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Monday 8 December 2014

Lundi 8 décembre 2014

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 8 December 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 8 décembre 2014

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's my pleasure to welcome Studio Y, which is Ontario's Youth Social Impact and Leadership Academy. Folks from there are seated in the east members' gallery and include: Andrew Do, Matthew Blackshaw, Kacper Niburski, Safiah Chowdhury, Irfan Sharif, Sabrina Tang, Ryan Collins-Swartz and Keaton Evans. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm very pleased to welcome my former Scarborough–Agincourt student, who is currently a fourth-year student at Ryerson University, Sachil Patel, who is witnessing today's proceedings.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to acknowledge and welcome Equal Voice to Queen's Park. Equal Voice Toronto is hosting their annual Queen's Park reception today from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., in rooms 228 and 230. I hope all the members will participate.

This year's theme is "More Than Ever" to celebrate that in June 2014, more women than ever were elected to Queen's Park.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to welcome today Fanshawe College. They're here as well for a reception at 11:30, and I extend an invitation to all my colleagues to join them.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Monsieur le Président, j'ai le plaisir d'accueillir—I have the pleasure of welcoming the students from Briarcrest Junior School, grade 5, whom I had the pleasure of meeting with this morning. It's the French class visiting today, Mr. Speaker, so I welcome them.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Steve Lichty, the CEO of Tri-County Mennonite Homes in New Hamburg, and his wife Judy Rocco.

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, my EA, Margo Duncan, is retiring on Thursday, and she has her family and close friends here today to help her celebrate. I want to introduce her daughter, son-in-law and grandsons: Xana, Derek, Ciarán, Brayden, Braonán and Declan McCormick; her sister and brother-in-law, Pat and Bill Ostermeier; her aunt—and our Sergeant-at-Arms's aunt's best friend—Bella Spencer; and lifelong friends Linda Zepotoczny and Catherine Dunne.

I wish Margo all the best in her retirement and thank her for her hard work, training, brutal honesty and friend-

ship over these past seven years. I'm also putting her in for the Order of Canada, because she was with me for seven years.

Hon. Reza Moridi: Please join me in welcoming page captain Johann Muthukumaraswamy; his mother, Rachael Rajaratnam; his brother, Dominic Muthukumaraswamy; and his grandmother, Ariam Rajaratnam. They will be sitting in the gallery. Please join me in welcoming them.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It gives me great pleasure to introduce a long-time friend, a champion of the Portuguese-Canadian community, the owner and operator of Merit Metal Industries, Virgilio Pires. Welcome to Queen's Park. It's great to have you here.

Hon. David Oraziotti: I want to introduce two constituents from Sault Ste. Marie, John and Ida Bruno, who are joining us here today.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted that we are joined today by representatives of Fanshawe College in London: Peter Devlin and Anne Marie DeCicco-Best and their team. Welcome. You're all invited to a reception at noon for Fanshawe College.

Hon. Jeff Leal: In the members' east gallery today, I'd like to introduce Lyle Vanclief, who is the former federal member of Parliament for Prince Edward–Hastings and was the federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food in the Chrétien government; and Doug Moses, who is his assistant and with us today. Let's welcome Lyle and Doug.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. I want to take the privilege to introduce, on behalf of our colleague MPP Jack MacLaren, page Kelsey Clark; her mother, Cheryl Clark; and her grandmother, Patty Clark. They are in the members' gallery, so let's welcome them.

It's time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY RATES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The leader of the—no, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: My goodness, promotions all around—it must be Christmas.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): You had me surprised there.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Energy. As we get

closer to winter and temperatures drop, the consequences of your irresponsible hydro policies become more apparent and dire. All across Ontario, people have to face the hard choice between paying their hydro bills or going without other essentials. This is because they're paying 14 cents a kilowatt hour plus the debt retirement charge, HST and delivery charges. When you entered office, ratepayers were paying a competitive 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour.

If you don't change your course, Ontarians who are struggling to pay their hydro bills today will soon be forced out of their homes and left in most desperate conditions. Minister, will you finally address the reality of the failure of your energy policies and stop these unaffordable increases?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: For the last 10 years, this party and this government have been making tremendous efforts to create affordability, reliability and clean energy in the province of Ontario. When we took over government 10 years ago, there was a deficit of electricity; they were expanding dirty coal, to the point where it was 25%; and they had double-digit increases in the rates when they tried to privatize the electricity system.

We've invested tremendously in the energy sector to make it reliable, to make it affordable and to make it clean. I'm happy, in the supplementaries, to deal with the specifics.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minister, you know that the primary reason for skyrocketing hydro bills is because of your Green Energy Act and the expensive contracts that you signed under it for unreliable, intermittent energy.

On November 24, wind turbines were cranking out a ton of expensive power we didn't need. We had to sell that power at a loss. We sold it to Michigan, New York and Quebec at a loss of \$10 million. That's \$10 million for a single day. Steve Austin was the Six Million Dollar Man; you're the \$10-million-a-day man.

1040

How do you explain to the small businesses or the seniors struggling with their backs up against the wall how we can blow \$10 million a day? It's right on their hydro bills. How do we explain that to them?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I know that the critic for the Conservatives understands the electricity system a little more than he's letting on. He's feigning ignorance in terms of the electricity system. He knows that we have a surplus, when they left us with a deficit of electricity. That surplus is being used to help the ratepayer and to reduce rates. We're doing that in a number of ways.

One of the ways we're doing it is by creating the Industrial Electricity Incentive Program, which represents about a 50% reduction in electricity rates for new companies coming into Ontario and for those that are expanding. We are taking significant steps.

He also knows that on the sale and the trade of electricity we are saving costs to the taxpayer by exporting our electricity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Final supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minister, critics of your government policies have said time and time again, as new, intermittent, expensive, unreliable energy comes on line, we will have to sell more power at a loss to our competitors at times when we don't need it.

When our electrical system is flooded with wind power, ratepayers have to pay Bruce Nuclear to release steam from their plants, reducing the output from their plants. When we're flooded with wind power, you have to let gas plants stand idle.

Ratepayers have to foot all of the bills for that. They pay for your mistakes. You know that as peak and off-peak hydro rates rise, Ontario ratepayers get hit harder and harder and harder.

Minister, what are you prepared to do to ensure that Ontario has no more \$10-million days so you can stop being the \$10-million man?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member knows that renewable energy consists of about 8% of our total energy supply. That has a marginal increase in prices. To attribute it to renewable energy is very disingenuous, to borrow a phrase from the member from eastern Ontario.

But I would refer the member to an article in the New York Times about four or five days ago, where they spoke about a study by Lazard investment firm, which is a very credible, large investment firm, where they have itemized across North America how energy prices are coming down for renewable.

In US states, the renewables are now parity at grid. In other words, wind and solar are not—

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —anywhere else. The current procurement process we're going through—I met with the industry about five or six days ago. They are now almost approaching parity at grid.

Moving forward, it will be as cheap as gas, and it will be cleaner than gas. That's because we have—

Interjections.

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

New question?

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, it has been almost a year since the ice storm and municipalities are still waiting for emergency assistance. It took you nine months to write an application so municipalities could apply for the ice-storm funding. It took another two months to give them training on the applications. Then, two weeks later, according to the Toronto Star, you are blaming municipalities for not having their applications in. Who is really at fault here, Minister: the municipalities or you?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Let me take a moment, Mr. Speaker, to say I was amongst a large number of Ontarians who experienced the ice storm. Our power in our place was out, I think, for six days.

I have nothing but admiration and respect for municipalities and the first responders who responded so well to the emergency that befell large parts of Ontario. In that regard, our government took the unprecedented step of supplying up to \$190 million based on municipalities requiring money over and above their budget and also related to health and safety concerns directly related to the ice storm.

Municipalities are processing the applications. We're helping them in every way we can. I'm pleased to say that things are coming along quite well.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Minister, if you can't get the smallest of the claims out, how long is it going to take you to process these claims that are thousands of times higher?

According to the press, the claim from Toronto is going to be 2,000 times higher than the claim that's already in your office waiting for approval. Have you approved that claim yet? Has any of that money gone out to the municipalities yet? We were told last week that, in fact, you had one application in. Have they actually got their money yet, Minister?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I appreciate that question from my honourable opponent, who speaks quite frequently about government accountability. I know that in a similar situation when they were in government, they shovelled money out the door, and when they applied to the feds to get the money back, the feds said no. We're not about to replicate that situation.

Here's what your former leader John Tory, the current mayor of the largest municipality in Ontario, said: "The applications are just about complete. They (staff) are having no trouble putting them together, and they are going to be submitted on time. The deadline is what it is, and I am told that the applications will be in on time and that they are not having any trouble with them."

So when the largest municipality and one of the smaller ones, Mapleton, can complete them, we're well on track.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Final supplementary.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Minister, it's clear that someone has messed up. It's a year after the ice storm, and only \$23,000 of the \$190 million in emergency assistance, according to you, has actually gone out, which would be to that small municipality.

Now that you've found out that the program is so bad that some municipalities are considering giving up on their applications, are you going to penalize the Alberta company you hired for almost \$3 million to help you deliver this program? Are you going to penalize them for this delay, or are you, in fact, going to accept that they are doing their job, but you're not?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Well, we're doing the job, Mr. Speaker. There are accountability provisions in place. Much of that is governed by the federal process. By the way, we learned just last Friday that, because of the pro-

visions we put in place around accountability, the feds are going to actually partner with Ontario in terms of assisting. So I think that's good news.

We'll continue to work with municipalities. They asked for some additional time and some additional help, and guess what? We extended the deadlines because some of them had not even calculated the full cost by the end of August. We have extended the deadline, and we provided some assistance to them. We are on track for December 31, and I'm pleased to say that I think very soon, things will work out very well.

DENTAL CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. In hundreds of schools and clinics across this province, public health units provide basic teeth cleaning and checkups to low-income children, but New Democrats found out that Liberals are quietly cutting preventative dental care for kids by cutting this service from the Ontario Public Health Standards. Toronto's medical officer of health says that 80% of children who received oral health care are going to lose it.

The Premier has said she is "not going to cut health care." Can she explain why she is, in fact, doing just that and cutting dental care for thousands and thousands of vulnerable children across this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Here's the reality of what we're doing: We are in the process of combining six different programs. If you look at the programs that were in place, in fact, the money that was allocated to these programs was not all being spent. It wasn't being used in the way that it was intended to be used. In 2013-14, the funding for the Healthy Smiles Ontario program was \$30 million, and as of April 1, 2014, 70,000 more children from low-income families can now access dental services. So the changes that we are making are designed to help more kids whose families cannot afford dental services to get those dental services.

1050

We are combining six programs. It is a change. I know that the leader of the third party is not keen on change of any kind, but this change is going to mean that more kids from low-income families will get dental services.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: That is simply not the case, and this Premier knows it. She and her minister have insisted all along that health care is not being cut, while we've watched the Liberals cut health care time and time again. But the Liberals are secretly cutting dental care for the most vulnerable children; 15,000 children in Toronto will lose dental care. That's a cut. News to Premier: That's a cut, 15,000 children.

According to Northwestern Health Unit, of the 4,000 children who received preventative dental care services last year, 98% of them are going to lose that service. That is a cut. Of those 4,000 kids who received care last year, only 80 kids—of 4,000, only 80 kids are going to be getting that service.

New Democrats believe that children should have healthy smiles, not rotting teeth. The Liberals used to believe that at one time, too. Will the Premier stop these cuts and make sure these kids get their services?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The reason that we are making the changes that we are, the reason that we're taking six programs where kids were not accessing the services that they needed and combining those into one program, is because we believe that more kids from low-income families should have access to dental services. So as of April 1, 2014, 70,000 more children from low-income families have access to dental services.

If there is a particular issue in a particular program in a particular municipality, I know that the Minister of Health would like to know about that, but overall, the funding has not changed, the programs have been consolidated and more children are receiving dental care. More children from low-income families are getting that dental care that they need.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier can drink her own bathwater all she wants, but the Toronto Board of Health has asked the Liberals to stop these cuts. The Northwestern Health Unit has asked the Liberals to stop these cuts. The Association of Local Public Health Agencies has asked the Liberals to stop these cuts. The Premier is the only one who is saying that there are no cuts to kids. Everybody else is admitting that, in fact, low-income kids are going to have their services cut. This Premier should admit to the people of Ontario exactly what she's doing.

So now I ask her the question: Will she actually do the right thing and stop these unprecedented preventative health care cuts, dental care cuts, from being cut from the people, from the lowest income, from the most vulnerable children in our province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The \$30 million that is in the Healthy Smiles program is there. It has not been cut. That money is available. What we have done is we have integrated six programs. If, as I said, there is a specific case where there has been a change that has had an unintended consequence, we would want to know about that and we would want to know the specifics. But 70,000 more kids from low-income families are receiving dental care because of the changes that we are making. I think that that is a good thing. We are working so that more children will have that dental care, and that will make them healthier. That is the full and the primary reason that we are making these changes: so that more kids will have access to dental care.

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. As the session closes this week, the cynicism and arrogance of this Liberal government continues to grow. We just saw it again with that Premier's answer. The government insists people aren't being hurt by health

care cuts, but cutting nurses and cutting access to home care actually hurts people. Now it's cutting dental care for low-income children. Will the Premier admit that her government is cutting health care and that, in fact, people and children are being hurt?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are working very hard on this side of the House to make changes that are necessary to transform the health care system so that people get the service that they need. Whether it's low-income kids who can't access dental care or whether it is people in their homes who need service, we are increasing funding to make sure that that that happens.

The reality is that there is change needed. There's change needed, whether it's the integration of the six dental care programs or whether it's accessing more service for people in the community. Those are changes that are necessary. We are making those changes, Mr. Speaker, and we are increasing funding in health care, not reducing it.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The people of Ontario want their government to make changes that make their lives better, not make their lives worse.

It's not just cuts to health care. This government insisted that it was being open and transparent, but the Liberals keep a so-called transparency report on the auto insurance industry hidden, and the Liberals are still protecting Liberal insiders in the \$1.1-billion gas plants scandal.

How long can this Premier continue to insist that she is being open and transparent when the evidence shows the contrary, time and time again?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just picking up the thread from that first question, Mr. Speaker: The reality is that the report to which the leader of the third party refers is a report that will be made available. We have said that all along.

We have been very clear about the challenges in front of us, and we've been very clear that we do need to make changes. When there are six programs that are in place to allow kids to have access to dental care, if the resources aren't being spent, if the money is not being spent on that, and the kids who most need the dental care are not getting that dental care, then I think a change is needed. That's why we've integrated the six programs.

I understand that the leader of the third party thinks it is responsible to just say, "Don't change anything. Just leave everything the way it is." That's not what we believe, Mr. Speaker. If there's a problem, we think we should solve it. More kids needing dental care: We think we should solve that. That's what we're doing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I know that the Premier ignored the transparency and accountability piece of my question. Perhaps when she meets with Christy Clark this afternoon, a Liberal Premier to another Liberal Premier, she can encourage Ms. Clark to have Peter Faist and

Laura Miller come to Ontario to talk about their roles in the gas plants scandal.

Since the Legislature was recalled in the fall, we've seen cuts to health care for kids, and now dental care. We've seen child care spaces closed. We've seen insiders protected. We've seen cuts to schools. We've seen reports hidden from the public. We've seen an increase in the privatization of everything from hydro to health care.

Is this the kind of cynicism and arrogance that we can expect from this Liberal government for the next three and a half years?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just because that is the narrative written down on the page that the leader of the third party has in front of her does not mean that that's what's happening.

The reality is that we are implementing the plan and the agenda that we ran on. We said we were going to make sure that we continued to deliver health care to people as they need it, in their homes, where they need it. We said we were going to tackle issues of poverty and make sure that more low-income kids have access to dental care. That's part of the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

We said we were going to be open about the work that we were doing. That's why all of our mandate letters, both the ministers' and the parliamentary assistants' mandates letters, are available for everyone to know the work that is being done in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that as the leader of the third party sees the things that are happening, the changes that we are making that are benefitting people, she will support us in those changes.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development. Minister, in 94 of the last 95 months, Ontario's unemployment rate has been higher than the national average. In particular, my riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London has seen its unemployment numbers continually rise since April. This past month, its unemployment rate rose from 7.5% to 7.8%.

You, Minister, have implemented a number of measures over the past three years, but obviously your plan is not working, as unemployment numbers continue to escalate. My riding has lost over 6,000 manufacturing jobs under your government and unemployment numbers continue to increase.

Obviously, your ideas are not working. Minister, what is plan B for jobs in my riding?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Yes, indeed, the job numbers on Friday weren't what we were hoping for, and I had an opportunity to speak to that on Friday.

1100

The fact of the matter is, these numbers fluctuate from month to month. If you look at September numbers, Mr. Speaker, they were up 24,000. Not a peep from the opposition when our business community was creating 24,000 net jobs. When you look at October, we're up 37,000 net new jobs. Not a peep from the member opposite when we're up 37,000 new jobs.

This past month, yes, the numbers did go down. But since September, we're still up 30,000 net new jobs in this province. That's good news, and still, not a positive peep from the member opposite on that news.

When our Premier came back from China—

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'll talk about that in the supplementary.

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

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Minister, obviously you didn't listen to my question. The unemployment rate has been going up since April. It wasn't fluctuating; it was a continual, steady trend upward. Maybe if you'd listened to the question I'd get a good answer.

Minister, the strategies you have initiated over the last three years have only transformed into election-buying and job-retention strategies as opposed to job creation funds. Your policies are failing my constituents. You've had three months in this Legislature, Minister, to bring changes that would foster a business environment for investment and job growth. You again have failed to do so. Your current jobs program is that of high energy costs, job-stifling regulation such as the College of Trades, mandatory WSIB for private contractors, and mountains of red tape, all of which is detrimental to job growth for medium, small and large businesses.

Minister, when will this government stop relying on old strategies that aren't working and implement policies to deal with the job losses in my riding?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Again, in the month of October, manufacturing jobs were up 32,900 in the province of Ontario. Last month—overall, not the best month for Ontario—manufacturing jobs were still up 11,600 net new jobs. Again, not a peep from the member of the opposition on any of that positive information. In fact, London has gained over 3,800 net new jobs in the last year. Again, the member ignores that good-news information in his community.

There are parts of this province that are struggling more than most. That's why we set up the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund. Shamefully, that member voted against that fund. Some \$2.9 million have been invested in the London area, leveraging nearly \$30 million in private sector investment in London and creating jobs in that community. We're creating jobs right across the province.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. During the holiday season, many charities give out gift cards to help clients afford food and gifts for their families. Last week, we uncovered the outrageous practice that Money Mart was using to take advantage of the most vulnerable people in Ontario by paying out 50 cents on the dollar for gift cards.

While we are encouraged, in fact, that Money Mart has announced they're suspending this program, how will the government—how will the minister—ensure that

Money Mart doesn't resume this shameful practice once the spotlight is turned off?

Hon. David Orazietti: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. Obviously, this practice, we believe, is impacting vulnerable consumers in Ontario, and that's why we sent enforcement folks from our ministry to Hamilton to investigate. We reached out to Money Mart immediately on hearing this information, and the program is now suspended, as the member has indicated. I'm certainly pleased with that.

We have a strong record in our government of consumer protection and of increasing and enhancing consumer protection measures for Ontarians. We will continue to review this matter and ensure that regulations are put in place. We have proposed legislation coming in the spring following a very exhaustive consultation that took place this past spring prior to the election. We would likely have more progress on that legislation had an election not been called, but we have some very good recommendations coming forward to enhance legislation to protect consumers on this issue.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The minister has had 11 years—this government has had 11 years—to address this problem and they have not addressed this problem. Minister, it's not just Money Mart that has this predatory practice. As soon as we brought this issue to your attention, we learned that other payday loan companies are offering a similar program. For example, Cash Corner is offering a very similar gift card program to vulnerable Ontarians in the Niagara region. New Democrats have long called for sweeping and wholesale reform to put the brakes on this predatory industry, and this government has done nothing.

Will this government follow the example set by other provinces and finally commit to wholesale reform to properly regulate this predatory industry?

Hon. David Orazietti: The member knows that the comments he's making are not completely accurate, because these are practices that evolve with these organizations as they continue to look for new ways to increase their financial betterment at the expense, often, of vulnerable consumers. We need to make sure—and we need to be vigilant—that we are continuing to move forward with regulations and legislation that help to protect consumers in the province of Ontario.

As soon as we became aware of this issue, we acted. This process and this activity is now stopped in the province of Ontario. We have changes coming. I am not aware of any jurisdiction in North America where there is legislation or regulations that regulate the resale of gift cards in North America. However, we obviously want to take all steps that we can to protect consumers.

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, in my riding of Kitchener Centre, I'm hearing from people who are having very much

trouble saving for their retirement. There are many studies that do show that Ontarians simply are not saving enough for their retirement years.

Our government committed to improving the retirement income system in the 2013 Ontario economic outlook and fiscal review. Just to recap this three-part strategy, it focuses on people without workplace pension plans, people with self-directed retirement savings and people with defined benefit plans.

Minister, I understand that you are planning on introducing PRPP legislation this afternoon that is going to bolster our retirement pension strategy. Can you please further tell this House why it is that we need this plan?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you to the member for Kitchener Centre for her question.

Less than 35% of workers in Ontario have a workplace pension plan. Coverage for workers in the private sector is even lower, with only 28% having membership in a benefit plan.

These numbers are alarming, and that's why this afternoon I plan on introducing PRPP legislation. I'm proud that this government is taking a balanced strategy to ensure Ontarians are better able to enjoy their retirement years.

The PRPP will be part of our plan for a comprehensive retirement strategy for their security. If passed, PRPP will allow Ontarians working for small to medium-sized businesses, as well as self-employed, to benefit from voluntary retirement savings tools at lower administration costs.

Building a strong retirement savings system so Ontarians can have a secure retirement future is a key pillar in our four-part plan to build Ontario up.

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

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you to the minister for his response. It's very encouraging to hear that our government is committed to ensuring a strong and secure retirement income system to help people when they reach their retirement years.

We know that in the 2014 budget our government committed to introducing PRPP legislation this fall. But hasn't the federal government already introduced its own PRPP bill? They did this back in 2012.

Minister, can you please tell us how the legislation that you plan on introducing this afternoon is going to compare with the federal legislation when passed?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Again, thank you to the member for Kitchener Centre for the supplementary question.

The member from Kitchener Centre is correct. PRPPs were first introduced by the federal government in December 2012 to provide individuals under federal jurisdictions with a new retirement savings tool. Legislation must now be passed by each province before PRPPs can be made available to the individuals employed in provincially regulated sectors and self-employed individuals.

