because if crop prices crash, as they've done, and if that stays like that, one sector could very well drain that program and render it basically useless—not useless; useless isn't the right word. It could render it—basically, it'll drain the tank and it won't get the job done and you still might need an ad hoc program.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Ineffective.

Mr. John Vanthof: Ineffective; thank you.

That's something we really have to worry about.

So we need to do a lot of consultation with producers on this. I think we need to do much more consultation with producers on neonics than what's being proposed—much more—because, believe me, farmers across the province want to solve this problem. But they need to understand, they need to have confidence that the government actually wants to work with them, and that's going to take more than just a couple of sessions; it's going to take more than that. It's going to take a commitment from the government to actually fund the research so we know, in a timely manner, where we do and where we don't need neonics.

In my final minute, I'd like to reiterate that for any type of crop insurance to be effective in the future, especially with this government—when the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change keeps talking about the huge impacts that's going to have for agriculture. Well, then, the crop production insurance program in this province has to take that into account, because otherwise, producers are going to bear the brunt and then producers are going to fail. It's happening right now in Timiskaming-Cochrane. There has to be changes made to the crop production insurance program this winter in Timiskaming-Cochrane or there will be farmers, through no fault of their own, who will not be able to afford the crop insurance that they need to get operating capital to put in their crops.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands adjourned until Monday, December 8, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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