Our government committed in the 2014 budget to introduce a legislative framework for PRPPs. It is an important part of our government's three-pronged strategy

to enhance retirement savings in Ontario. If passed, our province will join British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia in providing this voluntary retirement savings tool to ensure that people across this province can retire with dignity and security.

1110

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. In just the first month of this government's winter road-clearing plan for 2014-15, we see that while we may have a new minister, he's working off the former minister's tired old script. He's employing the same old failed strategy of fining the heck out of contractors for traffic tie-ups and then walking away thinking the problem is fixed.

Will the minister tell us how effective the over \$3.2 million in fines handed to contractors last year have been in preventing road closures this year?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member opposite for that question. I believe that member knows, because I've said it in many times in this House and outside of this House, that road and highway safety is, in fact, one of my most important responsibilities when you look at the mandate that I received from the Premier to deliver as Minister of Transportation.

It's one of the reasons that, not that many weeks ago, we announced that we would be releasing more equipment in southern Ontario—50 new pieces of equipment, specifically—to join with the 55 new pieces of equipment that were deployed last February in northern Ontario. It's why we have new inspectors out on the ground. It's why we've moved swiftly when there had been incidents that have occurred so far this winter.

We will continue to work very closely with our area maintenance contractors. We'll continue to work closely with communities right across the province and, of course, we encourage drivers to drive according to the conditions of the road and to work with us as partners, as they always do, to ensure that our roads remain amongst the safest in North America.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: It's always the drivers' fault—always.

Speaker, just two weeks ago the minister announced new fines for the southern Ontario contractor for the QEW mess in late November. Then last week, another review, and surely fines to follow, for a Highway 17 closure in northern Ontario due to snow. This broken merry-go-round routine of winter road closure, government review and contractor fines may be filling government coffers, but it has done nothing to improve what's becoming a road-clearing crisis. Yet we're still two weeks, in fact, from winter officially.

Instead of just fining our winter maintenance partners, will the minister commit today to exercise his responsi-

bility and work with the contractors to address problems ahead of time so that we can prevent them from occurring in the first place?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the member again for that follow-up question. I would say that since the end of last winter, right through to the beginning of this winter, the Ministry of Transportation has worked very closely with our area maintenance contractors. By and large, throughout this winter maintenance season so far, our contractors have performed well.

Of course, there have been circumstances, and the member has referenced a couple of them, where it is possible—and, in one case, likely—that a contractor was out of compliance with contractual obligations. That's why the Ministry of Transportation, as per the contract, filed notices of non-compliance.

We continue to work closely with our partners: the contractors themselves. We encourage drivers, as I've said before, to drive according to the conditions of the road. And we, as the ministry, will continue to enforce the contracts to ensure that our partners are actually in compliance.

PAPER MILL

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Pardon my voice. Last Friday, residents of Iroquois Falls got a huge lump of coal for Christmas as Resolute Forest Products announced that they were closing the paper mill. The paper mill is the pillar employer in that community—not just in that community, but in that whole region. Because the forest industry is highly integrated, this is going to impact other mills. It's going to impact suppliers. It's going to impact right down to the grocery store. It's going to be huge. The last shift is just before Christmas.

A bigger issue: It was also announced that the heat for the mill will be shut off in February. So the residents of Iroquois Falls—and they are a very resourceful people—they will basically have only a month—not even—to look for options on how to use that infrastructure. What we're asking today is: Will the minister stand with us and keep that mill heated so the residents of Iroquois Falls and of northern Ontario have a chance to look for options for their future?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I thank the member for the question. I got the call on Friday morning about half an hour before the press release went out. Let me just take a minute to offer my concern and support and anguish to the new mayor, who, quite frankly, sounds like he has been hit by a truck: Mayor Shea—very difficult circumstances. I also talked to Al Spacek in his capacity with FONOM and have committed to meet with them as soon as we can, or as soon as they are able.

The member makes a good point: The integration of the forestry sector is also at play here. As difficult as this is for the community of Iroquois Falls, this decision by Resolute obviously has implications for the sawmills in

the region as well. If they lose their biggest customer for their chips and the residual that comes out of their saw-mills, it has a big implication for them.

We're open and willing to discuss any options that may be available, and have already extended that to the mayor and to FONOM as well.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the minister for his response, but the crucial question is still—maybe everyone doesn't know this, but in northern Ontario, once a frost sets in a building, it's ruined. We've got a month because, basically, when you shut her down before Christmas, you're not going to do much over Christmas. On the 1st of February, the heat is off. We've got basically a month.

I'm impressed by what he has done so far, but we need the government to stand with the people of northeastern Ontario and make sure that that mill stays heated so we have the option to look at our future.

Hon. Bill Mauro: This facility, as I understand it, is primarily and only a newsprint-producing facility. I'm not in a position to state with certainty exactly what's possible with this facility. But what I do know is that this decision was based solely on the fact that newsprint demand over the last 10 or 15 years has basically been cut by 50%, 60%, 70% in North America or worldwide. I don't know how much opportunity there is to transfer this facility into some other capacity. What I do know is that it has an impact on the greater region.

I'm willing to listen; we're willing to talk. I can't make any commitments to you here today. But at the heart of this is the fact that there is, and continues to be, a significant declining demand for newsprint in the North American markets. That is what fundamentally underpinned the decision that was made by Resolute last week.

I would say it wasn't just in Ontario; they closed two machines in Quebec as well. I asked them, "Are you transferring capacity to another jurisdiction?" No. They just removed the capacity from the system. There's no market for newsprint anymore—or a significantly declining market.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, in my riding of Halton, we have a growing number of young families, and an increasing number of young children who are approaching school age. There's no question: Communication is a key skill for kids in school life, and we know that the sooner we address speech and language difficulties in a child's life, the more successful they tend to be. But when speech and language difficulties go undetected, they can have a devastating effect on the lives of children and youth.

Minister, studies show us that about one in 10 children need help developing speech and language skills. This means that a lot of young people in my riding could be facing an uphill battle.

Minister, what steps has the Ministry of Children and Youth Services taken on this issue?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you to the member from Halton for asking this very important question. Just last week, we committed an additional \$6.9 million over the next two years to Ontario's Preschool Speech and Language Program. Prior to this investment, the funding for the program totalled \$36.2 million. What this really means, in terms of how it affects children, is that it will benefit 10,000 more children who need speech and language services.

We're very proud of our achievements with the Ontario Preschool Speech and Language Program. Last year it provided services to more than 58,000 children with important communication and support services. This will make it easier for children and their families to access services sooner, and provide the resources they need to progress through their important developmental stages of life.

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

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you to the minister for highlighting how our government is working to make sure children who experience speech and language disorders get the services and the help they need in the critical early years.

I know members in my riding will be happy to know that the government will be providing millions of dollars in funding for ErinoakKids, an agency leader in the development of children's speech and language skills. This funding will help thousands of children get vital preschool speech and language therapy services.

Minister, I would be interested in knowing how these investments fit into our government's Special Needs Strategy and how quickly these investments will begin to be seen.

1120

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Earlier this year, our government announced our Special Needs Strategy with the goal of improving the experience and outcomes for children with special needs. It will improve the services for children and their families by offering earlier identification, improved service planning and coordination in the delivery of rehabilitation services.

What's really important, Speaker, is this funding will be allocated to the 31 preschool and language agencies in a very fair and transparent manner.

It's also important to note that every agency will receive funding to reduce their wait-lists—absolutely every agency. Half that money will flow this fiscal, which goes until March, and families will be able to start benefiting sooner from this funding, and almost immediately.

I look forward to working together with our common goal, which is an Ontario where every child and youth succeeds.

DEFIBRILLATION EQUIPMENT

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister,

my federal counterpart, Scott Reid, had donated defibrillators to our local police forces a few years back. However, when the OPP took over the Perth police in April of last year, the OPP removed this life-saving equipment from their police cars. For three months, I have asked for a response from you, but to no avail.

Minister, it's anyone's guess where these AEDs are now. But, more importantly, why would the OPP, who are often the first responders to our highway accidents, remove these AEDs, and why can't you answer a simple question from a member of this Legislature?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: First of all, I want to take this opportunity to thank our OPP officers for the incredible work they do in our communities 24/7. We should be thanking them every single moment, given the work they do, putting themselves in dangerous situations in our communities.

I have had a great opportunity, as the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, to meet with a lot of OPP officers, to visit detachments and meet mayors whose communities benefit from the services that the OPP officers provide. At every instance, Speaker, I have residents and local leaders telling me how grateful they are to the OPP services.

I have had the opportunity—the member has raised the issue, and I have assured the member opposite that we are looking into this matter. Once I have more fulsome information available, I will be sitting down with him and relaying that to him.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: Back to the minister: Minister, for three months now, I have called your office. I have sent you letters. I have spoken with you in this House. Where are these AEDs? Minister, please explain to me, and everybody in this House, the logic behind your policy that removes defibrillators from our police services.

Minister, what you just did, that response, was atrocious. I've got a simple question to you: Where are the AEDs, and why do you have such a ridiculous policy that takes AEDs out of OPP cruisers?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think the member opposite very much recognizes, and I'm sure everybody in this House will expect, that when it comes to decisions like what equipment to use and how to use it, that it is not a political decision. That is a decision that is made by the Ontario Provincial Police, as it should be. That is not a decision that we, the non-experts in matters relating to policing, should be making.

As I have given my commitment to the member opposite, as my office has been working with the member opposite, we are looking into the matter. As soon as we have that information available, Speaker, we will share it with the member, and I will even take his advice into account. But, again, when it comes to matters of safety and security of our communities, I will listen to our police service. I will listen to the OPP any single day versus this member opposite.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Wayne Gates: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Auto industry jobs are vital to Ontario. Economists are telling us that for every one job in a major auto assembly plant, there are 10 spinoff jobs that depend on it. Auto sales are strong, but there are worries about more auto plants leaving Ontario as the Canadian manufacturing footprint commitment signed in 2009 is coming to an end.

I'm surprised to see the Conservatives talking about this. They were clear in 2009: "Let GM fail and let the jobs leave Ontario." Without an auto strategy, the Liberals will be putting manufacturing jobs at risk in the exact same way the PCs wanted to back then.

Will this government commit to a unified and integrated auto strategy for this province that will protect our manufacturing sector and keep good-paying jobs here in Ontario, in places like Oshawa, St. Catharines, Niagara, Windsor and Ingersoll?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for his passion for the auto sector. It's great to see that coming from the NDP. It's great to see it coming from the member because, to be frank, just a number of weeks ago we announced a very significant investment in Alliston, an \$857-million investment by Honda to support 4,000 jobs and tens of thousands of supply chain jobs, with an investment from the province of \$85.7 million, and the view from the NDP was lukewarm at best. So if your position is that you support the investments we've made—in all, we've invested \$800 million over the last 10 years in the sector to accrue \$10 billion of investment from the private sector in Ontario's auto sector. If you support those investments, we're really pleased to have your support.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Minister, you might not know that, but I participated in the 2009 footprint agreement, so I absolutely have passion for the auto sector.

We've lost jobs in the truck plant. We've lost jobs in transmission. We've lost jobs in the components plant. The footprint is important. We have so many advantages here in Ontario that manufacturers look to: our low Canadian dollar, our universal medical system and our highly educated and skilled workforce. General Motors is committed to keeping 16% of its North American manufacturing here in Canada with the agreement signed in 2009. It is ending in 2016. What we need now is a promise from this Liberal government that they will support an extension of the Canadian manufacturing footprint commitment.

With a comprehensive, sensible and unified auto plan, we can protect thousands and thousands of manufacturing jobs and pensions—just as important, pensions—here in Ontario. Can we expect this government to do just that?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member can expect this government to do what we've been doing, and that is to keep working with our auto sector partners making very significant investments in the auto sector; \$800 million we've invested over the last 10 years to accrue \$10 billion of private sector investment. That's the biggest commitment any government has ever made to the auto sector.

We'll continue to work with our auto partners. We'll continue to work hard to continue to maintain and grow that footprint that the member talks about.

I welcome his passion. I hope that the NDP's words are matched by their actions as they support the investments that we have made and will continue to make in the auto sector in this province.

VICTIM SERVICES AWARDS

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Ma question est pour la procureure générale. Attorney General, I understand that each year you recognize the exceptional achievements of dedicated professionals and volunteers in the field of victim services in Ontario with your victim services awards of distinction. These services are essential to victims of crime. The services include counselling, referrals and financial support, which all work to decrease the trauma that victims experience.

My riding of Davenport has a number of shining examples of organizations that provide these crucial services. West Neighbourhood House provides counselling services for women and children who are experiencing or have experienced abusive relationships. These counsellors work to help victims make positive changes in their own lives.

The individuals who do work in this field should be proud of what they do, and I feel they should be publicly recognized. Speaker, can the Attorney General please share more information about these awards and inform this House who would be eligible for a victim services award of distinction?

1130

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me say thank you to the member from Davenport for this very important question.

The victim services awards of distinction were established in 2006 to recognize the high-quality services and support that people and organizations provide to victims of crime on a daily basis throughout the province. The awards were created to recognize the great work of individuals who are personally impacted by crime and have raised the profile of victims' issues in Ontario.

The nominee must be an Ontario resident and may be an individual victim of crime, their family members or others personally impacted by crime who have raised the profile of victims' issues in Ontario; volunteers who offer their time and personal resources to help victims; professional practitioners and paid victim services providers who have gone above and beyond their duty; or pro-

grams, groups or organizations that deliver innovative services to victims of crime.

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

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I thank the Attorney General for that response. I am pleased to hear that our government recognizes the exceptional achievement of dedicated professionals and volunteers in the field of victim services, as well as the good work of individual victims.

I know of individuals in my constituency who have dedicated countless hours towards this honourable cause. I also strongly believe that once an individual goes through a program such as this, the individual, as well as the community, benefits.

Can the Attorney General please tell this House how to nominate and submit an application for the victim services awards?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you to the member of Davenport for a very important question.

If you would like to submit a nomination, you need to complete a nomination form, and those nomination forms are available on my ministry's website.

Your nomination form must be signed by either the nominee or a person authorized to sign the form. Detailed instructions that explain how to complete and submit a nomination are included on the form. Completed forms need to be mailed to the Attorney General's victim services awards of distinction, and the deadline is December 12, this upcoming Friday.

I encourage all members to consider submitting an application to recognize someone from their riding. The individuals who work and volunteer in this field are essential to the community, and on behalf of my ministry and the Premier, I want to thank all of them who are helping those victims.

DRUG SHORTAGE

Mrs. Gila Martow: My question is for the Premier. In the past two years, there have been over 500 reports of pharmaceuticals that are either in short supply or completely unavailable. Why has this government made no apparent effort to ensure that our province's health care needs—specifically, life-saving medication—are being met?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, in fact, what the member opposite is alleging is not actually the case. We have worked across the country with our colleague provinces to make sure that there is a rational process whereby those drugs that come on the market and are available elsewhere become available at a cost that is reasonable across the country. We have actually worked through the Council of the Federation of Premiers, through the Ministers of Health, to make sure there is a process that's nationwide and allows for the accessibility of pharmaceuticals across the country.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: Mr. Speaker, our provincial counterparts in other provinces are already working cooperatively with the federal government to address this issue and produce concrete solutions. We all heard from people from the Epilepsy Foundation last week that they're having trouble finding their meds.

The reality is this: Ontarians are simply not getting the best health care available, and their government is not looking at proactive solutions to get health care back on track and shortages under control.

When will this government start taking Ontario's drug shortage problem seriously?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We're actually working with the other provinces as well, we're working as part of that national process, so I'm not sure exactly where the member opposite is getting her information, because we are part of that pan-Canadian process; in fact, our Minister of Health was very much a part of creating that panel. So we are working across the country. We have a good working relationship with the health ministers across the country, and we will continue to work—as drugs become available, as they are proven to be efficacious, and as we work with our colleagues across the country—to make sure they are available to people in Ontario.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. In September, I wrote the minister asking when the South West Detention Centre would accommodate male intermittent offenders. Now, four months later, I'm informed that, for the time being, male intermittents from Windsor will continue to be sent to Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre because it is under capacity. In the time he took to answer my letter, one offender committed suicide and the facility was on lockdown for a week. Overcrowding at EMDC has been one of the triggers for all the problems there. Does the minister truly believe this facility is under capacity?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for asking this question. As the member alluded to herself, she has written to me on this issue and I sent her a response letting her know that the South West Detention Centre is going through the process of making sure that it gets to full capacity.

But as I explained to her before, and as I think all members will recognize, when you open a new detention centre, you don't just open all the doors immediately and get it filled up. There's a process. There's a protocol that is put in place to, in a progressive way, open the detention centre, primarily to ensure the health and safety of our correctional staff. They work extremely hard, and we need to make sure that they are comfortable with the new facility and they know all the protocols well. As that process is under way, we'll make sure that the South West Detention Centre is filled fully to its capacity.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Perhaps the minister didn't understand the question—I asked the minister if he truly believes EMDC is under capacity, not South West Detention Centre.

Just because you can do something doesn't mean you should. The minister thinks that throwing a mattress or two on the floor is a safe and effective way to increase capacity. He thinks that shuffling offenders out of EMDC to make room for intermittent offenders doesn't cost the taxpayers anything. Perhaps the minister should head down to Toronto South today and attend their information picket after question period. Maybe then he will actually gain an understanding of our correctional facilities.

Why won't the minister listen to corrections officers, inmates and families, and fix the deplorable state of corrections in Ontario?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It's very clear what the member opposite is trying to do. She's trying to inject herself in a collective bargaining process, which is highly inappropriate. I think the member opposite should know better—there is collective bargaining that is going on, and we should respect that process.

Our focus is to make sure that we do transform our correctional system. The Premier has given me a very strong mandate in that regard, and we will do so by working with our correctional staff, working with our management, working with the experts, to make sure that we are focused on rehabilitation and reintegration of our inmates as they come back into our community, also at the same time ensuring that our correctional facilities are safe places to work for our hard-working correctional staff.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): There being no deferred votes, this House is recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It's my pleasure to welcome today some guests from the Golden Age Village for the Elderly in our members' gallery. We have David Diêu Phạm, vice-chair; Linh Nguyễn, treasurer; Sĩ Minh Trần, deputy secretary general; and Tanya Thanh Nhã Nguyễn, secretary general. Thank you for coming.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JASON VERKAIK

Mrs. Julia Munro: I would like to congratulate Jason Verkaik from my riding, a Holland Marsh farmer who was the recipient of the Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence.

Jason is the owner of Carron Farms, which grows heirloom carrots that come in red, purple, black, white, yellow and orange. He received the Premier's award for

his work that adapts existing computerized equipment from Europe to ensure that each bag contains not only the right weight, but the proper mix of colours.

Jason has had many previous successes, as well, having been a finalist for the Ontario Outstanding Young Farmers award in 2011.

Congratulations to Jason on all your success, and to the entire Carron Farms family. Thank you for contributing not only to our local community but to the entire province.

It is because of people like Jason that Ontario's agri-food sector is so vibrant and remains crucial to our provincial economy. I can also attest to the flavour of the many carrots that Jason grows on his farm. It's fun to get a bag of many-coloured carrots.

DENTAL CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: I rise today to commend the advocacy efforts of two dental hygiene students at the Ontario Dental Education Institute in Ancaster. Nicole Obermeyer and Rachelle Taylor recently met with my constituency staff to advocate for better access to dental care.

I was shocked to learn that for every \$100 spent on oral health in Ontario, this government contributes just \$1.50. Nicole and Rachelle ask that we make preventive care more widely available, that we increase dental funding to the Canadian average and that we improve programs for housebound citizens. Nicole and Rachelle presented their ideas with passion, intelligence and eloquence, a standard that each of us in this House aspires to.

People in low-paid and precarious work rarely have access to benefit packages, and certainly not to the ones that include good dental coverage, yet dental diseases result in pain, serious health problems and heavy financial cost. One in six Canadians do not seek dental care, even when they are in dire pain, because they cannot afford it.

The people who decide that dental care is not important are usually those who already have excellent care through benefit packages, as we do here at Queen's Park. I was appalled to learn from my NDP colleague from Nickel Belt this morning that this government is cutting preventive dental care for tens of thousands of vulnerable children. I will fight these unjust cuts and instead advocate for wider access to dental care in Ontario, as Nicole and Rachelle have argued.

LOUISE SPROULE

Mr. Grant Crack: I rise today to recognize an outstanding citizen in my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. On November 6, this province acknowledged an Ontario citizen for her impactful and long-standing commitment to the community. The Lieutenant Governor presented 13 awards at a ceremony held here in Toronto, including one to Louise Sproule of Vankleek Hill, who

was recognized with a 2014 Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship.

This award, created in 1973, recognizes people who have made an exceptional long-term contribution to the quality of life in their communities. Louise was acknowledged for her extraordinary commitment to local fundraising efforts and for her enormously important Yes, Women Can! event which showcases female entrepreneurs.

She was also responsible for spearheading and organizing the restoration of the historic Higginson Tower in Vankleek Hill, which was originally built in 1932 as a wind-powered gristmill and then transformed into an observatory tower.

In 2013 she celebrated her incredible 20th anniversary of ownership of *The Review*—that's a local newspaper—a beacon of award-winning journalism, community engagement and charitable involvement.

I first had the opportunity of meeting Louise in 1994 when I was mayor of Alexandria. Throughout my political career, Louise and *The Review* have always provided comprehensive political coverage; there were only a few editorials, perhaps, that raised my eyebrows.

Her commitment to her community demonstrates the spirit of active citizenship. I am extremely proud of Louise and I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks and appreciation on behalf of everyone in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Congratulations, Louise: You're a very worthy recipient of this year's Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship.

SALVATION ARMY

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise in this House today to recognize an extraordinary effort by the Salvation Army Central East Division. On December 1, the Salvation Army collected over 12,000 pounds of donations for the local food bank in the town of Bracebridge. In one day, with over 150 volunteers from the community—including local emergency services staff—they were able to accomplish this. Some 12,000 pounds of food in one day is an amazing feat.

I would like to recognize all the volunteers who contributed to make the holiday food drive a success. I'm proud of the generosity of individuals with both the donations of food and time through volunteering. Through these efforts, the Salvation Army provides a tremendous service to our communities across Ontario.

On December 12—this Friday—I will be participating in the local Moose FM Kids Christmas Radiothon in support of the Salvation Army. The annual radiothon is run by Moose stations in Huntsville, Bracebridge and Parry Sound. Money raised through the radiothon contributes tens of thousands of dollars annually to provide much-needed services, including emergency food relief, emergency assistance with utilities, and emergency housing and accommodations.

Locally, the Salvation Army also gets results through non-traditional methods. One which I would like to

highlight is the donation of firewood for families and individuals in need, particularly with winters like the one we experienced last year. The difference in people's lives that the donations to the Salvation Army make cannot be measured simply in dollar amounts.

I would like to thank Lieutenant Fred Reid, pastor of the Salvation Army in Bracebridge, and all of the Salvation Army and volunteers for the great work they do in providing this assistance to families in need, particularly at this time of year.

DENTAL CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I rise today to sound the alarm bells about cuts coming to dental care to vulnerable children here in our province. In August 2015, about eight short months from now, this government plans to remove clinical preventative oral health services from the Ontario Public Health Standards. What does that mean, Speaker? It means that thousands of children whom public health units identified as in need of preventative oral health care will lose access.

The government says that they have increased eligibility to 70,000 children as of April of this year. They say that they are integrating several different programs and that funding will stay the same. This all sounds pretty good, but it could be quite misleading because, come August of next year, the new program's proposed income cut-off will mean that services will be denied to thousands and thousands of children in need of oral care.

Don't take it from me, Mr. Speaker. Listen to Dr. David McKeown, medical officer of health for Toronto Public Health. He says that for his public health, 15,000 children will be cut off. Go to northwestern Ontario with Dr. Mark Perrault from the Northwestern Health Unit, and he says that 98% of their children will no longer qualify. The Association of Local Public Health Agencies is also sounding the alarm bell. Things have to change. Those children need our support.

1310

LISAARD HOUSE

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Last week, I attended the annual feather party in support of Lisaard House in Cambridge and chatted with executive director Connie Dwyer, who reminded me about what a special place it is.

In 1998, Sheila O'Donovan and her late husband, Val, founder of COM DEV in Cambridge, gave \$1 million to establish a free-standing residential hospice in Waterloo region. Today, Lisaard House is a cancer hospice providing quality end-of-life palliative care. Staff welcomes its residents without charge to a home-like environment offering support to the resident and their family.

I recall Val saying, "I want Lisaard House to be better than home," and in many ways this hospice achieves just that. All six bedrooms have a gorgeous view through

large-windowed doors and all rooms are decorated with serene countryside paintings. The sunroom with lounge chairs and heated floors is a favourite spot for all to watch birds at the feeders.

When I used to refer families to Lisaard House, I knew that staff and volunteers would look after residents' needs and let them focus on making the most of their last days. I commend the dedicated staff and volunteers for the incredible care they give to these families at such an emotional time in their journey. I know that Cambridge citizens will continue to support Lisaard as it opens a new hospice named Innisfree with another eight to 10 beds in the very near future.

FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Michael Harris: While we've recently seen a return to the old Liberal politics of blaming Ottawa for our province's fiscal woes, we've also seen a reminder of the benefits of Conservative economic values, both on a national and local level.

I spoke a couple of weeks ago about the economic example set by Wilmot council in achieving debt-free status. So too can this province learn from the examples being set by the very government Wynne Liberals point at with one hand while seeking handouts with the other.

Instead of pointing fingers under a cloud of a \$12.5-billion deficit, the province would do well to learn from a federal government that has achieved a \$1.6-billion surplus.

Interjections.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm glad the finance minister is here to listen to this. While Ontario's deficit grows more ominous with each scandal, squandering tax dollars on eHealth, gas plants and MaRS buildings, the federal surplus means a whole realm of opportunities for Canadians.

In implementing Conservative economic values instead of feeding a government spending addiction, the Harper team is supporting and giving back to Canadian families. In fact, the federal government has announced a \$27-billion package of family-focused tax cuts, including income-splitting for families for a possible \$2,000 benefit and an increase and expansion of the universal child care benefit of up to \$160 a month.

You see, this is what leadership looks like: taking care of economic priorities in order to take better care of our people. When members opposite are pointing their fingers at Ottawa, I'd ask them to take a look at their target, as if they don't learn from the national example, it's the closest they'll get to fiscal responsibility here in Ontario for the next four years.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Mr. Speaker, I have some positive information to offer you from Waterloo region. This past Friday, I had the opportunity of joining female engineering students and faculty at the University of Waterloo, where they have the largest school of engineer-

ing in Canada. The event was to mark the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. With 14 female students lighting candles in a very solemn memorial, we were reflecting on the events 25 years ago at the École Polytechnique in Montreal. Fourteen female engineering students there were senselessly murdered, singled out by a disturbed gunman because of their gender.

I remember covering this tragic event and locally asking the question, what would compel someone to act out so violently against women? Twenty-five years later, we're still asking that same question. In recent weeks, we have seen a very heightened awareness surrounding this issue. I'm encouraged to see our government taking action to raise awareness, to support victims and to remain committed to stopping violence and harassment against women.

I have a daughter who is currently attending the University of Waterloo, and she is the same age as some of the victims who were killed on December 6, 1989. So for her sake and for the sake of women and girls in my community, across Ontario and Canada, we need to remain vigilant in ending all forms of violence against our gender.

MIRACLE LEAGUE OF OTTAWA

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I rose before you for the first time as the MPP for Ottawa–Orléans on July 8 to talk about a project that's very dear to me, the Miracle League of Ottawa. At that time, I urged everyone to vote online for this project. Though we did not win the grand prize, the organization was lucky enough to receive a generous donation from the Toronto Blue Jays.

Today, I rise again as a proud resident of Ottawa because we succeeded. We did it. We will soon have an accessible baseball field.

It is a privilege and an honour to have been part of this amazing adventure to build the first-ever baseball diamond and playground for children with disabilities in the country.

The president of the Miracle League of Ottawa, Mr. David Gourlay, along with the mayor of Ottawa, Jim Watson, city councillors Stephen Blais, Jody Mitic, former councillor Rainer Bloess, representatives of the Rotary Club of Orléans and, most of all, Bryce Desrochers, an extraordinary 11-year-old boy with cerebral palsy, joined me for the official groundbreaking on November 28 at the future baseball field in Notre-Dame-des-Champs.

This is a remarkable community project that will make an enormous difference in the lives of local children and their families.

VISITOR

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of order, the member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thanks very much, Speaker. I appreciate you hearing my point of order.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to introduce to you a friend of mine. He's in the west members' gallery. He lives in the "Jewel of the Rideau." I'd like to introduce to you the former mayor of the municipality of Merrickville-Wolford, Doug Struthers, a great friend of the Legislature.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, assumes ballot item number 30 and Ms. Scott assumes ballot item number 52.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE RÉGIME DE RETRAITE DE LA PROVINCE DE L'ONTARIO

Ms. Hunter moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 56, An Act to require the establishment of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan / Projet de loi 56, Loi exigeant l'établissement du Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the Associate Minister of Finance for a brief statement.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to introduce the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2014. This proposed act would, if passed, require the establishment of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan by January 1, 2017, and lay out a framework for the creation of the plan.

The Ontario Retirement Pension Plan would help to strengthen the retirement income system and ensure that working Ontarians are better able to enjoy their retirement years.

POOLED REGISTERED PENSION PLANS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LES RÉGIMES DE PENSION AGRÉÉS COLLECTIFS

Mr. Sousa moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 57, An Act to create a framework for pooled registered pension plans and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 57, Loi créant un cadre pour les régimes de pension agréés collectifs et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): To the Minister of Finance for a brief statement.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I rise in the House today to introduce the Pooled Registered Pension Plan Act, 2014. This proposed act would, if passed, provide a legal framework for the establishment and administration of a type of pension plan that is accessible to employees and self-employed persons, and that pools the funds in members' accounts to achieve lower costs in relation to investment management and plan administration.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. tonight, Monday, December 8, 2014, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1323 to 1328.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Members, take your seats, please.

Mr. Naqvi has moved government notice of motion number 13. All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	McMeekin, Ted
Anderson, Granville	Gravelle, Michael	Meilleur, Madeleine
Baker, Yvan	Hoggarth, Ann	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Balkissoon, Bas	Hunter, Mitzie	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Ballard, Chris	Jaczek, Helena	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kiwala, Sophie	Potts, Arthur
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chan, Michael	Lalonde, Marie-France	Rinaldi, Lou
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	MacCharles, Tracy	Sergio, Mario
Del Duca, Steven	Malhi, Harinder	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Martins, Cristina	Vernile, Daiene
Dickson, Joe	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo
Dong, Han	Mauro, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	McGarry, Kathryn	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMahon, Eleanor	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Gretzky, Lisa	Taylor, Monique
Bailey, Robert	Hillier, Randy	Thompson, Lisa M.
Barrett, Toby	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John

Bisson, Gilles
Clark, Steve
Fife, Catherine
Gélinas, France

Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Sattler, Peggy
Tabuns, Peter

Walker, Bill
Yakubski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 50; the nays are 20.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, at this time, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Is there unanimous consent? I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot items number 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30 be waived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Is it the pleasure of the House? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

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

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

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

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

"To repeal the statutory obligations created by Bill 119."

I support this petition, will affix my signature and send it with page Nicole.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over 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...;”

They 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 fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Mikaila to bring it to the Clerk.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Before we continue with further petitions, I would just ask the House again to reflect some courtesy and respect to those who are stating the petitions. They are very important and I would like to be able to hear them. I’m sure others would as well.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is, in fact, a very important petition, and I’m glad you got the House’s attention for it. This is for an east Toronto French secondary school.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees access to publicly funded French-language education; and

“Whereas there are more than 1,000 children attending French elementary schools in east Toronto (Beaches–East York and Toronto–Danforth) and those numbers continue to grow; and

“Whereas there is no French secondary school (grades 7-12) yet in east Toronto, requiring students wishing to continue their studies in French school boards to travel two hours every day to attend the closest French secondary school, while several English schools in east Toronto sit half-empty since there are no requirements or incentives for school boards to release underutilized schools to other boards in need; and

“Whereas it is well documented that children leave the French-language system for the English-language system between grades 7 and 9 due to the inaccessibility of French-language secondary schools, and that it is also well established that being educated in French at the elementary level is not sufficient to solidify French-language skills for life; and

“Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged in February 2007 that there is an important shortage of French-language schools in all of Toronto and even

provided funds to open some secondary schools, and yet, not a single French secondary school has opened in east Toronto; and

“Whereas the commissioner of French-language services stated in a report in June 2011 that ‘... time is running out to address the serious shortage of at least one new French-language school at the secondary level in the eastern part of the city of Toronto’; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Education has confirmed that we all benefit when school board properties are used effectively in support of publicly funded education and that the various components of our education system should be aligned to serve the needs of students; and

“Whereas parents and students from both French Catholic and French public elementary schools in east Toronto are prepared to find common ground across all language school systems to secure space for a French-language secondary school in east Toronto;

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

“That the Minister of Education assist one or both French school boards in locating a suitable underutilized school building in east Toronto that may be sold or shared for the purpose of opening a French secondary school ... in the community by September 2015, so that French students have a secondary school close to where they live.”

I agree with the petition. I sign my name and leave it with—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Beaches–East York. Just a reminder: You can shorten those petitions if you care to do so.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"That the Minister of the Environment takes immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I'm pleased to affix my signature and send it to the table with page Moiz.

1340

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

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

"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 support this petition totally, affix my signature and will give it to page Ella to take to the table.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I have here a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario is home to over 400,000 first-, second- and third-generation Hispanic Canadians who originate from the 23 Hispanic countries around the world; and who have made significant contributions to the growth and vibrancy of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas October is a month of great significance for the Hispanic community worldwide; and allows an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about the outstanding achievements of Hispanic peoples to our province's social, economic and multicultural fabric;

"We, the undersigned, call upon members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support proclaiming October of each year as Hispanic Heritage Month and support Bill 28 by MPP Cristina Martins from the riding of Davenport."

I'm very happy to support this petition, Speaker. I'm going to fix my name to it and hand it to page Jenny.

TAXATION

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

"Whereas the Liberal government has proposed a 148% increase in the province's aviation fuel tax over the next four years; and

"Whereas the tax increase will mean the average family can pay an estimated extra \$50 to \$200 for the flight on top of their tickets; and

"Whereas the massive tax increase: (1) punishes consumers and communities; (2) makes Ontario a less attractive destination to invest and expand into; and (3) compounds an already large competitiveness gap with neighbouring US airports; and

"Whereas the flight tax increase flies in the face of a Liberal election promise of no tax increases on the middle class; and

"Whereas the proposed tax increase will drive away over 400,000 air travellers out of Ontario when three million Ontarians are already crossing the border annually to fly from US airports; and

"Whereas this tax increase will impact many industries across Ontario including manufacturers, freight and tourism including hotels, restaurants, travel agents and tour operators, among others who support the tourism industry; and

"Whereas British Columbia, New Brunswick, Alberta, Quebec and Saskatchewan have eliminated international flight fuel taxes, while Ontario's rate is set to become one of the highest fuel taxes in the world; and

"Whereas Dr. Fred Lazar of the Schulich School of Business indicates in his study that this tax increase will cost the province up to 2,907 full-time jobs and decrease provincial GDP by up to \$97 million annually;

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

"Ground the flight tax increases pending meaningful consultation and a full study of their adverse economic impacts before it's too late to reverse the damage to Ontario's economy."

I support this petition, will sign my name and send it with Kate, the page.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further petitions? The member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was one of the nicest introductions I've heard, so keep it up.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads 'that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles';

"Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

“Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

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

“We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition, affix my signature and present it to page Moiz to bring down to the table to the Clerks.

LEGAL AID

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly regarding population-based legal services funding. It’s signed by a lot of people, mostly from Mississauga, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas Mississauga Community Legal Services provides free legal services to legal aid clients within a community of nearly 800,000 population; and

“Whereas legal services in communities like Toronto and Hamilton serve, per capita, fewer people living in poverty, are better staffed and better funded; and

“Whereas Mississauga and Brampton have made progress in having Ontario provide funding for human and social services on a fair and equitable, population-based model;

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

“That the Ministry of the Attorney General revise the current distribution of new and existing funding in the Ontario budget and adopt a population-based model, factoring in population growth rates to ensure Ontario funds are allocated in an efficient, fair and effective manner.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this petition and to send it down with page Nicole.

AIR QUALITY

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

“Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario’s automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

“Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

“Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

“Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by

amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old are exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature and support this petition and send it to the table with page Joshua.

MISSING PERSONS

Ms. Catherine Fife: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario does not have missing persons legislation; and

“Whereas police are not able to conduct a thorough investigation upon receipt of a missing person report where criminal activity is not considered the cause; and

“Whereas this impedes investigators in determining the status and possibly the location of missing persons; and

“Whereas this legislation exists and is effective in other provinces; and

“Whereas negotiating rights to safety that do not violate rights to privacy has been a challenge in establishing missing persons law;

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

“We ask that the Attorney General’s office work with the office of the privacy commissioner to implement missing persons legislation that grants investigators the opportunity to apply for permissions to access information that will assist in determining the safety or whereabouts of missing persons for whom criminal activity is not considered the cause.”

It is my pleasure to affix my signature and give this to page Vida.

CREDIT UNIONS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: “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, attach my name to it and give it to Mikaila to bring down to the desk.

1350

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PUBLIC SECTOR AND MPP ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION ET LA TRANSPARENCE DU SECTEUR PUBLIC ET DES DÉPUTÉS

Ms. Matthews moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to promote public sector and MPP accountability and transparency by enacting the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act, 2014 and amending various Acts / Projet de loi 8, Loi visant à promouvoir la responsabilisation et la transparence du secteur public et des députés par l'édiction de la Loi de 2014 sur la rémunération des cadres du secteur parapublic et la modification de diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'm pleased to recognize the Deputy Premier and President of the Treasury Board to lead off.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I rise in the House today to begin third reading debate on the proposed Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, 2014.

I do want to take a moment and acknowledge and thank my parliamentary assistant, who, by the way, is celebrating his birthday today: Yvan Baker, the member from Etobicoke Centre. I thank the member for his leadership during committee. I also want to thank all members of the Standing Committee on General Government for their very hard work on this bill.

There were many people who worked to bring this bill forward. I want to give a special shout-out to Olivia Nero in my office, who has nurtured this bill along. She's done an outstanding job with the whole team in the public service and in my office as well.

I'm very proud of Bill 8, and I'm even more proud of our democratic system. We heard hours of debate by members from all parties, and at committee we heard from people and organizations from all walks of life across Ontario. Very good points were raised. That's why our government has responded by introducing amendments that would clarify the provincial Ombudsman's role regarding municipalities to reduce overlap and

duplication. It would modernize lobbyist registration by requiring individuals who spend 50 hours or more lobbying government to register with the Integrity Commissioner as lobbyist registrar and would expand the list of persons who may make complaints to the patient ombudsman. The committee also accepted a number of amendments from opposition parties that would strengthen the proposed bill even further.

While there were different views and perspectives, one thing is clear: All members of the House see the importance of and need for accountability and transparency measures.

Our proposed bill is broad in scope, touching upon school boards, universities, municipalities, the health care sector, government agencies and even elected members of the Legislative Assembly itself. We are committed to being the most open and transparent government in Canada.

This is a signature piece of legislation, a foundational piece of legislation upon which we will build Ontario up by growing the economy, creating jobs, balancing the budget and looking after every tax dollar. The accountability bill is an important step in our plan to transform government so that we can not only meet our fiscal targets but, more importantly, do government differently, do government better.

The people of Ontario have a right to know how their dollars are being spent, and that includes executive compensation. This legislation would, if passed, authorize the government to control the compensation of executives in the broader public sector and to take action to ensure compliance.

This government has the right plan for executive compensation. The provisions in this bill would give the government the right to access all compensation-related information so that we can set up compensation frameworks, including sector-specific hard caps. If the proposed legislation is passed, the government would take a strong and fair approach to developing compensation frameworks that would provide consistency and clarity. That's why we would consult with each sector as the proposed frameworks were being developed. We want to ensure that sector-specific considerations are built in.

The proposed bill, if passed, would also include enforcement and compliance measures, and our government would have the ability to audit any of these organizations to ensure that they are in compliance with these frameworks.

The proposed legislation, if passed, would apply to hospitals, community care access corporations, school boards, universities, colleges and hydro organizations. During committee, the government introduced an amendment that would add 64 other broader public sector organizations, such as Ornge, LHINs, eHealth, MetroLinx, OLG and LCBO. The government also brought forward amendments to ensure that existing executives are fully subject to all elements of an applicable compensation framework upon expiry of a three-year transition period. We know that every dollar counts, and all of our partners have a role to play.

The Ombudsman of Ontario plays a key role in promoting high standards and helping to address issues in the delivery of services. That's why the proposed changes to the Ombudsman Act would expand the role of the Ontario Ombudsman to municipalities, school boards and universities.

Our government respects municipalities and the work of municipal councillors. Municipalities would still have the authority to appoint their own ombudsmen and integrity officers. Our proposed approach would enable the Ontario Ombudsman to step in only after local processes have been completed. At the same time, the Ontario Ombudsman, as he now can for provincial matters, would be able to investigate municipal matters on his own initiative.

Our government has heard the concerns about overlap and duplication, and we have responded. During committee, the government introduced an amendment to exempt complaints within the jurisdiction of the Toronto ombudsman from the Ontario Ombudsman's jurisdiction. This recognizes that Toronto has an established accountability framework and is the only municipality in Ontario required by law to have an ombudsman. The Ontario Ombudsman could still include Toronto, along with any other municipality, in a systemic, broad-ranging investigation.

Municipalities would continue to have the authority to appoint their own closed-meeting investigators, and the Ontario Ombudsman would not be able to investigate a closed-meeting complaint if a local meeting investigator is appointed. Our proposed legislative changes are about making sure that every Ontarian in every municipality has access to an ombudsman.

The bill would, if passed, provide the Ontario Ombudsman with the authority to investigate school boards and universities. Our educational institutions play a critical role in our province and for our economy, and we value their contributions immensely. If our bill is passed, the Ombudsman would be required to respect the principles of academic freedom when conducting investigations. The proposed approach would enable the Ontario Ombudsman to investigate only after all internal school board or university processes have been completed. This would minimize any possibility of overlap or duplication.

The bill, if passed, would also improve support for patients in Ontario, in our continuing efforts to promote patient-centred care. The proposed legislation would, if passed, amend the Excellent Care for All Act to establish a patient ombudsman to receive, and work to resolve, complaints from patients and former patients of hospitals, long-term-care homes and community care access corporations. The patient ombudsman's powers and responsibilities are closely based on those of the provincial Ombudsman, but would be tailored to the health care system. Our government believes that a sector-specific approach is the right approach when it comes to the oversight of health care.

During committee, our government introduced an amendment that would add caregivers to the list of

persons who would be able to make complaints to the patient ombudsman. The government also brought forward an amendment specifying that the patient ombudsman would hold office for a term of five years and may be reappointed for one further term of five years. This would further enhance the patient ombudsman's independence and provide the appointee with security of tenure. These proposed changes would build on our efforts to improve the patient experience and the quality of health care in Ontario.

In addition, Bill 8, if passed, would allow the government to move forward on our continued commitment to restore public confidence in Ontario's air ambulance service. This bill, if passed, would protect whistleblowers, while allowing the government to take control in extraordinary circumstances. These changes would allow the government to appoint special investigators when it is in the public interest to do so. It would allow the government to appoint members to Ornge's board of directors, amend provisions of their performance agreement with a service provider at any time, by regulation, and provide protection for staff who disclose information to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

This legislation would, if passed, build on steps already taken to improve accountability, patient safety, response times and air safety at Ornge.

1400

When it comes to oversight, there is perhaps no greater issue than those relating to Ontario's young people, particularly children in the child protection system. That's why we are proposing to expand the mandate of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. The proposed amendments would give the advocate investigative powers for matters related to the services provided by children's aid societies and certain residential licensees where a children's aid society is the placing agency.

During committee, the government introduced amendments that would further clarify the role of the advocate's office, such as allowing the advocate, in certain situations, to decline to conduct an investigation based on a child's wishes, and providing additional protections to the advocate and the investigative staff of the advocate's office, similar to those provided to the Ontario Ombudsman's office.

Our government believes that openness begins with our elected representatives. As people who are elected into office, we need to lead by example, and that's why our government is proposing new measures that, if passed, would set a high standard and make Ontario a leader by legislating expense reporting for elected representatives.

The proposed bill, if passed, would make it mandatory for cabinet ministers, parliamentary assistants, opposition leaders and their staff to post their expense information online. Currently, this expense reporting is done on a voluntary basis.

Our government's proposals to report expense information online do not just stop with cabinet ministers,

PAs, opposition leaders and their staff. Under the proposed bill, online reporting of expense information would also extend to each and every one of the MPPs in the Legislature. This bill, if passed, would require the Speaker to post online information on MPP expenses concerning—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Excuse me. I would ask the opposition members to refrain from heckling the minister so that I can hear her.

I return to the Deputy Premier and President of the Treasury Board, who has the floor.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. This bill, if passed, would require the Speaker to post online information on MPP expenses concerning out-of-riding travel, related hotel expenses, meals and hospitality expenses.

Our government understands the important role transparency plays in letting the people of Ontario know who is lobbying their government and for what purpose. That's why we're proposing to modernize Ontario's Lobbyists Registration Act.

If passed, the proposed amendments would strengthen the registrar's oversight and enforcement powers and enhance the transparency of the lobbyists' registry. The proposed bill would give the Integrity Commissioner, as lobbyist registrar, investigative powers and the ability to prohibit individuals from lobbying for up to two years if they are found to have violated the act.

Lobbyists would be prohibited from lobbying and providing paid advice on the same subject matter at the same time.

A single set of rules would be established that apply to in-house lobbyists at both for-profit and non-profit organizations. Enforcement provisions would include stiffer fines: a fine of up to \$25,000 for a first-time offence, and a fine of up to \$100,000 for subsequent offences.

This bill, if passed, would also enhance the review of executive expenses in classified agencies. Since the Public Sector Expenses Review Act came into force in 2009, the Integrity Commissioner has been reviewing the expenses of 17 classified agencies and four hydro organizations, the public entities currently prescribed in regulation. Our proposed legislation, if passed, provides the Integrity Commissioner with the ability to review travel, meal and hospitality expenses of all 196 classified agencies and the four hydro organizations on a selective or rotating basis.

Lastly, Bill 8 would build on efforts to bring greater transparency to the broader public sector and help us make government more open and transparent. Proposed changes to the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act would, if passed, require designated organizations to post their business plans and other specified business or financial documents. Many broader public sector organizations already post their business plans publicly, but our proposed changes would make this voluntary practice a mandatory requirement.

Another key component of the proposed bill for enhanced accountability and transparency is our proposed

reforms on record keeping. Our government takes our record-keeping obligations very seriously. The proposed bill would require all institutions subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Privacy Act to ensure that measures are in place to preserve records, to prohibit the alteration, concealment or destruction of records with the intent to deny an access request, and to make it an offence to alter, conceal or destroy records with an intent to deny an access request, with a penalty of up to \$5,000. The proposed offence provision is in line with similar offence provisions in seven other Canadian jurisdictions, including the federal government.

The proposed Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act will help us raise the bar in government and the broader public sector. It will help to build a transparent, open and accessible government that the hard-working people of Ontario deserve. I urge all members of the House to pass this important legislation, and I look forward to implementing the proposed changes.

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

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm proud to stand up and discuss Bill 8, the Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act. I believe this is the first third reading I've had the ability to debate since being at the Legislature. It's interesting. It's time-allocated so it's not an official debate for me for third reading. However, that brings me pretty much to my point that I wanted to start out with: the process with which this bill was passed. I must quote, "Absolute power corrupts absolutely."

When we go forward through this process, we'll notice that I was part of the committee that this bill came through at general government, and the fact that it was time-allocated—people at home may not realize this, but the government passed a motion which limited the ability to have discussion on the amendments at the committee level, where these discussions needed to take place. There were a few hours of amendments going through the committee where we weren't allowed to ask questions or have comments on the amendment put forth in front of us. Instead, the government passed this motion that at a certain time in the middle of committee all discussion was gone, all motions were put forward and it was just basically votes going forward. I found it quite disconcerting when the government puts forth an accountability act to be accountable to the people of the province; however, the process to get this bill passed is not accountable or transparent at all. It's actually just ramming this through. I found it quite disconcerting, the fact that I had many questions and comments and discussions I would have loved to have at committee, but it was shut down. It was completely shut down.

I'll revert back to earlier. Before the committee was shut down, I put one amendment through, and it was an amendment to actually strengthen this bill to incorporate all legislative officers under the Legislative Assembly. The NDP supported our motion to make sure that their

expenses were all posted online; however, the government—excuse me; the Chair—ruled it out of order. I did want to appeal this to the Speaker; however, it was the government who voted against my appeal.

I feel the money that the taxpayers give this province is the same amount of money whether it's spent by you, me or any legislative officer, and I have no problem posting expenses online. I have nothing to hide, as opposed to maybe over on the other side of the House. I believe that all legislative officers of the House should post their expenses online. It's one pot of money we collect from the taxpayers, and I think the accountability has to be stretched across.

However, I put that amendment forward. The Chair of the committee ruled it out of order and I requested an appeal to the Speaker of the Legislature to come forward so that he could rule upon it. However, as I said before, the Liberal government ruled against that amendment and struck down a little more accountability that this province has been asking for.

After this bill was put through committee, after cutting out discussion, after the second reading previously being time-allocated, which means there's only a certain amount of time for members to speak upon this bill and offer their amendments—and at the start of the committee it was time-allocated how many people could come forth from the public across the province. Mind you, it was Toronto-centred; they didn't want to take it across the province to actually hear what people from northern, southern and eastern Ontario wanted to say about accountability. They limited the number of people who could speak to this bill and propose changes or amendments.

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So, Mr. Speaker, we go forward with this bill. I'd like to point out that the whistle-blower protection for persons who disclose information is much needed. I wish it was in place when the Ornge scandal occurred. Hopefully, this can be retroactive. Is it going to be retroactive so those people can now come forward with what really occurred and be protected? I haven't heard if that will be going forward, or is it just starting from the day the bill passes? Because there are many people out there who could be potential whistle-blowers and open up what really occurred with Dr. Mazza, Ornge and the Ministry of Health with regard to that scandal, which wasted billions of dollars and put many lives in danger due to how Ornge had been operated.

I'd also like to comment on the Ombudsman Act, to expand jurisdiction over municipal sector bodies, school boards and universities. That's welcome. I think people have been calling for that for years now. The President of the Treasury Board must know that the city she belongs to—their municipality has had quite a few run-ins with the Ombudsman with regard to their secret meetings and such. I think the people of London, let alone the province, are calling for the Ombudsman definitely getting this oversight.

I kind of wish the Ombudsman had more oversight of the health care system. I know they're creating a patient

ombudsperson. Maybe we could have cut down on the bureaucracy and just expanded the Ombudsman's powers to the health care sector. Maybe that would have been an easier step to take.

What happened, though, because this legislation was pushed through so fast, was that you ended up having legislative officers fighting at the committee level. We had the Auditor General and the Ombudsman having a public feud over this bill. I received a letter; I'm sure many MPPs in this House received letters from the Ombudsman trying to clarify the position. It's terrible that, because of the process this government wanted to follow, it caused a huge blowout between its legislative officers, which I'm sure still isn't resolved. That doesn't benefit the people of Ontario.

Lastly, I just want to comment on the fact that this bill also addresses the protection of government records and documents, probably making reference to the deleted email scandal in the Premier's office with regard to the gas plant scandal, which we didn't really hear the end result of because deliberations were taken away from us at the committee on the gas plant scandal.

Mr. Speaker, you can't legislate ethics. Unfortunately, you can have all the accountability in place, but it's the people and the policies of a government that we need to stand up and uphold their ethics and not try to—it's a hard word to say without being told to withdraw—mislead the public. Is that? No?

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I withdraw that before you stand up, Speaker. You get my point, anyway: coming forth and being truthful, expanding accountability across the planks of government. We look forward to the vote coming up and hearing the rest of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's always a privilege to stand up in this House and talk about this piece of legislation, but I have very mixed feelings about Bill 8. I made it very clear at second reading how we, as a party, have struggled with a fairly comprehensive bill, which has 11 different schedules contained within it. Of course, we're supportive of some parts of that legislation; namely, schedules 4, 6, 7 and 11, which actually do speak in some part to transparency and accountability. For us, though, there are some places that really are not negotiable, and then, more broadly, it is about the process.

I share the frustration of my PC colleague: To have the bill time-allocated in the first place, to have it go to committee and then to—I mean, obviously the numbers at committee are indicative of a majority government, so we are outnumbered, outplayed. Certainly not outwitted; I just want to make that point clear. There was a limit of one hour for debate on the amendments. There were 123 amendments. Do you know why there were 123 amendments? Because this is a poorly crafted piece of legislation that does not achieve the goals it aims to meet, especially around the protection of children and on the oversight and the enforcement of integrity and dignity for

those in the health care sector. Obviously it doesn't even meet the perceived or the pretend goal of capping broader public sector executive salaries. It does not do that. If it did that, we would be in a different place.

What I really find very interesting is that, in this minority setting—I'm sorry; this majority setting—having come from a minority culture, in that minority culture the most distinctive piece is that actually there had to be some give and take. There was some exchange of ideas. So when legislation came before this House, first of all, it never came in an omnibus bill like this. It didn't. You would never put 11 different diverse pieces of legislation in a giant bill and call it "accountability and transparency." They do have somebody on staff over there on that side of the House who's incredibly creative, a poli-sci 101 grad who comes up with these titles, but that would never happen in a minority setting.

When those pieces of legislation came to this House, there would be a thorough debate and exchange. It would actually be fairly productive.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It was slower; I'll give you that. It was slower, but at the end of the day you had a stronger piece of legislation because in the committee section, when there was this vote and give and take on how to amend legislation, there was a responsibility, even a shared responsibility, to navigate that legislation through this House and to make it stronger.

That did not happen with Bill 8. After one hour, on 123 amendments—I was able to put forward numerous NDP amendments to this piece of legislation on everything from the public sector salary cap or non-cap, particularly with the provincial advocate and the Ombudsman—I never even got to that part, really.

What I want to do today, though, because even the people who were in that committee session who were watching us felt—one lady said to me that she felt like it was an abuse of process, that there was this complete disregard for their voices because it was an up-and-down vote. They didn't have their voices reflected in the debate, particularly around the provincial advocate for children.

What I had proposed to do today is to give some credence and give some respect to those voices that were not heard through this majority government. Particularly, I wanted to focus on the provincial advocate because there was such an opportunity to actually protect children in this province, and you missed it. You missed it in this—and don't take our word for it. We've raised questions in this House. We have written letters. We have petitions. We've met with the advocate. The member from Hamilton Mountain has been the critic for years now. But I'm going to read the stories, the voices of children, actually, who were not respected.

But first I want to start off with what the provincial advocate said after he came and presented to the committee, because this is a key part. He came to the committee. He had some serious amendments that were based on evidence. I always go back to this moment. There was

this moment of hope in this Legislature when the Premier of this province stood up, and do you know what she said? She said that she was going to put evidence above partisanship. The evidence in every other province in this country says that when the provincial advocate is empowered to follow through on his mandate, then children are better protected—but not in the province of Ontario. In the province of Ontario, this Bill 8 actually ties the hands of the advocate. It's shocking, because the advocate actually came over here and said that they wanted to investigate complaints from vulnerable children and youth in all areas of the advocate's mandate. What a concept, right? Bill 8 is not going to come before this House for a very long time. It says, "... not just in a children's aid society or residential licensee where a children's aid society is a placing agent." The advocate is actually asking only for the powers to do his job, as other provincial advocates have across the country.

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You know what? I'm just going to go right to the voices of children, and then I'll recap what he asked for, which was completely reasonable, which was supported by the PC caucus and which was, of course, advocated and supported by the NDP.

"The following are real examples to illustrate the need for amendments to Bill 8 in order to deliver stronger protection to all ... children and youth.

"Example one: restraints and serious occurrence reports and why provincial advocate should be permitted to investigate beyond children's aid society."

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You might want to listen to this.

"A young boy, under 12 years of age, called the advocate's office because he thought he was getting restrained too often and he wanted to be moved to a different group home. Anytime anyone uses a physical restraint on a child, a report needs to be made to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services." This is a good policy. "An advocate requested the reports and we discovered that this young man had been restrained over 100 times in one year. After analyzing the reports, we discovered that in more than half the cases, no immediate risk had been documented, which is the legal basis for using a physical restraint. This number of restraints is very high for a child of any age, much less someone under 12."

For those of us who are parents in this House—I mean, can you imagine the vulnerability and the fear that a child would experience? But can you also imagine the courage that it would take for a child to pick up the phone, when he is already outside of the margins of society? If you're in this home, and you're being restrained 100 times over the course of a year, and you're 12 years old, and you reach out to the provincial advocate—it's hard to imagine the strength that it would take for that child.

The advocate also "found similar problems with physical restraints that had been used on another little girl, also under 12. She, too, had contacted the advocate's

office because she felt the group home staff was using restraints too often and she was getting hurt.”

The pages in this House are the age of these young children.

Right now, the advocate says that they are “trying to analyze all of the serious occurrence reports from group homes that have been filed with the ministry. Unfortunately, the ministry is only willing to send us redacted reports, with the names, ages, and gender of the children involved removed.” Removed, Mr. Speaker. “So while we can determine the overall number of restraints, and the risk that necessitated the use of a restraint—if the document identifies this—we cannot determine whether other young people are at risk at this home of receiving a high number of restraints.”

So Bill 8 could have given the provincial advocate the powers to go and protect these children, but it does not. The problem of having the provincial advocate oversee young people placed in a group home by a children’s aid—this is now possible under Bill 8.

This is important. You know why? Because more and more children’s aid societies under the transformation agenda have moved out of the group home business to save money. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? It’s not saving money, because those group homes are for-profit group homes. Those for-profit group homes are in the business of making a profit. So when the profit trumps the needs of children, children lose. That’s why the provincial advocate needs to have the full scope of powers to ensure that they are protected.

“What Bill 8 won’t help, are the young people with special needs (perhaps a developmental delay or communication difficulties) who are placed in ministry funded homes but are not in CAS care. These young people may not be able to tell an advocate (or anybody else)—and that’s really important; these children have no one else—“if there is a problem with restraints. And if we asked for the serious occurrence reports from all of the homes for children with special needs, these reports would be redacted if the language in Bill 8 stays as written”—which it did, because the amendments that we put forward were not listened to. Then children still are at risk. They are still vulnerable. They still have no one in their corner. “So, again, we will not know if particular homes were frequently using restraints, or if particular young people were being subject to many restraints, or particular young people with certain disabilities seemed to be restrained more often than others.”

I don’t know if you’ve ever had this experience when you’re campaigning in your riding, but you knock on these doors, and there’s always this one house in one neighbourhood. There’s nothing on the house. It’s very muted. You knock on the door, and usually a couple of people will come to the door. And you can usually see four or five or six—a huge range of children to young adults in that home, and that’s where they are. They’re off the grid, Mr. Speaker. They have nobody else. Bill 8 was the opportunity to change that, and this government chose not to. The members of that committee voted

against the amendments that were put forward by the provincial advocate. They ignored the most informed voice in this province on how to protect children, and they did so with intention.

For us in the NDP, it’s astounding, because why come here and bring forward a weak piece of legislation when you have a majority government and you can do the right thing? If you did the right thing, we would say that you did the right thing. Why bring forward a piece of legislation which actually continues to systemically ignore the most vulnerable children in this province? I see you don’t like hearing it. I guess my question, my sincere question to the government, is, why doesn’t the Liberal government of Ontario have the courage to respect these voices? I think that is an outstanding question that we are going to ask for the next four years, because we’re not going to give up on ensuring that the provincial child advocate has the powers that he needs—or she needs, going forward—to protect children.

The second example—and this has been a long-standing issue—that the provincial advocate brought to us and that indicates why Bill 8 fails is the investigation reports in youth justice facilities. Once again, the member from Hamilton Mountain has been championing this issue for years now, and there’s a petition actually on the books. The provincial advocate says, “For the past five years, the advocate’s office has raised concerns about the ministry’s refusal to provide copies of investigation reports into the allegations by young people in youth justice facilities who report they have been assaulted by staff. The reason we are asking for these reports is because we are concerned that the allegations are not being properly investigated. When we have managed to receive copies of investigation reports what we have found is that the investigator has relied on the written reports of the staff who were involved and then determined that the allegations are ‘unfounded.’”

So you have a systemic, documented imbalance of power, especially in a youth justice facility, where there is a whole host of issues that come into play in these facilities, from addiction to mental health as well. It’s actually impossible for me not to think of Ashley Smith in this regard. That was a federal prison. She had no advocate. She had no one in her corner. Her parents, who loved her, were shut out of the system. The provincial advocate, in this process, has said, “Let me at least find out the information.” If the allegations are not true, then that’s great. That’s the best-case scenario. But if the allegations have some truth to them and inmates who are in youth justice facilities are being assaulted, then we have a serious problem—a serious problem.

The child advocate goes on to say, “We believe that whenever a young person alleges an assault by staff, a thorough investigation should take place”—I don’t understand why the government doesn’t think that that’s a reasonable thing—“and anyone who was a party to the incident or witnessed it should be interviewed. This is consistent with the ministry’s Child Protection Standards for child welfare investigations into allegations made by

children in institutions.” Why have a policy on the books? If a child makes an allegation, why not follow through on that allegation? Why not ensure that those allegations are tested? It’s a prevention piece and it’s a respect piece and it’s a trust piece. At the very base of this issue, it comes down to trust.

“In one recent case,” the child advocate goes on to say, “a young person alleged staff ‘kneaded, kicked, and punched him in the face and ribs while he was handcuffed and shackled.’” We read about situations like this in the most horrendous countries, in countries where human rights are not respected. Yet we have a report here on the books that this happened and the provincial child advocate does not have the power to do a thorough investigation.

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In another case, a young person who is in a youth justice facility said that the staff “ran at me and charged me into a wall.” Why would we not want to find out if that actually happened or not? And if that did happen, why would we not want to address it head-on with the full force of the provincial advocate’s office?

He goes on to say, “As the provincial child advocate, I believe I need to be able to confirm for myself—not just take the assurances of others—that these very serious allegations have been properly investigated.” This is a reasonable request. This is something that could be easily amended. Both the PC Party and the NDP put forward one of the 123 amendments to this act to ensure that those children—because that’s what they are; if they’re in a youth facility, they’re still children. They clearly have not had the same upbringing as my own children or as some of the children of the members in this room, so they’re already on the outside. They’re already marginalized, and then they come into an institution which is supposed to be a place of trust and caring and sometimes education. For the provincial advocate not to have a clear view, a clear idea, an ability or the power to investigate what actually is happening in those places makes no sense to us, nor does it to anybody, really.

So if this was a minority government, this would be a place where we would stand. We would stand on principle to make sure that children in youth facilities and to make sure that children who are in group homes actually have somebody in their corner. That would happen. But in a majority, they don’t have to listen to us. They don’t have to listen to the provincial advocate. They don’t have to listen to the Ombudsman. They don’t have to listen to the PC Party or the NDP. When you don’t listen to all of those voices, then you are moving ahead with a flawed piece of legislation and not, I would argue, as I am, fulfilling your responsibility as a government. It is a missed opportunity, not to make Bill 8 stronger for the provincial advocate.

I want to talk about the third example. In this House, we deal with provincial and demonstration schools. As a former trustee, I have some understanding of what these demonstration schools are about, and there are some challenges around them. The vast majority of these

schools actually do an amazing job of securing an education where the mainstream education system cannot deal with it.

The provincial advocate brought this as a third example. He goes on to say, “Some years ago, several students complained about being assaulted by staff at one of the provincial and demonstration schools”—just one. “These are the schools operated by the province for children who are deaf, blind, deaf-blind, and severely learning disabled. I was told by the Ministry of Education I was not entitled to any information because our legislation permitted us only to do ‘informal advocacy’”—informal advocacy—“and we had no right of access to information. More recently, an 18-year-old student from one of the schools requested assistance from an advocate because he had concerns about an investigation the ministry had undertaken. The concerns were serious. My office wrote to a senior ministry bureaucrat outlining our concerns, but we were told that because the student was 18, he would have to handle it on his own and the ministry would not deal with us on this matter.”

That is a door slammed in the face of a young adult who clearly is in a demonstration school because there is nowhere else for them to be and he clearly has no other choice in the matter and then reached out, in an act of courage and strength, to the provincial child advocate, requesting some assistance around a process. Just as I have issues with the process that Bill 8 went through, this young person has issues with the process of the investigation into some serious concerns. The provincial advocate’s hands were tied.

So every time the Liberal government gets up and says, “We are expanding the powers of the provincial advocate,” you can understand the frustration that we feel on this side, because there is a whole swath, a segment of society, of the most vulnerable children who are not included in those expanded powers. This is not us saying this; this is the provincial child advocate.

Finally, the last example, because people are getting sad on that side—but it’s not a case of getting sad; it’s a case of actually changing the legislation or voting against it, voting your conscience, because this last example has to do with allegations of assault involving a child or youth in a mental health facility. These examples are heartbreaking, and they are happening in every single one of our ridings.

Last December, the *Globe and Mail* actually reported a story about a man who had been given a 20-year sentence for assaulting a boy at a children’s mental health facility—20 years, a 20-year sentence. This is very serious. The provincial advocate had been made aware of the situation through media reports. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services took the position that it was unable to provide information to us about the specifics of the assault or the investigation. As a result, the provincial advocate was forced to seek public court documents to learn about the circumstances of the situation, and they’re even going to need to file an FOI request to understand what steps have been taken to protect children in the future.

This is incredible. You sent the provincial advocate, who's responsible for protecting children, to court. You sent him to court to get the information that he needs to report back to you about what needs to be changed in this particular facility, and then he has to FOI the information to understand if anything has changed in that place. You can't discard this kind of information as sleight-of-hand; this is the most informed voice in the province of Ontario asking for the powers to protect children, and the committee stood down on every one of those amendments.

It defies logic. You have the power to change this situation. You have a majority government. It's a majority. You can do whatever you want. What you can't do is ignore these voices and not have the opposition stand up and charge you with neglect. This is essentially what it is. When you tie the hands of the provincial advocate by not strengthening Bill 8, you are essentially saying that you don't care about those children.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a whole segment of children that this act could encompass. You might see—I mean, it's frustrating, right? It's frustrating because the amendments that we took the time to bring forward were good amendments. They mirrored some of the requests of the provincial advocate.

The PC Party brought forward some amendments to the bill as well, seeking, quite honestly, clarity in some instances. A piece of legislation should not put children into this grey zone where they may or may not have rights.

The examples that the provincial advocate has brought forward, I think, indicate that this is a flawed piece of legislation. What I just fundamentally don't understand—I really don't—is, why would you support it? Why would you support a piece of legislation with a great little title, but that leaves these children and their lives hanging in the wind?

The provincial advocate obviously had some frustration. I think, more to the point, that the frustration also came after he met with the minister's staff. It was really quite astounding. He says, "I was very disappointed when the Minister of Children and Youth Services' office explained that my recommendations would not be accepted by the government because it would create too much 'document process' for service providers and that it would be too much to expect them to respond to a 'robust, third-party oversight.'"

So, basically, it's too much paperwork. How can that be? How can too much paperwork trump the rights of children in this province? How is that even possible, that somebody in the minister's office would say this to the provincial advocate? And they've confirmed it, as well. They've said that the mental health system is not prepared for this kind of oversight. Well, then fix the mental health service. Fix the mental health system for children and youth. I mean, this is not new news. One in five children in the province of Ontario suffers from mental health issues.

We have this act before us. You would think that there are some good parts in it, as I've said. I mean, the truly

accountable pieces, that we have supported—schedules 4, 6, 7 and 11—we have no issues with. But we have serious issues—serious ethical issues—with passing a piece of legislation which doesn't do the job of protecting children.

1440

Even more concerning in some regards, I think, are some of the amendments that the government brought forward in this committee session partway through. It has to do with schedule 9, the background on the amendment relating to the Ombudsman jurisdiction.

Government motion 83, which of course passed in committee—everything that the government wanted passed; mostly everything that we wanted passed didn't pass, and the same thing with the PCs. This government motion passed in committee, and it says that if any question arises where the Ombudsman has jurisdiction to investigate any case or class of cases under this act, the Ombudsman, or any person who is directly affected, may appeal to Divisional Court for a declaratory order determining the question.

It was really interesting. It was the first time, actually, that I met the Ombudsman. He came, and his reputation precedes him. The Auditor General had already been there, so there was already a legislative-officer-to-legislative-officer spat in the mix, which sort of took us away from the things that I've been talking about, in some respects.

He came, and he said, "No, I'm not going to bring forward any amendments." I said to the Ombudsman, "But in 2012, in your annual report, you quoted the 2,679 cases that were reported to you under the health care sector." He got those unsolicited complaints around the health care system in the province of Ontario, which he does not have oversight for, and which he still does not have oversight for, under Bill 8.

What was really interesting was that—I was surprised that he came and didn't make any amendments, and perhaps it's because it's the majority culture now. There are some things worth fighting for, and you've got to pick and choose your battles. Some of us don't have the energy to fight all the battles; some of us do.

He said in 2012 that the time was right for him, as the Ontario Ombudsman, to have oversight over the health care system in the province of Ontario, just like every other province in the country. He said that the time was right. So he came, and I said, "Well, is the time not right?" He goes, "No, no, you're right." I said, "No, actually, you were right. You were right in 2012 when you said the time was right in 2012 to have Ombudsman oversight of the health care sector." I was just genuinely surprised.

Instead of the MUSH sector—municipalities and universities and schools and hospitals—he just got MUS—municipalities, universities and schools—and not hospitals, not the biggest budget in the province of Ontario, not the \$52 billion. No, no, no. He doesn't have oversight of that, no—and there are no problems in the health care system, as you all know.

What was astounding to me is that the biggest call for Ombudsman oversight on any issue would be health care. All of us, as individual MPPs—the number one issue that comes into my office is navigating what is a layered, complex and bureaucratic health care system that was further complicated by LHINs and CCACs and the local sectors. Everyone takes a little piece of the pie as the money comes through the community, and by the time it gets down to the personal support workers, they get \$12—right?—even though they were promised \$16.

If it was up to me, I would ensure that the Ombudsman—I'd start with health care first. Right? We've been calling for Ombudsman oversight under the health care system for so many years now, and yet this government has brought forward a patient ombudsman.

I just want to say, on this piece, on this amendment that the Liberal government brought forward that would allow for the Ombudsman to seek clarification on matters of jurisdiction before the courts, the potential issue with this provision is that any individual or entity that does not want to be subject to or captured under the Ombudsman oversight can at least make an application that would halt progress on an Ontario Ombudsman investigation until the matter is settled through the courts.

What you did is promise Ombudsman oversight, but then you also gave this little trap door, a little get out of jail free, as if this is some Monopoly game: "Pass Go and get \$200." Sometimes it seems like games are being played here. You brought forward a piece of legislation, you promised Ombudsman oversight of municipalities, universities and schools, and you left out the hospitals, one of the biggest budget items in the province of Ontario. There's a huge question mark here under the motivation for that. What we have here is a trap door for Ombudsman oversight. I'd be curious to know his opinion on that. We have asked the special adviser in the Deputy Premier's office to clarify; we have not heard back.

The patient ombudsman: There are so many problems with this idea. Again, it just begs the question: Why would you not want to do something right the first time? The Ombudsman has the powers, the establishment, the administration to actually deal with these issues. Once again, I just want to bring the voices of some of those who travelled from across the province to speak to Bill 8. This one was actually Mary Gavel, who is director of navigator and patient advocacy. First of all, she points out that "Ontario is the only province that does not have Ombudsman oversight of health sector complaints." One would ask, why? We did. We still have no answer.

She says that, based on her experience, "I believe that an ombudsman must be a neutral, objective resource to which patients and family can turn when they have not been able to achieve resolution of their concerns within the health sector." She also says, "I also believe that there must be a trusting relationship for the process to be successful in achieving resolution."

This is completely reasonable. I pointed out that the patient ombudsman would be hired, of course, by the LG

and the Legislature, serve under a health care agency, and therefore be subject to the whim of that health care agency and not even necessarily—we put forward an amendment. You'll be interested to hear this: We put forward an amendment that the patient ombudsman for the province of Ontario should only have this job. This is not a huge ask, one would think.

Being a patient ombudsman is a pretty big job, but as the legislation is crafted, that person can have other jobs. They can be a waitress or a librarian. They could be a truck driver. The legislation should be very clear: If you're the patient ombudsman for the province of Ontario and you're responsible for oversight of the health care sector, then it seems reasonable—I don't know—that that would be your main job, your main responsibility.

She went on to say that she urges the committee "to examine carefully the lack of trust that could exist with a patient ombudsman as proposed in section 5 of Bill 8." She says, and this is key, "Trust is fragile and hard to restore once lost. Trust is also a core pillar of quality care." We couldn't agree more with those words, Mr. Speaker.

We have a provincial advocate about whom the government stands up and says, "You know what? We have expanded these powers," even though they've tied his hands at the same time, even though they've purposely, with intent, carved off a whole segment of vulnerable children whom he cannot help, which is a non-starter for us.

Then we have the provincial Ombudsman, who has all of the structure, all the administration in play to expand the scope of his responsibilities. Obviously there would be local people connected to the Ombudsman—of course that would happen—but the experience is there and it is true oversight because he is an officer of the Legislature. He doesn't respond to any one party. He has independence. The independence piece is the key piece. It's a key component of ensuring the integrity of that role, of that position, in their responsibilities.

1450

Finally, I think we have to talk about the lack of having a public sector executive cap on salaries. I know that the party opposite, the Liberal government, says that you can't set a number to it. You have to start somewhere. Even a framework: They refuse to even entertain a framework—\$400,000, \$500,000, somewhere in there. They refuse to do that, even though, in our original motion in the last Legislature, we actually included a sector-specific skill-based salary. So if you're a nuclear physicist, you're not going to fall into the regular scope of the broader executive salary cap.

But there's no cap. There's no cap. You can't—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Gee, what do you think an NDP researcher would be worth?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Do you know what I know it isn't? I know it isn't a \$780,000 buyout for the executive of the Pan/Parapan Am Games. I know that's not what it is. If I was the government, I know I wouldn't be writing

contracts where you get more money to get fired than to actually stay and do your job. I know that. Let's start someplace.

Again, just on my theme of missed opportunities with regard to Bill 8, the sunshine list: Everyone makes a big deal about the sunshine list, people who make over \$100,000. But do you know what that sunshine doesn't capture? It doesn't capture the tens of thousands of high-income earners who get all or part of their pay from working for the government. If you were truly interested in peeling back the layers, in opening the doors, in being more transparent and in being more accountable, then you might have looked at this. If you really want to know how the government pays people, you should be including private contractors and those who work for them under the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act. That's what should happen, because you want to think about the money that's going out of this place that we don't know about.

As the new finance and Treasury Board critic, I can tell you that it's a full-time job following the money around this place. I think I'm going to find it and then it ends up in another ministry and everyone has taken a little bit of a cut along the way. It's astounding to me that if you were truly interested—and we've raised this issue. We've raised this issue on the IT file, for instance. This government is spending two to three times as much on private sector IT services than they are on supporting and valuing the Ontario public service.

You don't have that money to waste. You don't have \$200 million to waste. If we could find you the savings, we'd put it into dental care—the dental care that you're not cutting, even though 70,000 young children are not going to find access to care.

What I have to say, of course, is that we didn't support this legislation in second reading. We tried to make it stronger at committee. I think I've done my job as an opposition MPP by bringing the voices of children to this place. We should always remember those voices in this House. I know that there's political pressure to push things along, but I wouldn't mind a little courage on the part of the government to do the right thing, because if they showed the courage, they would have our support.

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

Mr. Chris Ballard: Mr. Speaker, I believe you'll find that we have unanimous consent to allow me to deliver my inaugural address during debate on this bill today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Newmarket–Aurora is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to deliver his maiden speech right now. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today, as I said, to make my inaugural speech with a touch of trepidation. It's not just that I'm addressing this august body; it's because, and I have to admit that, I'm here in part because of an ice cream cone—a double-scoop chocolate ice cream cone from Cousins Dairy in Aurora.

You see, as a young boy, my father would be taken on a yearly church excursion during the summer. On a hot summer day, they'd board an electric tram in Toronto and rocket north on Yonge Street all the way to Lake Simcoe, where the church would have a grand picnic. On the way home in the evening, they would always stop in Aurora for a nice ice cream cone. Over the years, my father got to know Aurora, fell in love with Aurora, and fell in love with Cousins Dairy's chocolate chip ice cream cones.

Memories stuck with my dad, and when he and my mother were looking for a place to buy a home and settle down when they got married, Aurora was at the top of their list. That they moved to King City, right next door to Aurora, is testament to available housing but also the proximity to that Cousins Dairy.

As an aside, I often shake my head at how advanced our public transportation was in those days, the olden days, when they could board an electrified train deep in Toronto and go all the way north up to Aurora and on to Lake Simcoe, and even change trains and head east and west to all the small communities through the county of York—as it was known then—Schomberg and Nobleton and those sorts of things. I think this is what drives my passion, and our communities' passion, for all-day, two-way electrified GO train service. We're back to the future.

I need to thank all of those who encouraged and supported me as I first entered political life, the political life that led to this chamber.

To my wife, Audrey, I certainly owe a debt of gratitude for her unwavering support and hard work on the campaign trail. It certainly is nice to have someone who believes in you.

To my children, Joshua, Michelle and Emily, who offered unlimited encouragement but, strangely, moved away when it was time to knock on too many doors: I do owe them a thank you.

To friends Ken Whitehurst and former Aurora mayor Phyllis Morris, who incubated and encouraged my political ambition to be a town councillor and, later, an MPP: Thank you.

To an amazing campaign manager, Cathy Gapp, who ran a tremendous campaign, and all of the volunteers, of course—too numerous to mention—I do thank them all.

Finally, to former Liberal leader Lyn McLeod, who first took me aside and told me that she thought I had what it took to be the MPP for Newmarket–Aurora—I said no a few times to Ms. McLeod, but accepting a no is not something our one-time leader does well, so here I am.

There is, of course, another leader that all of us on this side of the aisle owe a large debt to, and I believe, in all earnestness, that Premier Wynne, in my estimation, is the epitome of what leadership is. Her dedication, hard work and focus on positive politics has been an inspiration, especially to the new caucus, which I'm honoured to be a part of.

As for the members on the other side, I'm optimistic about our ability to work together, and I look forward to getting to know you all in the months and years ahead.

I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I were not to mention my predecessor in Newmarket–Aurora, Frank Klees, and to acknowledge his many years of commitment to public service as an MPP and cabinet minister.

So here I am. Looking back, while growing up, politics was always part of my family's life. Our family motto seemed to be, "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem."

I, too, have an immigrant story. This one involves my grandparents, my father's parents, who sold everything to buy passage from England to Canada, in search of opportunities and a less class-conscious society.

Landing in Toronto with four children in tow, and an offer of employment in hand, my grandparents Henry and Bertha were optimistic. But they arrived just in time for the Great Depression, and the promised job disappeared. They found themselves without money, without a job, without a home, and with another child on the way. My father was that child. His stories of growing up poor, but in a house filled with love, shaped my life.

Along with this heritage shaping the person I am today, there's also my upbringing in King township. When I was growing up, we had two signs entering King, one coming and one going; they both said the same thing: "Welcome to King City, population 800, growing with Canada." I think that sign was there almost the entire time that I was growing up. The town has grown a bit since then, but it certainly was rural, small-town Ontario when I enjoyed myself there.

1500

One of the great features about King township is that much of it sits right on top of the Oak Ridges moraine. When people really didn't know much about the Oak Ridges moraine, it was part of our core geography studies in both public school and secondary school. In fact, I can remember that Mr. Simpson, my grade 13 geography teacher, had written a textbook about it for universities and was our instructor. So it's no surprise to me that when I was knocking on doors in Newmarket–Aurora, the Oak Ridges moraine was top of mind for people in my riding. They want to make sure that it's protected and preserved. It's one of the reasons that I'm here.

The Oak Ridges moraine played a role in shaping the heritage of Newmarket–Aurora. First Nations, thousands of years ago, travelled the area and hunted the area. Later, when the Europeans arrived, they found the soil to be fantastic, and they cleared the forests and farmed the area and did quite well.

The moraine itself—just a bit of a geography lesson or geology lesson—is a 160-kilometre ridge of sand, silt and gravel deposits extending east to west north of Toronto left behind by retreating glaciers. It currently provides fresh water to over 200,000 people, and it's the headwaters of 65 different river systems, so it's very important. A large portion of the moraine is covered by development, by fields, by roadways and by golf courses. In the coming months and years, you'll hear me speak passionately in support of the Oak Ridges moraine.

Another key building block that shaped the great community of Newmarket–Aurora is the Queen's York

Rangers. The Rangers have a strong connection to both Aurora and Newmarket. They built Yonge Street, along with the city of York—some of the initial infrastructure here. They built Yonge Street from Toronto to Lake Simcoe, and it was the first road in the area, which helped pave the way for settlement. The development of Yonge Street allowed the enraged residents of the recently founded Newmarket and area to march down Yonge to express their anger with the Family Compact during the Upper Canada Rebellion. If they hadn't stopped at a tavern—I think it was in what's known as Hogg's Hollow—as the lore goes, if they hadn't stopped there to wet their whistle and been caught by the British regular forces, things may have been a bit different here. But the fact that they did, the fact that they gathered and they marched down Yonge on Toronto, was enough to rattle the monarchy of the day so that they looked again at what was happening with the Family Compact and there were great changes. It's one of the reasons that, frankly, we're all here.

If we fast-forward a few centuries later, we have the Queen's York Rangers A Squadron located in our community at the John Graves Simcoe Armoury, and I'm honoured to say that my son, Joshua, who has followed our family motto of being part of the solution, is a member of that squadron. As I've witnessed, first as a town councillor—well, really first on a community newspaper in Aurora, later as a town councillor and certainly now as an MPP—our community is not only home to the Oak Ridges moraine and the Queen's York Rangers; it has a vast array of community organizations and events that highlight our heritage and culture and do a lot of good in our community, as do all communities across Ontario.

I'd like to commend the hard work and dedication given by the local volunteers in the community who make these events and clubs possible and keep these traditions alive. Specifically, in my short term as MPP, we've celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Newmarket Car Club, and I'll tell you, when they put on their big festival, they get 1,000 cars from across the GTA to come to Newmarket. These are cars that, when I lift the lids and look at the engines, I actually understand how those things work, compared to automotive technology today.

We celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Aurora Lawn Bowling Club, the 70th anniversary of the Aurora Lions Club, the 50th anniversary of the Aurora Youth Soccer Club, and those are just to name a few. Each weekend is filled with events and celebrations in the riding of Newmarket–Aurora.

I've also been delighted to attend events such as the Caribbean and South Asian Showcase, the Newmarket Jazz Festival, the annual Magna Hoedown, and multiple farmers' markets that display the delicious produce the area has to offer. These are just some of the many events that ensure my weekends are extremely enjoyable and busy. I look forward to attending many more events which celebrate our community's culture and heritage.

Along with attending events, while being MPP I've had the opportunity to participate in multiple transit announcements thanks to my colleague from Vaughan, who's working hard to provide the constituents of York region and Ontario with accessible and efficient transportation to ensure our province is moving forward on transit.

Since our government has been back to work, the East Gwillimbury bus servicing and storage facility has opened. That holds 36 buses indoors and four buses outside. Also, the 404 extension from Green Lane to Ravenshoe Road opened. That removes 22,000 vehicles from local roads each day, which really has had a positive impact on our riding and local roads. And of course, one of the earlier announcements from Metrolinx was the increase of the number of trains heading north at night to make sure that students and those who work past 6 o'clock at night can have GO train service back to their homes in Newmarket and Aurora.

Over the next few years, I look forward to seeing further improvements in York region transit, specifically securing the development of that all-day, two-way electrified GO train service for Newmarket–Aurora, which, frankly, is another reason that the people of my riding put me here.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to tell you a little bit about my riding. I wanted to just talk about my time here at Queen's Park. I've had a few months to settle in and to understand better my responsibilities at Queen's Park, and I'm really eager to get to work and to build on the work that we've started.

We've already seen some results. As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, Minister Oraziotti—he and I have sought the input of industry and consumers to pass Bill 15, Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates. I was happy to contribute to Bill 15 because valuable protection will be extended to consumers regarding the towing and storage of vehicles.

Continuing my private sector work in consumer protection, it truly is an honour to be able to lend my experience in advocacy to this government, a government which is promoting a fairer society for all Ontarians.

While the amalgamation of consumer services and government services is under way, I'm also working to ensure that our Ontario is not only a fair society, but has a government that is efficient and well-connected. That's why I'm working closely with ministry officials to target key initiatives aimed at developing relationships with our vendors. I'm making sure that small and medium-sized businesses, a powerful engine of our economy, have access to services aimed at growing the economy and building Ontario up. From a personal side, as someone who ran a small company for 25 years, as someone who chaired the Economic Development Advisory Committee in our town of Aurora, which focused on small business, the impact of a government building relationships with smaller businesses can't be understated. It's a very positive move.

Mr. Speaker, along with that important work going on at MGCS, I received the distinct pleasure of being asked to take on an additional PA-ship to the minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Like consumer advocacy, reducing poverty and increasing services to vulnerable populations is not only an issue near and dear to my heart, but it's the moral responsibility of any government.

The leadership of Minister Matthews has been pivotal in the achievements that our government has made so far. Tens of thousands of Ontarians have been raised out of poverty, along with an untold number who have been helped to stay above the poverty level.

But there's more work to be done. During my time as resident, councillor and now MPP for my riding, I've heard that poverty is largely a downtown Toronto issue, but let me tell you, that couldn't be farther from the truth. Poverty is pervasive across the entire province, including the towns that I represent. That's why it's a privilege for me to be part of the ongoing consultations that are seeking the input of poverty-reduction-focused groups located all across the province.

Through province-wide discussions with individual and group stakeholders, we're finding out that Ontario has some very interesting and successful areas of social enterprise. It has been one of the most eye-opening experiences that I've had over the past few months, to meet with organizations from across Ontario. Some are big and well-known; others are small and only operating in their small community. But they've all figured out a way of making a difference where it counts. We want to learn from them and see how we can help them deliver greater service and help us be more efficient. It's very important to nurture these successes.

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Targeting vulnerable populations like the chronically homeless, persons with disabilities and recent immigrants, Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy is a vital tool to ensure that all Ontarians realize their potential. While outreach and consultations continue, Minister Matthews and her staff are working hard to create networks, both within our government ministries and amongst the many groups that seek to end poverty, and it is rewarding work.

I consider myself a very fortunate individual. I find myself contributing to two very busy ministries that are working for all Ontarians as part of a government that is dedicated to fairness, openness and transparency. That's why I was proud to introduce my private member's bill, Bill 42, which received second reading last week. It will expand democracy in York region, one of the fastest-growing regions in Canada.

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the foundational work of both my colleagues from Richmond Hill and Oak Ridges–Markham on that bill, and I'm proud to see their work reintroduced. If passed, Bill 42 will see the regional chair and CEO of York region be no longer an appointed position but an elected one. Bill 42 will make this important office accountable to the

residents of York region, and I'm thankful for the support of members from all parties on moving that through.

Whether I'm working hard to represent my constituents in Newmarket–Aurora or participating in an active government at Queen's Park, I'll continue to devote my energies to the task at hand: building Ontario up one step at a time, whether it be moving transit forward, protecting the Oak Ridges moraine, working hard to alleviate poverty, or protecting our consumers.

I thank you for the opportunity to rise in the House, and I hope it has provided a little insight as to why I stand here today and showcased just a taste of what the wonderful community of Newmarket–Aurora has to offer. As I've discovered, there's a lot more to taste than just an ice cream.

I notice, Mr. Speaker, that I've run out of pages, but there are five minutes left, so I will go back to an earlier version of that speech and just outline some of the issues that Aurora and Newmarket have faced in the past while.

People talk about the demographics of Aurora. Both Aurora and Newmarket are changing organizations. Aurora, when I was a young child, was 2,500 or 2,600 people. Today, 56,000 people call Aurora home and 85,000 people call Newmarket home, and both are growing. The town of Aurora, when I was growing up, was primarily rural, with horse farms and crops; today, the last bit of green space in Aurora is being developed, and the same with Newmarket.

However, both communities have a real focus on the environment, and both are known for the number of active transportation systems they have—we would call them “trails”; they like to call them “active transportation”—that link Toronto all the way to Lake Simcoe. You can walk through our two beautiful communities, and spend a day if you'd like, because in Aurora alone we have over 100 kilometres of trails that loop through the town, and Newmarket is quite similar—some absolutely beautiful things to be done.

One of the other areas of focus besides the environment is on arts and culture development. Both communities spend an awful lot of their time building those institutions. In fact, the town of Aurora, a number of years ago, had a beautiful two-storey facility called the Church Street School. The Church Street School was once the home of Lester Pearson when he was a young boy. The future Prime Minister of Canada went to school in this old building.

There came a time when the historical society didn't know what to do with the building anymore. It had become too expensive for them to keep up, and far too expensive for them to develop. With the help of the town and different layers of government, we managed to develop the Church Street School into a setting that's now known internationally as the Aurora Cultural Centre, which hosts all sorts of arts events, from displays to world-class music.

In fact, what's really nice is to see young, budding artists display their work and to see experienced artists who've just come from a show in New York display their

works, and then the next week there might be a display that the local high school has put on, demonstrating that this is the way to bring a community together and to showcase the depth of talent that Aurora and Newmarket show. Newmarket is going through a similar phase right now. They're looking at one of their old municipal buildings right in the historic downtown core of Newmarket, and looking to develop a similar type of facility. I think it harkens back to the early days of the communities of Newmarket and Aurora.

Newmarket was primarily founded by Quakers who came from the United States seeking a peaceful place to live and to farm, and they found, again, fertile farmland in the Newmarket area. I believe about 200 families originally settled in the area, and Newmarket is now home to some very strong Quaker heritage, which I think has really helped develop the community we see today, those qualities that the Quakers brought with them.

Aurora was a little different. Aurora was, as I said earlier, primarily a farming community, but we were also the railhead north of Toronto, and we had the Fleury plow developed in Aurora. It's an early claim to fame of our community, because the Fleury plow was made out of steel. It was very tough, and it is what broke the prairie sod. We're quite proud to think that because of the technology from Aurora and the manufacturing prowess of our Aurora foundries, we are really behind the expansion of farming across the prairies. You needed a really tough plow to cut through the sod there, and the Fleury plow was the one to get that job done.

So a very varied background to both of the communities, two communities that I am certainly proud to call home and certainly proud to represent in the days ahead.

I'll leave you just with one thought. History plays a real, important part of our community, both Newmarket and Aurora. I've talked about the Quaker heritage and the business background in Aurora, but if you have some time, you must google Blake's Aurora speech. At the same time he was the Prime Minister of Canada and the Prime Minister of Ontario—he gave a speech at the old Aurora armoury that set the foundation for federalism for the years to come. He believed so much in what he spoke about federalism that he had to resign as Prime Minister of Ontario to carry on as Prime Minister of Canada. It's just a very interesting speech that sets the tone of the time.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to deliver my inaugural speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to third reading of Bill 8, but before I do that, I would like to congratulate the member from Newmarket–Aurora on his maiden speech; certainly it's always great to hear a maiden speech, but to learn more about his background and small business experience. I hope he remembers that going forward when the government is bringing in new rules that will affect small

business and that he remembers what it was like when he was actually in business himself, as time marches forward.

Certainly with this time allocation, there is no opportunity for questions and comments, so I'm pleased to use a bit of my time to just comment on the member's speech. Certainly I learned a lot about his family—his wife, Audrey, and kids Joshua, Michelle and Emily—and his background as a councillor, and also who he talked to when he was thinking about getting into politics.

I recall back some 13 years ago when I did my maiden speech in June 2001. I think it was before there was actually an air conditioning system that worked well in this place, so my big concern was, "Do I buckle up my jacket, or do I unbuckle it?" and would the sweat be running down my face. I was a little nervous making the inaugural speech. He seems much more relaxed than I remember being at the time.

He mentioned that he spoke with Lyn McLeod, a former Liberal leader, about the decision to run. I actually called a Liberal member as well, Murray Gaunt, who is no longer with us, but was a long-time Liberal member for the Wingham area. He happened to be a guest at our lodge for many years, so I knew him quite well. I knew that he had a young family and had also been an MPP, so I thought he would be a good guy to talk to and find out what the job really involved. I'm here now, so obviously he didn't tell me not to run.

1520

Ms. Catherine Fife: He didn't talk you out of it.

Mr. Norm Miller: No.

I was pleased to do the eulogy for Mr. Gaunt when the time came here at Queen's Park and to attend his funeral, actually, as well.

The member for Newmarket–Aurora mentioned working together. Well, I hope he talks to some of his members on his side of the Legislature, too, about that.

My birth certificate actually says Newmarket on it, and we lived in Aurora at the time. It's before any of my memory, mind you, because I think I was one when we moved away to Montreal and then finally, of course, we found the best place to live, which was Parry Sound–Muskoka. Actually, my father was teaching at St. Andrew's College for four years at that time. He spoke very fondly of the good times at St. Andrew's and wanted to tell me how much he enjoyed it there.

I would also like to comment on Bill 42—which also relates to what's going on in Muskoka right now—your bill that would, I gather, make for an elected district chair, elected by all the people. We're actually just having a race going on in Muskoka. We still have a system in Muskoka where it is just those elected councillors and mayors on the district government who pick the new chair. There are, I think, at least four people running this time, so it's fairly contested. But it is an interesting question: Should all of the people in the community be able to vote for the chair? I think it's hard to argue against that, really. So that's a good bill that the member has brought forward.

Having said all of that, I would also like to segue into talking about Bill 8, because the first thing I'm going to talk about with Bill 8 has to do with ambulance services and the Auditor General. Of course, he did pay a compliment to the former member for Newmarket–Aurora, Mr. Frank Klees, who subbed in on the public accounts committee for a couple of years and was probably the key person for the PC Party, in terms of the Ornge air ambulance hearings that went on. That's certainly directly related to Bill 8, which, of course, is what we're talking about here today.

I thank the Speaker for giving me some room to not directly speak to Bill 8, An Act to promote public sector and MPP accountability and transparency by enacting the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act, 2014 and amending various Acts. We're speaking to third reading on this. As the government has done with most of its bills, it is time-allocated, meaning we only have two hours total time to debate third reading, and there's no questions and comments.

I would like to talk about the section that deals with ambulances. I'll note, as I mentioned, that I was pleased to see the summary report from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on the Ornge air ambulance and related services get reported to the Legislature in October. I'm pleased that that happened because there were a couple of years of work and there were many, many areas of concern that were raised by that report. Some of them are answered partially, I would say, in this Bill 8—not completely.

One that is not completely answered, I would say, has to do with what was learned from the investigation into Ornge air ambulance and the work of the Auditor General and how the current rules make it harder for the auditor to do her job. One of the findings of the committee to do with the Office of the Auditor General was:

"The Auditor General was unable to obtain all necessary information in the course of the 2011-12 Ornge audit. The auditor was refused access to the records of any of the other entities, which Ornge had contracted with to provide, among other things, aviation, aircraft maintenance, pilot management, accounting and payroll processing services. Ornge's management and board advised the Auditor General that this was because the ministry was not funding the other entities directly or indirectly (under the Auditor General Act the auditor is generally allowed access only to organizations funded by the provincial government)."

I'm disappointed that this bill does not incorporate into it powers to allow the Auditor General to follow the public dollars no matter where they are.

Last session, I introduced and debated a bill—I believe it was Bill 190—to do just that, and I have introduced a private member's bill, Bill 25, which is the Auditor General Amendment Act, which would allow the auditor to follow the public dollars no matter where they happen to go. I would suggest to the government that they're welcome to borrow that private member's bill, if they wish, in some future government bill, because I

think it is a good thing to do, and I know that the auditor absolutely supports it.

To give a little background, the reason that bill is needed is what we found with the Ornge air ambulance study at the public accounts committee. With Ornge air ambulance in particular, the creating of for-profit subsidiary companies through Ornge Global proved to be a stonewall to the special investigation and provincial oversight.

Currently, when conducting audits, third-party service providers and indirect recipients of public funds are an area which the provincial auditor does not have access to. Some entities falling into these categories may comply with requests of the audit but could choose to provide only selected information. When this is the case, it is difficult to get a clear picture of where the funds are going.

One such example is with the recent investigation into the costs of the Mississauga power plant cancellation. The proponent, Greenfield South Power Corp., who was under contract to build the plant, submitted only select financial information for the investigation. The company, as a third-party recipient of funds, could not be compelled to comply with such requests from the Auditor General.

The auditor has also been recently asked to look into winter road maintenance, and again, with winter road maintenance, there could be problems getting all the information because there are private contractors that are doing the maintenance. That's an area that the auditor is shortly going to report on. Certainly, this evening, when we're talking about Bill 31, I'll have an opportunity to talk a bit more about winter road maintenance.

The limitation stretches to many areas where public bodies contract out service delivery to private and for-profit third-party organizations. Specific areas where this information would be useful include details on profit margins, number of employees, and salaries paid to senior management.

Third parties can also include organizations such as charities and non-profit groups. There's no doubt in my mind that this lack of information would make future audits less telling and therefore less useful.

It's my feeling that the auditor needs the correct tools to do the job. In this case, the current legislation can be improved to allow the auditor to follow the dollars. There are other jurisdictions that do allow this: Manitoba, Nova Scotia and British Columbia all have that legislation; New Brunswick, I believe, has tabled legislation. I have tabled Bill 25, and I hope the government will use Bill 25, or change it if necessary, to give the auditor the powers that she needs to be able to do the work that is so important. It has been learned, from looking at Ornge air ambulance, that there needs to be a lot more oversight.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 8, of course, has many different schedules. One of them that I've been talking about is schedule 2, which is to do with ambulance. I believe you were in the chair last time I had the opportunity to speak about the need in my riding for ambulance services in the more remote parts of the riding, that being in the Port Loring/Argyle area, which you're very familiar with.

I was recently trying to get an update on what's happening up there, so my office contacted the director of emergency services in Parry Sound, Mr. David Thompson, to get an update, because there has been a pilot project reported on that's being tried out in the community—it sounds like a good idea, and I just hope that they're able to make it permanent—and that's the community paramedicine program, which I believe is going until June. That has an ambulance station in Port Loring, with two paramedics, with partial coverage, but it also does other things, including health education and local health promotion. It works with the nursing station, and it also provides visits in the home and preventive care.

1530

The operational review for the area is ongoing, and there is to be a report in mid-January. I think it's an improvement over the fall, when I attended the public meeting. The question is how to make the coverage for an ambulance service permanent in the area.

It is a challenge because of the low volume of calls and the significant—big geography, is what I would call it. That's also the reason why it absolutely needs an ambulance in that area, because it's at least an hour from the closest hospital, meaning at least a two-hour ambulance ride. So I'm very much supportive of there being an ambulance station there permanently.

Mr. Speaker, in the few minutes that I have left, I would also like to talk about the section—I have to find the right schedule here—oh, yes, schedule 6, which makes amendments to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

This came about, I believe, because of the work to do with the gas plant committee and the deleted emails and all that was going on. Now they're trying to correct that, although it's interesting that the two key witnesses, Peter Faist and Laura Miller, have still not come before the Legislature. In fact, I believe those people have left the province. I think that's something that needs to be addressed.

As well, we've been learning recently about new computer systems—talking about transparency—for the Ontario Disability Support Program and Ontario Works. It has been a bit of a mess. It has been reported that there have been all kinds of problems with the system not providing the correct amounts. The government says it's a minor glitch, but it doesn't appear to be that, based on the number of people reporting about it.

I can tell you I've had anonymous calls to my constituency office from people who work with the system, and what I'm hearing on the ground is that there was \$250 million spent on this new computer program; I believe it's called SAMS. What the people who are using it are telling my office is that it's supposed to save time and allow more time to deal with the recipients. In fact, the opposite is the case: It takes 10 times longer to use it. What used to be six clicks is now 100 clicks. The system is not integrated, and on and on it goes.

I believe that the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who is going to be speaking next, has said that our party has requested that this go before one of the standing committees of the Legislature, and the government is, so far, refusing to do this.

I know the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound wants to speak and would love to have at least the 17 minutes that are left, so I will wrap up now and thank the Speaker and the House for the opportunity to speak to Bill 8 today.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to follow my colleague Norm Miller. He has probably said most of what needs to be said, but I'll try to take it from here and add a few other points.

Before I start, though, I would like to say [*remarks in Ukrainian*] to the member from Etobicoke Centre. Happy birthday, Yvan Baker.

Speaker, I spoke of this extensively at second reading, and I'm going to try to recap a fair bit of that, because I only have 17 minutes; I think I had an hour that day.

But nothing has really changed from the perspective of—this is a time allocation bill. At the end of the day, it's the height of—I'm not going to say the word, because I know that's inappropriate and not acceptable, but there's a lot in this bill that says one thing and they're going to do the other. That's just not acceptable—even to the point of the title of the bill—talking about accountability and transparency, and then not allowing things like Laura Miller and Peter Faist to be called in front of this House after a billion-dollar gas scandal. They talk about quite a few things—and I'm going to really try to avoid that word, because it is the exact opposite of what they are doing most of the time.

I'm going to start, though, by saying there are points of the bill that I believe—we have tried to show some support, we've tried to take amendments, and there are certain pieces in here that I believe, the principle of them, we can support. Those are things like the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act; things like amendments to the Legislative Assembly Act so the Speaker will have the ability to have us post our travel; amendments to the Lobbyists Registration Act to ensure that we know what's going on with lobbyists and who is lobbying the government; and amendments to the Ombudsman Act. Most of these are the kind of motherhood-and-apple-pie type of thought processes. Again, giving the Ombudsman the ability to check and to verify are all admirable, and I think we're relatively supportive.

The challenge comes when we always want to turn to someone else. If there were truly a government that was accountable and transparent, why would we need all these separate silos and these people to do so much other investigations? If they were truly being accountable to the people as cabinet ministers and as that ministry, you would think we would be there.

Amendments to the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Act: Again, the ability for the advocate to come in—I met with him when I had the critic role for children and youth. I think he does a lot of great work and is definitely there to advocate on behalf of the children. It's good but, again, we want to be sure that we're not just creating other silos that are not going to be effective and, at the end of the day, are spending time getting to the needs of the people as opposed to studying and doing more consultations.

Amendments to the Public Sector Expenses Review Act I've already talked about.

So there are some things in there that I think are at the highest level and, in principle, I think we can agree with, but there are also some big challenges in there that I think we have to be looking at. Whistle-blower legislation is one of them, with the Ambulance Act. It certainly is great, but my former colleague Frank Klees from Newmarket–Aurora tried to bring in some people who were actually willing to be whistle-blowers, to step up and do the right thing even though their careers might be in jeopardy, because they were truly concerned. At the end of the day, those people really did not get heard by this Liberal government. They basically just said, "We know what we're doing; we're moving forward." Again, the height of saying one thing and doing another came shining through in that example.

Just recently we've had a colossal nightmare with the SAMS program under the Minister of Community and Social Services. We've had a lot of front-line people coming through my office as the critic and, certainly, through those of my colleagues in the PCs. I trust the NDP are hearing it as well. There are lots of concerns behind the scenes with this system: the lack of training and the stress they're encountering. We've called to say, "Bring them to committee; bring those front-line people so that we can truly get to the bottom of what the glitches were and what they are so we can improve it." At the end of the day, those people not getting their cheques, underpayments, overpayments—we've heard of both—have to be rectified.

Just recently my colleague Bob Bailey from Sarnia brought an example of someone in his riding who, on October 29, applied to be able to have the application process and was denied. Sadly, this person has HIV and needs medication. How do you tell someone that, "No; we're going to deny you going through the process because we're taking training on a new system"? That's a person's life that we put in jeopardy. Luckily, Bob and his staff worked very diligently and found a work-around to be able to help this person out. At the end of the day, the government should be responsible for that. They should have taken steps to ensure that those types of things wouldn't happen. We keep hearing, "They're just minor glitches." Minor glitches they're not if it's a life-saving medication. Telling you that you cannot even apply to the process is totally unacceptable.

One of the schedules is on public sector executive compensation. The other day—it was interesting—I

raised a question about the CCACs and the administrative salaries, and both the minister and the Treasury Board president kind of tried to make fun of me, that I didn't know what I was doing. They said, "It's already in Bill 8. Why aren't you just agreeing to it?" There are words in there that say you "can limit" compensation. "Can limit" and actually doing something about it are two totally different things. Accountability is actually about stepping up and not using rhetoric and lofty words. It's actually taking a stand and saying, "This is unacceptable. We are going to do something about it." We need to ensure that accountability is truly about action and not just rhetoric and words. That's one that, again, I found quite—I keep wanting to say that word, but it's saying one thing and doing the other. They want to say they're doing all the right things, they want people to read the 30-second headline and feel that everything's rosy in this world, but that's just not the way it is.

The executive salary cap in Bill 8 talks about limiting, but really what it does is, it does not impose a salary cap; it says, "We can," "We shall," "We're able to." At the end of the day, what we really want is that we are definitively taking action.

1540

The minister's own parliamentary assistant has said, "I did not suggest that [this bill imposes caps on executive compensation]" but "the bill provides the government with the ability to impose those [hard] caps." The ability to and saying you will not, or "I'm going to stop," are two totally different things, Mr. Speaker. Again, I find this in many cases in regard to a lot of the things in my three years here: The government suggests that we can do better, we should do better. We hear this. I believe the Premier, just last week, used words like that: "I'm sad that it isn't better; it wasn't implemented better." Tell that to the person who does not get their cheque and can't pay their hydro, they can't pay their rent, and the stress and duress that puts them under. Saying, "I can't," and then sloughing it off as just a minor, little glitch on an important system such as that just is not acceptable.

We too often see this government saying one thing and doing another. At the end of the day, this bill, even the wording of this bill, "accountability and transparency"—why will they not allow us to bring people forward to ensure that the things that they've messed up in the past can never happen again?

Minister Matthews said the salary caps show, "We are serious about restoring trust in government." If it wasn't for Ornge, eHealth, gas plants, MaRS, recently the \$500-million cut from the education budget, would they have to? Why would we not believe, if we didn't have all these? We might be able to stand in this House and say, "Yes, we know what you're saying, but there's just too much of a track record here." What I see is the same old, same old. When I came in these doors under Premier Dalton McGuinty, we heard a lot of the same rhetoric: "This won't happen; it's not happening," and they denied it. Then we have Premier Wynne, and I was really hoping for a change. But at the end of the day, I don't see

anything different, really. Bringing in a bill and using rhetoric to say that we're addressing all of these concerns is only credible if you truly, actually, are going to step up to the plate and do it.

I believe my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London said it earlier: Ethics cannot be legislated. It's one thing to put it on paper so people know that it's there, but at the end of the day, it's the action that's really about ethics, integrity and doing the right thing, doing the honourable thing. The Liberals have put accountability measures in place before and still—I repeat again—Ontarians have experienced eHealth, Ornge and gas plant scandals. It's just not enough to put it in words when you don't stand behind those.

Again, I'm going to give credit to my colleague, Jeff Yurek, from Elgin–Middlesex–London. I think in his short presentation earlier he used, "Absolute power corrupts absolutely." That's a sad statement, Mr. Speaker, because it's what we're seeing in a lot of cases. After 11 years, it's kind of that mentality of, "We know what we're doing. We know better than you." They shut down Bill 10. They used time allocation to shut down Bill 10, something that's going to impact children across this province. Garfield Dunlop, my colleague from Simcoe North, stood in this House and asked for more time to travel the province and really hear first-hand feedback from the people of Ontario because we were concerned that where they were going was not right, that we could make actual improvements, particularly if we actually reached out and listened to the people at the front lines and ensured that democracy truly was in place, where we listen to those who give us the privilege of representing them. They denied that. They time-allocated it. That, to me, shows an arrogance. That shows, again, that "absolute power corrupts absolutely" may just be creeping in. I believe most large organizations, certainly governments, have fallen—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I understand the latitude granted to a debater during a debate such as this, but the member has returned repeatedly to an allegation using a word that is normally out of bounds in the Legislature regarding the government's conduct. I would ask the Speaker to ensure that standing order 23(h), which refrains the member from making an allegation, or 23(i), from imputing motive, be more strictly enforced. Perhaps the member could take this into his comments as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would remind all members of the House that the debate has to be relevant to the bill; it's important that we're talking about the bill that has been called for debate. I remind the member about temperate language and ensuring that his language conforms to what is acceptable to other members of the House.

I return to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who has the floor.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, being a relatively new member of the Legislature and not

knowing all the technicalities at this point—certainly I don't know the standing orders as well as some of my other colleagues in the House.

There are so many things that this government does in an illegal context, in a less-than-appropriate context—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the member to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Bill Walker: Withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You have to stand up and say “withdraw.”

Mr. Bill Walker: Withdraw—my apologies.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Okay.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm struggling for words, because a lot of their actions certainly lead us down a path—but what I would like, and I don't know if this is appropriate or not, because I've never had this happen to me before: May I ask the member who drew the point of order to share the word with me that I'm actually supposed to withdraw, because I don't know which word he's talking about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): There's no mechanism to allow back and forth at this point. The order of the House is clear: There are no questions and comments.

You've got the floor. I asked you to withdraw the unparliamentary comment; you did. You have the floor.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I apologize. Again, I'm not really certain why the Liberal government is concerned about what I'm saying. If it's the truth, then it may hurt, at the end of the day.

I'm going to continue on. I'm trying to use language that shows the people both listening at home and here in the House where we have concerns with this bill. I'm trying sometimes to use quotations that aren't necessarily mine, but they're general quotations out there, and I'm just trying to paint a little bit of a picture.

The other one that I find very interesting is the compensation framework. I find it interesting that, again, this bill comes in after the fact of Ornge, where Chris Mazza was paid \$9.3 million. It's very interesting how that was acceptable and fine, and they didn't ever really apologize or even want to talk about it, and now, amazingly, they want to start limiting that.

They talk about auditing organizations, and yet, if we go back to that Ornge example, there were companies that we can't even find recorded. We can't find a record so that we can go back and have a true audit to show just what may or may not have been done appropriately. So I find it, again, a little bit interesting that they're bringing out this legislation, and yet there are two very distinct examples of how that happened.

Again, if we just think of the words “accountability” and “transparency,” this government had—and has still, I believe—in place two OPP investigations into the gas plant scandals. That's unprecedented in this province's history, so it's a little bit fresh that this government wants to bring in legislation and suggest that it's actually transparent and accountable.

You can't just sit there and pretend that legislation is going to change the rules. Yes, legislation plays an abso-

lute role in this, but, as I alluded to earlier, ethics cannot be legislated. You need stringent accountability measures, and you need to see the action that follows those accountability measures if we're truly going to believe that a government is sincere and not just utilizing a rhetoric of empty words.

I'm going to return again to how many of my colleagues in this House asked numerous times for Laura Miller and Peter Faist to be able to be called in front of committee, to be able to have a discussion. They're the two people who we believe know the most about—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound has the floor. I would ask the government members to come to order so that I can hear.

The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must have hit a sore point that they're either embarrassed of, or they know I'm getting pretty close to the jugular, because they're really raising a lot of concerns about this. If they would have just let Laura Miller and Peter Faist come in front of committee to share how those emails got deleted—again, the first time that we believe it probably has ever happened, or at least the first time that we've ever been able to catch them in that act—I find it very strange.

Again, last week I asked about SAMS, that system that's supposed to be serving our most vulnerable. We want to make sure that we understand why there are so many glitches, why people aren't getting their payments or are getting overpayments or underpayments—at the end of the day, it's really impacting them significantly—so that they could come in front of committee and truly give us the front-line perspective, so that we have the people who know the most about the system and we can ensure that we can put some situations in place to prevent this from ever happening again.

1550

My biggest fear right now is that they probably haven't done a whole lot to correct it. Will it happen again next month? It raises questions about who's going to pay for these supposed little glitches. Is it going to be IBM, the company that they bought this off the shelf from, or is it going to be you and I, the taxpayers out there listening?

The other question I would raise: If they really want to be transparent and accountable, what's this going to cost us at the end of the day in all of the time and energy of the staffers that are working on this out there, and what aren't they focusing their energies on because they're fixing yet another mess-up out there?

At the end of the day, this is one of those pieces of legislation again. The title sounds very appropriate, but you really need to look back, even over my three years here—scandal after scandal after scandal, yet nobody has really lost their job over it. No one has actually lost a cabinet position from it. In fact, some have actually, you might suggest, been given bonuses or even—

Interjections: Promotions.

Mr. Bill Walker: —promotions, which is absolutely deplorable when you think of the magnitude of these things. There are people going without front-line services because of the waste of this government.

We want to see accountability. We want to see transparency. We, the PCs, will hold this government to account at every opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The time for this debate is up. Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 18, 2014, I am now required to put the question: Ms. Matthews has moved third reading of Bill 8, An Act to promote public sector and MPP accountability and transparency by enacting the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act, 2014 and amending various Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell—unless I receive a deferral notice.

I wish to inform the House that I have received a deferral notice from the chief government whip asking that the vote be deferred until tomorrow at the time of deferred votes.

Third reading vote deferred.

INVASIVE SPECIES ACT, 2014
LOI DE 2014 SUR LES ESPÈCES
ENVAHISSANTES

Mr. Mauro moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 37, An Act respecting Invasive Species / Projet de loi 37, Loi concernant les espèces envahissantes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I look to the minister to lead off the debate. Minister?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'll begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Burlington. I'm pleased to rise in the House to move second reading of Bill 37, the proposed Invasive Species Act. Our government first introduced the proposed invasive species legislation in the last session and reintroduced it last month. We remain committed to addressing this serious threat to our environment and our economy.

Ontario's natural resources provide a significant source of jobs and economic benefit for our province. It's one of the foundations of our prosperity, and it's fundamental to our quality of life. We must take stronger action to address the threats that invasive species pose.

With the proposed legislation, our government is showing leadership on this important issue. Ontario's location on the Great Lakes and our extensive trade links put us at greater risk than many other provinces. More invasive species have become established in Ontario than any other Canadian jurisdiction.

Climate change puts stress on ecosystems, making them more vulnerable to threats from invasive species. We need to act so that future generations will continue benefitting from Ontario's rich natural legacy.

Managing invasive species has always been a shared responsibility across all levels of government with industry, with environmental groups and with the public. Currently more than 20 provincial and federal acts are used in Ontario to respond to invasive species threats.

For example, the Canada Shipping Act, federal legislation, manages the discharge of ballast water; the Plant Diseases Act, which is provincial, bans the transport and sale of diseased plants, which could include an invasive insect or pathogen; and the Public Lands Act, which is provincial, allows landowners to remove some invasive plants from their shorelines.

None of these laws was designed specifically to address invasive species. If passed, the Invasive Species Act would be the first stand-alone legislation of its kind in Canada. It would complement the role of the federal government in managing invasive species, and it would promote shared accountability for managing invasive species.

In 2012, a number of ministries worked together to develop the Ontario Invasive Species Strategic Plan. The plan identified obstacles to preventing, responding to and managing invasive species. In 2013, my ministry issued a discussion paper that identified gaps in legislation that addresses invasive species. The comments we received expressed support for stronger laws to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species. In February 2014, the then Minister of Natural Resources introduced the proposed Invasive Species Act. At that time, the ministry consulted with the public through an Environmental Registry posting. Once again, we received generally positive comments from stakeholders.

Bill 37 would provide the province with better tools to prevent, control, monitor and eradicate invasive species. It would help by providing the powers to intervene earlier to help prevent invasive species from becoming established. It would give Ontario the tools to ban activities such as possessing and transporting certain invasive species. It would allow the government to enable rapid response actions to stop an invasive species from spreading. And when needed, it would help promote compliance through modernized inspection and enforcement measures. The proposed legislation uses a risk-based approach that considers the full range of threats, costs and benefits to the environment, society and the economy.

A broad range of stakeholders have expressed strong support for further action to address invasive species. These stakeholders include municipalities, conservation groups and industry. They recognize the need for stronger action to manage this threat to Ontario's economy and natural environment.

The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters is the largest conservation organization in the province. It represents outdoors recreation enthusiasts who could be

dramatically impacted by invasive species. This is what the federation executive director, Angelo Lombardo, says about the proposed legislation: “I am pleased the Ontario government has reintroduced the Invasive Species Act, a positive step in the fight against invasive species.... The sale, movement and importation of invasive species in Ontario are serious concerns.” The legislation being reintroduced by the province “will provide the minister with the much-needed tools to immediately react when a new species or threat is identified.”

The Invasive Species Centre in Sault Ste. Marie coordinates efforts among stakeholders to prevent, detect, respond to and control invasive species. Dilhari Fernando, executive director of the Invasive Species Centre, has this to say about Bill 37: “The proposed legislation is welcome and timely, and would help to set clear priorities and identify those invasive species that are posing the highest risk to Ontario’s environment, economy and social values.”

This initiative would also reinforce the importance of all stakeholders working together toward common objectives that would see invasive species being addressed in classrooms, boardrooms and at the community level.

Speaker, many of my colleagues in this House from across the province have become familiar with the problems invasive species cause in their own communities. Zebra mussels are a menace to municipal water systems, clogging intake pipes and costing the province between \$75 million and \$91 million each year to manage. Phragmites, the European common reed, is damaging beaches, and insects such as the Asian longhorned beetle threaten the health of our forests.

Also, there is the threat of species that are not currently in Ontario but may spread into our province. In northern Ontario, we face the risk of invasive pests such as the mountain pine beetle. This beetle has killed about half the total volume of commercial lodgepole pine in British Columbia. It has moved east to Alberta, where it is affecting and reproducing in Jack pine. In 2013, the infestation was within 50 kilometres of the Saskatchewan border, and it’s poised to continue to move further east. Ontario’s forest industry supports about 170,000 jobs in 240 communities, so this threat is indeed significant.

1600

Asian carp pose another very serious threat. I know that this is an issue of interest to the Speaker. These invasive fish have overwhelmed some river systems in the United States. They now make up more than 95% of the fish by weight in some areas. Recreational fishing contributes about \$2.2 billion to Ontario’s economy and attracts tourists from all around the world. Asian carp could devastate our commercial fishing industry and cost tourism jobs related to recreational fishing.

Invasive species are also a quality-of-life issue. Fishing and hunting are fundamental to the traditions of First Nations and many others in Ontario. Ontarians value our natural environment, and invasive species are a threat to the bounty of our natural areas and all our communities. A few examples: The Asian longhorn

beetle attacks hardwood trees, including all species of our iconic Canadian maple tree. The emerald ash borer may spread across the entire range of ash, causing widespread tree mortality. Water chestnut floats on the surface of the water. It forms dense clusters with sharp barbs, making swimming and boating more difficult. The sap of the giant hogweed can burn skin, causing blisters and scarring.

Once invasive species are introduced into the wild with no natural predators, they can and do, in some instances, spread quickly. Invasive species often out-compete domestic species for food, and they can destroy the habitat of native species. Invasive species are the second-largest threat to species at risk in Ontario. They are a leading cause of extinction of species globally. Two Ontario examples that I’ve mentioned already that bear repeating: Invasive phragmites releases toxins from the roots into the soil to harm and kill surrounding plants. It degrades habitat and decreases food supplies for native wildlife, including several species at risk. The invasive dog-strangling vine impacts the reproduction of the monarch butterfly, which is a species at risk. The butterflies lay their eggs on the plant, but the larvae are unable to complete their lifecycle and do not survive.

If passed, this proposed legislation would broaden the actions we can take in combatting invasive species. To manage invasive species most effectively, we must find them early and we must respond quickly because early detection and action are the most cost-effective approach, as we’ve seen with the zebra mussel. Finding new invasive species before they spread widely or become established allows us to try to eliminate populations as soon as possible. If it’s not possible to eliminate the invaders, early response could make control measures more effective and help us to reduce our costs.

Our proposed legislation would allow the government to make regulations to list invasive species and carriers of invasive species that pose a threat. Listed invasive species would be categorized as either a moderate or significant threat to the natural environment in Ontario. Importing, releasing, possessing, transporting and other actions involving an invasive species could then be banned. Examples: If a supply of wood were found to be infested with an invasive beetle, we could prevent it from being moved from one part of the province to another. Ontario could prohibit the entry of Asian carp into the province unless they were already eviscerated. The proposed act recognizes that there may be legitimate reasons, however, for possessing an invasive species, such as for research and education, and it does allow for exemptions.

No invasive species are listed in Bill 37. The proposed act would enable the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations to list the invasive species and carriers of invasive species that would be subject to the act. The proposed act would provide the minister with the authority to temporarily designate a significant-threat invasive species where the threat posed requires immediate action.

If the act is passed, extensive public consultation would occur before any species would be listed in the

regulations. Consultation would include posting proposed regulatory conditions and associated information on the environmental and regulatory registries so the public and stakeholders could review and provide their comments. Any proposed regulations regarding any invasive species would be based on risk assessments that consider the environmental, social and economic impacts. Stakeholders, including industry, would have an opportunity to review and comment on any proposed regulations before they are made or enforced.

Early detection of invasive species is key to managing them effectively. The proposed act would better enable inspection activity to help protect Ontario from invasive species where necessary.

Enforcement measures strengthen protection. In 2005—and this is important to note; we have been active on this file for some time—rules were put in place banning the transport and possession of several live invasive species, including Asian carp. Since then, enforcement officers have seized more than 40,000 pounds of Asian carp that were destined for Ontario markets. Bill 37 includes provisions allowing for strong penalties, and enforcement powers to investigate violations. If a high-risk species such as Asian carp were found in Ontario, the proposed legislation would enable rapid response actions, such as working with partners on control and eradication efforts.

Under Bill 37, there are provisions to hold those responsible accountable for the costs of control and eradication, through strong penalties and cost recovery.

Penalties are essential to ensuring effective implementation of any act. There would be a maximum fine of \$250,000 for individuals, plus possible imprisonment for up to one year. Maximum fines for corporations would be \$1 million. The penalties are aimed at providing adequate deterrents to potential violators. Fines may multiply in the case of multiple specimens or species. Fines may also be increased by the amount of monetary benefit resulting from the offence.

In addition to these penalties, upon conviction, a court may make other orders. Such orders could include remedying the harm to the natural environment that resulted from the offence.

In closing, I would like to share with the House two more supportive quotes from our stakeholders. Ducks Unlimited Canada is a leader in wetland conservation. They partner with government, industry, non-profit organizations and landowners to conserve wetlands that are critical to waterfowl, wildlife and to the environment.

Lynette Mader, manager of provincial operations for Ducks Unlimited Canada, says the following about Bill 37: “We are pleased the invasive species legislation is being reintroduced. Invasive species are a serious threat to the biodiversity of Ontario’s wetlands and waterfowl habitat. This is an important step forward in the prevention and control of risks posed by non-native plants and animal species.”

Environmental Defence is a Canadian organization that works to protect Canadians’ environment and human

health. Nancy Goucher, water program manager for Environmental Defence, supports the proposed legislation. This is what she had to say about it: “Invasive species like Asian carp are a real threat to the Great Lakes ecosystem and its fishing, boating and tourism economies. We applaud the reintroduction of the Invasive Species Act, which would allow the province to take a more proactive role in stopping new invasive species from taking hold in Ontario, and would enable the government to take action to eradicate invasive species that have become established.”

These are just two of the many stakeholders who agree that we need the proposed legislation.

These invasive species impact the lives of every Ontarian. You don’t have to be an angler or a forester to appreciate our rich natural resources. Invasive species have the potential to damage our beaches. They could decimate the urban tree canopy and devastate our forestry industry. The challenge of addressing invasive species will require all the tools that we can provide. The proposed Invasive Species Act would provide a stronger legislative framework to support the prevention, early detection, rapid response and eradication of invasive species in the province.

I am confident that all members will agree that the problem of invasive species warrants a strong action, and I would encourage them to support Bill 37.

Speaker, I thank you for your time, and I will yield the floor to my parliamentary assistant from Burlington to continue the remarks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I’m pleased to recognize the member for Burlington.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to allow me to deliver my inaugural address during debate on this bill today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Burlington is seeking unanimous consent to deliver her maiden, or inaugural, speech in this House. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Burlington.

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Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to rise and join the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry in speaking in support of Bill 37, the proposed Invasive Species Act. This proposed legislation would address a serious threat to our province. Indeed, close to my home in the riding of Burlington, the Cootes to Escarpment is the perfect example, a precious tract of land that contains more indigenous species than any other area of Canada, a number of them species at risk. Bill 37 will protect areas like the Cootes to Escarpment.

Invasive species cause significant damage to the natural environment, which results in significant ecological, economic and social costs, as the minister outlined. This is the case within Ontario, across Canada and internationally. Invasive species move into ecosystems and take over, killing or crowding out some native species. Inva-

sive species disrupt food webs, degrade habitat, introduce parasites and disease, and lead to species becoming at risk. Globally, only habitat loss is a bigger threat to biodiversity.

Mr. Speaker, on a global basis, invasive species costs are estimated to be \$1.4 trillion. That's the equivalent of 5% of the global GDP and seven times the cost of natural disasters. Industries like fishing, hunting, forestry, tourism and agriculture can all be negatively affected by invasive species. In the Great Lakes basin, invasive species foul water intakes, reduce the value of commercial and recreational fisheries and reduce property values. Every year, invasive plants cost the agriculture and forest industries in Canada about \$7.3 billion.

All invasive species pose some risk; however, some species pose a bigger threat than others. The members of this Legislature will be familiar with the Asian carp, which have damaged the ecosystems of many American lakes and rivers. There are actually four species of Asian carp: bighead, silver, grass and black carp. Our greatest concerns are bighead and silver carp, which have spread the most aggressively in the United States. They are considered one of the greatest threats to our Great Lakes.

Asian carp are voracious consumers. They eat up to 20% of their body weight each day. Everywhere they go, they eat the food supply that native fish depend on, and they crowd native species out of their habitat. The decline of native fish species could damage sport and commercial fishing right here in Ontario. Currently, there are no established populations—thank goodness—of Asian carp in Ontario waters. Preventing Asian carp from spreading in the Great Lakes is the best way to prevent harm to Ontario's native fish species.

Another species that has not yet entered Ontario is the mountain pine beetle. In British Columbia, it has destroyed millions of hectares of pine trees. Reports have predicted that climate change, a major underlying cause of the proliferation of invasive species, may allow the beetles to spread north and east. The cost of fighting the mountain pine beetle is staggering. Since 2001, the BC government has spent close to a billion dollars fighting this one insect.

Invasive plants may not be as well known, but they are also a serious threat. One of them, hydrilla, is considered one of the world's worst aquatic invaders. It can grow up to 2.5 centimetres a day, resulting in extremely dense growth that impacts boaters and swimmers. Hydrilla has not yet been detected in Canada, but it has spread rapidly throughout the United States. It is highly adaptable and thrives in many different kinds of aquatic environments.

Asian carp, the mountain pine beetle and hydrilla aren't yet established in Ontario, as I mentioned, but we are managing many invasive species that have become established here.

Some invasive species can be a threat to human health. One example is the giant hogweed, a plant introduced from Asia. Its toxic sap can cause painful burning blisters on the skin when exposed to sunlight. In addition to that threat, this plant can spread readily and shade out native plants, which can have an impact on our biodiversity.

Another invasive species that is already established in Ontario is the round goby. It is a small, bottom-dwelling fish that feeds aggressively on fish eggs, larvae and other small organisms found on lake and river bottoms. In less than a decade, the round goby has spread through all five of our Great Lakes and begun to invade inland waters. The round goby's aggressive eating habits and ability to spawn several times each season have helped them multiply and spread quickly. In fact, in some areas, the fish has reached densities of more than 100 fish per square metre. Round goby have reduced populations of sport fish and threaten several species at risk in our Great Lakes basin.

There is no question that the threat of invasive species is real and significant.

Managing the threat of invasive species is challenging and complex. It requires a coordinated approach. Indeed, managing invasive species has always been a collaborative effort across all levels of government as well as with industry, environmental groups and the public.

Ontario plans to continue to collaborate with all of those involved in invasive species management, including the federal government, which has an important national role to play in invasive species management. Indeed, I want to be clear: Our proposed Invasive Species Act is intended to complement the role of the federal government, not duplicate or take over their responsibility. The proposed Invasive Species Act will enable Ontario to use its own framework to determine an appropriate course of action.

Preventing invasive species from arriving and becoming established in Ontario is critical in our fight against this growing threat. Evidence has shown that the costs of preventing invasive species from becoming established through taking immediate action are generally much lower than the costs of controlling an established invasive species. Like so many things, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

We know that there may be many circumstances that arise where immediate and urgent action is required to eliminate or reduce the spread of an invasive species. This could happen if a new invasive species is found in Ontario or an existing invasive species is found in a new area of the province. The proposed legislation will help by allowing the government to intervene earlier and enable rapid response actions. This could include working with partners to stop an invasive species from spreading: for example, by preventing or restricting the movement of contaminated firewood.

Mr. Speaker, as I noted earlier, addressing the threat of invasive species is a collaborative effort. I would like to take a few minutes to highlight a few of the many enduring partnerships our government has built in the area of invasive species management and education. We place tremendous value on these relationships, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our ministry stakeholders for their valuable advice and for giving of their time and talents to enrich our public policy work as a government. Ontario works with the

Great Lakes states and the US and Canadian governments to prevent aquatic invasive species, such as Asian carp, from entering the Great Lakes. Indeed, there is a federal office in my riding of Burlington which is doing extensive work in this area.

We have been working with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters for more than two decades to deliver the Invading Species Awareness Program. The program raises awareness of the threat of invasive species to Ontario's biodiversity. It engages the public in preventing and controlling the spread, and monitoring the distribution, of invasive species. This program also operates the Invading Species Hotline to give the public an avenue to report sightings, seek information and request educational material on invasive species.

More recently, we established the Invasive Species Centre in Sault Ste. Marie to work with the federal government and other partners to address invasive forest and aquatic species and invasive plants. Ontario has provided approximately \$9.7 million towards the establishment and operation of this centre.

Partnerships such as these are helping us to protect our natural environment and industries that contribute thousands of jobs to our economy. One example is recreational fishing, an industry that contributes about \$2.2 billion to Ontario's economy and is also a notable contributor to our tourism industry. Ontario will continue to collaborate and work with these partners and, if passed, the proposed Invasive Species Act could help us expand the use of strategic partnerships.

The proposed act would provide the minister with authority to enter into agreements to help us prevent, detect, control and eradicate invasive species. As such, the legislation will provide us with the tools we need to protect our environment and our economy. Under the proposed act, regulations could be made to prohibit certain activities to help prevent the spread of an invasive species. Agreements could identify exemptions that would be necessary to achieve desired outcomes. For example, an agreement with a local conservation partner could allow the partner to undertake a program to control species such as garlic mustard. The partner would be able to possess the plant during the control activities and then dispose of it properly.

As I said earlier, managing invasive species is a responsibility shared with other governments, industry, environmental groups and the public. In fact, Ontarians can report sightings of invasive species to help us detect new ones and monitor the spread of those that are more established.

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We can all play a role in protecting Ontario's biodiversity. How can we do this? By planting non-invasive species in gardens, by never releasing bait or any wildlife into nature, by washing our boats before moving them to another body of water, and by buying firewood locally and leaving what we don't use.

We need to engage all Ontarians in doing their part to protect species and habitats, and as policy-makers, we

need to do our part as well, by taking a leadership role with this proposed legislation. The proposed Invasive Species Act would help limit the social and economic impacts of invasive species by preventing them from becoming established, controlling their spread once they are here, and eradicating them if possible. As such, I would encourage all members of this House to support this critical legislation. I look forward to today's discussion and the debate to come.

In the meantime, it is my honour and pleasure to stand in this House and spend some time talking about my journey to public life, to talk about what I hope to accomplish and bring to public service during my time here and thank the people who have helped me along the way.

It is worth noting that in strict terms this is my inaugural speech, Mr. Speaker, and that I have already had the honour and privilege of speaking on a number of occasions, to items that are not just of local interest and concern to the people of my riding of Burlington, but to Ontarians as well.

I must say that I am rather glad to have had these two months to begin to become accustomed to this historic and storied place and the work that we do here. As such, I can now look back on the past few months with a bit of perspective and experience.

If this speech were to have a theme, I would say that it is gratitude. There are many people to thank and many things to be grateful for. Let me begin by thanking the people of Burlington for the confidence they expressed in me on June 12. I am humbled by that confidence, and I look forward to serving them in this place, and to working with them towards improving the quality of life of all of the people in our beautiful city.

It is an honour and a privilege to have this opportunity to make a difference in people's lives, to be entrusted with their hopes and dreams, as well as their challenges. I'm grateful to have the chance to work on behalf of such an extraordinary community, and with such kind and generous people.

I would like to take a moment to offer a sincere thank-you to my predecessor, Jane McKenna, for her sacrifices and service in representing the riding of Burlington since 2011.

Applause.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Yes. Since my election, I have come to know what Jane knew during her three years of able service here: The hours are long, the time away from family significant. Thank you, Jane, for representing Burlington in this place so ably.

On our first day of orientation, we were reminded that, of the 13 million people who call Ontario home, we are but 107. "How fortunate am I?" I thought, and I know that many of my colleagues feel the same. We came here with a sense of purpose and excitement, and with a desire to serve.

My colleague the Honourable Ted McMeekin is fond of quoting Bobby Kennedy. Ted volunteered for Bobby on one of his campaigns, and he heard him say about his

passion for making change: “Don’t get mad, don’t get even—get elected.” I think that call to action embodies the desire that most of us have here to make a difference in the lives of the people we serve, to work as diligently as we can on their behalf and to do so with a listening ear and an open heart.

Let me talk for just a minute, if I may, about another reason I’m grateful to the people of Burlington. I am not from Burlington. I was born in Windsor, Ontario. I came to Burlington in 2005. My late husband and I chose Burlington. He was an OPP officer, and to a certain degree we had a choice of where we wanted to live in the GTHA. We chose Burlington for its beauty and for its people, and for our families. My brother and his wife have called Burlington home for over 20 years. During that time, as a result of numerous visits, we fell in love with Burlington and decided to settle there, which we did in the summer of 2005.

Since that time, my affection and my ties to the community have deepened. Burlington has been very good to me, and I’d like to thank my friends and my community for their warm embrace. Since becoming your MPP, your kindness and your graciousness have been nothing short of overwhelming. I’m grateful to you for making this native of Windsor feel right at home in Burlington.

I can honestly say that there is no more beautiful place to live in our province than Burlington. I’m delighted to have this opportunity—

Interjections.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: That may be a moment of debate.

I’m grateful to have this opportunity to thank everyone who helped me during the election campaign this past June. To our extraordinary volunteers, our wonderful staff—most especially, our dedicated campaign manager—our generous donors, and to the members of the Burlington Riding Association, the words “thank you” don’t seem quite enough. Your support and your encouragement, your confidence expressed in me as your candidate, your kind words of comfort when I needed it most—for all of this and so much more, thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Your support for me helped me during the election campaign, and it will serve to guide me in my work as the first Liberal in Burlington in 71 years. Our celebration on election night was one I shall never forget, and nothing short of extraordinary. Thank you for being there for me.

Perhaps most memorable was the presence of my family on election night. It has been said, and it’s true, that to do this job truly requires a support network unlike any other. I am truly blessed with an extraordinary group of siblings, their spouses, and my nieces and nephews.

Most of all, I was proud of the fact that my mother, Marie McMahon, was there with me. When we learned that I had won, we were standing in the foyer of my brother’s home. In an exchange I will never forget, my mother turned to me and said, “Your dad would be so proud.” It was a touching moment, to be sure, but it brought home to me, as indeed did my decision to run,

that I was truly fortunate to have been raised by two extraordinary people, who taught my brothers and sisters and I about the true meaning of working hard, giving back and community service.

My dad, Hugh McMahon, died in 1994 of cancer. Dad worked hard all his life. His family was his greatest joy. His own childhood was marked by challenging moments, from growing up during the Depression, to the start of the Second World War. Dad enlisted in the Canadian army at the age of 16; he lied about his age. He went overseas and served his country as part of the Canadian First Regiment. He landed in Sicily, saw action during the Italian campaign and later took part in the liberation of Holland.

A proud moment for me came in 2007 while attending, with an official delegation from Burlington city hall, the city of Apeldoorn, one of Burlington’s twin cities. We visited the Canadian War Cemetery in Nijmegen. A number of soldiers from my father’s unit are buried there, and his regimental crest is in the Apeldoorn city hall.

Dad returned to Canada after the war and married my mother, Marie, in 1948. He attended university briefly in Toronto and returned to Windsor, where he worked at Chrysler until 1981. Seven children followed, as did a life of community service in the militia and with many local organizations.

My mother, who I think is watching today, is a shining light for me. Mum will be 89 on Thursday. She was born in Glasgow and grew up in Windsor. A pioneer in so many ways and a strong believer in education, Mum attended Assumption University, then part of the University of Windsor. She got a science degree and served as a laboratory technologist at Windsor’s Grace Hospital for most of her career.

She and Dad both felt very strongly that education provided a gateway of opportunity, and they encouraged us in every way possible. Mum was adamant, too, that as women—there were five of us girls—we must have our independence, our own income and the ability to make our own decisions.

Mum is tiny in stature but mighty in every other sense of the word. Her love for her children, her care and concern for others and her utter selflessness have shaped my life in amazing ways. I would not be standing here today without her.

To you, Mum, I offer my undying love and thanks. Thank you for making me feel like I could do anything. Thank you for always being there for me, and for your wisdom and your friendship.

To my siblings: I’m truly grateful to you for your encouragement and support. I am so lucky to have such a tremendous group of ardent supporters and cheerleaders. As the youngest of all of you, I have benefited from your wisdom—and your mistakes—your advice, your terrific humour and your wit. You offer me a hand up when I need it, and no request is too much. When I told you I wanted to run, you were worried about the rigours of the debate and the demands of the job. After dutifully expressing your concerns to your younger sister, you were there from day one. Thank you all.

Earlier, I spoke of my parents as people who inspired me to public service. I grew up in a house where the mantra was, “To whom much is given, much is expected.” Speaking of my mother, I should add that her personal commitment to her family and her community was recently recognized. Mum recently got a volunteer award from Hospice Windsor in recognition of her 30 years of service as a volunteer.

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Applause.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Yes. Thank you.

Every Thursday Mum cooks lunch with her friend for the past 70-plus years, Mabel Gagnier, for hospice patients and their families. I know that Mum is loved by her hospice family, but I know too, because she’s told me this, that she gets as much out of this experience as she gives. Her stories of people who are in the most difficult and challenging of circumstances serve to bring a necessary perspective to her life and to mine as we reflect on what is important. As you can see, from my mother I learned empathy and compassion.

Speaking earlier this year to the CEO of the Carpenter Hospice in Burlington, I was reflecting on the same theme: the events that shape our lives and the people who inspire us. As we all know, one of the best parts of this job is the opportunity to attend events and meet the wonderful people in your riding. Well, it was very early in my job as an MPP that I truly understood what Burlington is made of, and it is strong stuff indeed.

On the evening of August 4, a once-in-100-years storm brought 200 millimetres of rain to Burlington in just six hours. This rain is the equivalent of the amount of precipitation that Burlington would see in July and August together. This devastating storm flooded our streets and people’s homes. A rush of water filled people’s basements and over 3,100 homes were damaged. As the unrelenting rain fell that night, reports began to pour in of flooding on the 407, the QEW, Fairview and New Streets, Brant, Guelph, Walkers Line and Appleby Line; all flooded, our major north-south arterial roads. The water overwhelmed Burlington’s sewage system, which at capacity is built for three million litres an hour. At the height of the storm, this reached 10 million litres.

People’s basements filled in mere moments as creeks overflowed their banks. Visiting devastated homes the next day on Regal Road, among the hardest hit, I met people who fled with their children, their animals and a few precious memories as water filled their basements within minutes. Seeing their anguish, not to mention the contents of their homes on their front lawns, was heart-wrenching.

On the 5th, I got on the phone, but many people were calling, too, wondering how they could help. My colleagues were there, and I’d like to thank them. The member from Halton; the Minister of Labour, the member from Oakville, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, all in neighbouring ridings, were there, offering a friendly word of advice. Thank you.

Applause.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Yes.

But it was the response of our community that was so remarkable. I reached out to the mayor that evening. He was travelling back from his cottage in response to the disaster. His own home was flooded. He hit the ground running the next day, and as we travelled door to door together, it became apparent that greater assistance was needed.

On the night of the flood and in the days that followed, our EMS personnel were extraordinary. Our front-line police officers, firefighters, paramedics—all were there, doing an amazing job rescuing people from their flooded vehicles and responding to those in need.

Later on, with the assistance of the region of Halton, the Red Cross came to our aid and did an extraordinary job quantifying the amount of flooding and the impact on people’s lives. Together we mobilized community support. I called the CEO of United Way, and 72 hours later they had a website portal up and running to collect donations.

The mayor, working with our regional chair, mobilized staff. City and regional staff began the process of responding to those in need and going door to door. As the scope of the disaster became clear, city council met and declared a state of emergency, triggering an Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program request.

On the community side, donations poured in and the community foundation stepped up, offering much-needed volunteer and fundraising support. The CEO of the community foundation, Colleen Mulholland, and her team have done an extraordinary job. Under the chairmanship of Ron Foxcroft, the disaster relief committee has worked hand in hand with the community foundation to raise funds, and to date, I am proud to say that our generous community has contributed close to \$1 million to help their neighbours in need.

Indeed, one of the truly wonderful things about Burlington is how generous our community really is. In 2010, 30% of Burlingtonians contributed to a charitable cause, higher than the provincial average of 24.5%.

During the summer, I attended many events which contributed to the flood relief, raising funds and rallying the community, from neighbourhood fundraisers like the Up the Creek event started by some neighbours whose street and homes were flooded—they raised \$20,000—to our Rotary Club’s Ribfest event, which raised thousands of dollars as well. There I was, side by side at the door, raising money with buckets, mayor and city councillors right beside me.

While the scope of the disaster made for a challenging summer for our community, and while much of the hard work remains to be done by the committee as they adjudicate requests for funding, I am proud to say that on November 10, my colleague, the member from Halton, and I announced that our government would be contributing up to \$3 million to support Burlington and its flood relief. For a new MPP, this was an extraordinarily proud moment.

Speaker, the election provided me with an excellent opportunity to speak to some of the opportunities and

challenges facing our community. During that time and since, I've had many conversations about the kind of Burlington we all want now and into the future. Burlington has one of the highest median incomes in Canada and we enjoy an excellent quality of life overall. Still, there are challenges. As the recent Vital Signs report by the Burlington Community Foundation shows, Burlington has one of the oldest populations in the GTHA. While most of our seniors are aging successfully, over 5% of them are living in poverty. More broadly, close to 8% or over 13,000 of our residents in Burlington are living in low-income households. When it comes to housing, access to affordable housing remains a barrier to many.

When it comes to employment, Burlington is doing well, with stronger employment levels than Ontario as a whole. The number of jobs is up 7% and the number of businesses is up 4% since the 2012 employment survey.

To maintain this excellent quality of life, I've had conversations about how, as a community, we can work together to tackle some of our challenges. Burlington is built out; therein lies another challenge. Our growth will come from infill and density. With growth comes the need for stronger transportation networks. I look forward to working with city hall, our region, local businesses, citizens' groups and my colleagues in the House on creating transit hubs in Burlington and encouraging the kinds of alternative transportation—cycling and walking—that will make our community more connected and more liveable, and attract investment.

Issues such as food security, investing in our agri-food sector, which is a strong sector locally, and continued investments in health and education will continue to dominate my conversations in the months and years to come and remain areas of strong local focus. In particular, youth and adolescent mental health is another area which is in significant need of focus, as demonstrated again by our community foundation and their work. I've also had terrific conversations about how, working together, we can find solutions to these important issues.

On a final note, Mr. Speaker, I started this speech talking about what brought me here and what I hope to accomplish. I want to close my remarks by mentioning someone who's no longer here but who had and continues to have a very positive impact on my life. On June 6, 2006, my late husband, Greg Stobbart, a veteran OPP officer with 24 years of experience in policing, was killed by a careless driver. Greg died, not in the line of duty, but doing something he loved. We were training for a triathlon. He had recently purchased a new bike, and with a beautiful day beckoning, set out on a training ride from which he never returned. Greg's tragic death at the age of 44 in a senseless collision was a life-changing event for me, for my family and for his as well. His legacy lives on in me and my desire to continue in this place the work that I started to create a more bicycle-friendly Ontario.

Our response to Greg's death came on many fronts. First, working with then-Minister of Transportation the Honourable Jim Bradley, we changed the Highway Traffic Act. In 2009, after sustained advocacy, we got

Greg's Law passed, increasing the penalties on suspended drivers based on similar legislation in six other provinces. The man who killed Greg had five convictions for driving under suspension, four convictions for driving with no licence, \$15,000 in unpaid fines, and two months after he killed my husband, he hit someone else.

As you can imagine, Mr. Speaker, this instilled in us the importance of focusing on that advocacy and securing those changes to the Highway Traffic Act. Our goal was to prevent others from going through what we did, and we wanted to get those repeat offenders out from behind the wheel and off the road. Greg's Law became the law of Ontario in October 2009.

Second, we launched the Share the Road Cycling Coalition in Ontario in 2008. Share the Road has become the provincial cycling policy and advocacy organization, representing thousands of local organizations, cyclists, stakeholders and municipal leaders from across Ontario, united in a vision of safer communities for all road users.

In 2012, I had the privilege of sitting on the coroner's review into cycling deaths in Ontario and secured a recommendation for an Ontario cycling strategy. Together with the Honourable Glen Murray, who was then Minister of Transportation, I launched that strategy, the first of its kind in Ontario in over 20 years, in September 2013, a proud moment.

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In Greg's memory, and in memory of all the cyclists who have been killed and injured, I look forward to continuing the work we started at Share the Road. Together with all members of this House, given the tremendous benefits of cycling, I look forward to making our communities and our province even more bike-friendly in the years to come.

In the interim, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you and my colleagues and all the members of this House for their gracious welcome, for your friendship and your support, for this opportunity to share my thoughts with you and for the privilege of being the MPP for Burlington.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: It is my pleasure to respond. I'm going to miss the minister's speech and just go straight to the member from Burlington and her maiden speech. They are always special speeches, because you learn so much about the member's family and what brought them to the Legislature.

I've learned a few things today. The member's mother was born in Glasgow, as my mother was born in Glasgow, and that she comes from a large family—the youngest of a large family. She certainly has a very close relationship with her mother. Of course, I already knew the other connection was her husband, Greg—who, unfortunately, as she described, was killed by a suspended driver—an OPP officer. My spouse is an OPP officer as well, so more connections than I realized. I certainly want to congratulate the member on her maiden speech.

Also, she thanked the past member for Burlington for her work. I know that Jane McKenna has been out to some community events, and she says how nice you have been to her at those events. So that's nice to hear as well.

I do take exception with the comment that Burlington is the most beautiful place in Ontario or the world, I think she said, especially when I know that she has got a cottage in Wasauksing First Nation in Parry Sound district on beautiful Georgian Bay, which I'm sure is more beautiful than Burlington. So I just want to get that on the record, Mr. Speaker.

I congratulate her for the work that she has done. I know that certainly with Share the Road Cycling Coalition—she has been a huge part of that. I've had the pleasure of working with her on paved shoulders, and I look forward to continue working with her with the Parry Sound active transportation committee. She sat in on a meeting last week, and I know they have a few things they'd like to accomplish: Highway 559, Highway 124, a connection into Parry Sound. We look forward to completing those in the near future.

Congratulations on your maiden speech.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Indeed, it's an honour and a thrill to be able to respond to the new member from Burlington, a friend of mine for many years.

One of her favourite sayings, which she didn't use today, was, "You can take the girl from Windsor, but you can't take Windsor from the girl." That was ever so evident today, I think, when she went out of her way to thank Jane McKenna for the work that she has done. Jane was also a friend to many of us here. I think that showed a lot of class when you did that.

Most of us knew the new member from Burlington—when I was on the board of AMO and on the board of FCM, Ms. McMahon would be there with her cycling activists reminding us of the importance of active living and cycling. We got to know her very well there.

What she didn't tell us today, Speaker, is that her political pedigree goes back many years. I mean, we have mutual friends in Shaughnessy Cohen—the late Shaughnessy Cohen. She used to work for Herb Gray, Paul Martin, Jean Chrétien—a lot of very important Liberals—and did very well with them as well, Speaker, and with the press corps in Ottawa.

I'm especially pleased that she mentioned her mom, Marie. Marie is a terrific lady. I have reason to believe that—well, prior to the new member from Burlington joining the Liberal Party, I believe Marie was one of my supporters. Hi, Marie! Nice to see you.

We also share the fact that our dads were in the military.

It is a real treat, Speaker, to share any time that we can with the new member from Burlington. You did a great job in your inaugural address.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: This is one of those two-minuters you wish was a four-minuter, because I want to

reference off the top how pleased I am to see Bill 37 moving forward, the invasive species legislation. It's certainly very, very important, one that I hope will get the support of the opposition. We will become the only jurisdiction with stand-alone legislation on invasive species.

We all know how important it is that we deal with the challenge of that. As a former Minister of Natural Resources, I am very, very conscious of that, so I congratulate the minister for bringing it forward and again hope that there will be strong support on the other side of the House for this legislation moving forward.

I will now use my time, if I may, to address my good friend and colleague from Burlington on this opportunity that she had to make her inaugural address. I've got to tell you, I've been here in the Legislature now for a number of years and it absolutely brought me back to my own inaugural address many years ago. I think what you conveyed in such a touching way was just how incredibly important it is for us to be given this extraordinary privilege and honour to represent our constituents—all our constituents. That way, it's a strangely non-partisan activity that we have, and it's our job to do so. You addressed it in such a warm fashion.

The reference to your family—it's impossible not to have a first address where you don't speak about your parents and your loved ones, who have made such a difference and supported you to be able to get to this place that we watch on TV. Again, the member for Windsor-Tecumseh referenced your political pedigree. It's indeed impressive.

You and I have been friends for a long time, but the long and the short of it is that you're doing a great job already. You've got a lot of class, and you care about people the way that I believe all of us in this Legislature ultimately do. I congratulate and thank you, and I congratulate the minister for bringing forward this important legislation.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I too want to add my congratulations to the member from Burlington on her inaugural speech. I've only been here a short time myself—just over three years, I think. I can remember, when I did my first speech, what a thrill it was and what a very nervous time it was. I'm not used to speaking in front of a large crowd, especially one that has been here for many years and has a lot more experience than I do.

I was most impressed with your talk about invasive species. It's something that we in rural Ontario and certainly around the lakes have gotten to know. I can think back to the time of Dutch elm disease, which is probably the most major one that I can remember. Now we have the emerald ash borer attacking our trees throughout southern Ontario. I think it has probably gotten to the north right now. We have to be on guard for that, and I'm certainly glad that you brought that up. I know that on the farm that we used to live on, we could see it in our bush, in our ash trees—the borer and its effects.

Family is so important to any MPP. I know that when I decided to get involved in this life, my wife played a very large part in my deciding to do this. I know your family is very important to you. We can't do this job without our family. That's the short and the long of it.

I would also like to say that I have a Windsor connection too. I was born in Windsor and spent the first 18 years of my life on a farm just east of Cottam. You might know where Cottam is; it's just a little town. We had orchards there. We grew peaches and pears, and a bit of cash crop besides that.

Thank you so much for your speech today. You showed a lot of passion, and I'm sure you'll do well at this position.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We return to the member for Burlington for her response.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'd like to thank the members of the House and in particular the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and the member from Perth–Wellington.

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On reflection, two things, I guess: The first is that, having now had the opportunity to speak to my colleagues and tell you a little bit about where I'm from, why I ran and why we're all here, I think what this speaks to is the unity of purpose in this House. On any given day, politics is a passionate and sometimes blood sport, and people exchange their views in this place in sometimes vociferous and passionate ways. But at the end of the day, what these remarks from my generous colleagues pointed out is that we're all here because we want the same thing: We want to work hard on behalf of the people who sent us here.

Percy mentioned one of my former bosses, the Honourable Jean Chrétien. I'll share with the House a conversation I had with Mr. Chrétien, who called me after I was elected—it was a great thrill. I asked him for his biggest piece of advice, and he said, "Never, ever forget the people of Burlington." The people of Burlington were the number one reason I was here, and despite all the other trappings of public life—and we all know they are there—to never forget the people who sent me.

I learned that lesson, too, from the Honourable Herb Gray, who was an ardent constituency member. I used to joke that Mr. Gray would take a constituency call in the bathroom. As the member from Windsor–Tecumseh knows, having been a member of the fifth estate, Mr. Gray was nothing if not incredibly dedicated to the people of Windsor.

Those are the experiences I've had. These are the things that have shaped me. I want to thank again the members of this House. I want to thank the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry as well for being such an able minister, and for allowing me the chance to speak to this important legislation on invasive species today. Again, thank you, colleagues, for your very generous remarks.

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

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I too would like to congratulate the member from Burlington on her inaugural speech and welcome her to the Legislature. I look forward to working with her over the next few years.

I'm also pleased to rise to the opportunity to speak today to Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act. I'm going to start off by saying that at this particular time, our party will be supporting this legislation. We've heard from many stakeholders, and they too support the legislation, but we're waiting to hear from some more. So, at this point, going forward, we will be supporting this legislation.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank a couple of members of the PC caucus who started working on this file many, many years ago. Sitting behind me right now is MPP Toby Barrett from Haldimand–Norfolk, who has been a champion on the Asian carp issue throughout Ontario and continues to be. He even toured the United States Senate committee hearings in order to see action initiated on Asian carp so it didn't invade our waters in Canada, and I applaud him for his efforts.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank the former member from Oshawa, Jerry Ouellette, who served this Legislature with distinction for a number of years, including serving as Minister of Natural Resources for a time. Jerry's input to this Legislature over the years has truly benefitted not only Ontario but Canada and the movement for a safe, clean and natural environment for everyone throughout the country.

In doing so, Jerry did participate in a speech back last April, I believe, or February—one of those months—where he spoke on the Invasive Species Act. Before I get into my speech, I just want to highlight some of the things that Jerry brought up, because his voice will be missed here. They're just items that I think should be put into the record, carrying this bill forward. So if you wouldn't mind me just reading some of what Jerry Ouellette brought forward in his debate on the Invasive Species Act—I'm quoting Jerry now:

"In some of the previous research that I had done, groups like the Federation of Ontario Naturalists had identified three specific types of invaders. There were natural invaders, accidental invaders and intentional invaders. Some of the natural invaders were some of the opossum or the white-tailed deer that slowly migrated north into Ontario and started to become resident...."

The "Federation of Ontario Naturalists at that time listed ... accidental invaders, such as what happened in 1959, when the St. Lawrence Seaway was opened up. It allowed the sea lamprey to come into the Great Lakes."

I'm going to talk about the sea lamprey later on and the devastating effect it has had on commercial fishing throughout the Great Lakes. At that time, it did devastate the fishing industry.

Jerry also talks about a concern in the bill, which I will also emphasize, but I will reiterate Jerry: "We very much appreciate the inspections and the warrant that is required to enter a place or dwelling," allowing members of the

MNR—conservation officers—when they think an invasive species is inside a dwelling or a home, they have to get a warrant. “However, when you go further into the legislation later on, there doesn’t appear to be a warrant required for entering properties that may contain invasive species.” Jerry, at that time, had a concern about that part of the legislation; we do, as well, carrying on as the PC Party, so you’ll hear more about that as I go forward.

Jerry later on talks about the intentional invader that he mentioned earlier, “which can be used to counter some of the actions of things like purple loosestrife or beetles introduced to kill off the plant. We have to make sure this beetle doesn’t become a problem later on.” What Jerry is basically saying here is that sometimes to fight invasive species you have to introduce a predator to that invasive species to take care of it. However, at the same time, we have to ensure that that invasive species that we introduce “doesn’t become a problem later on” down the road. So Jerry was very insightful to ensure that this comes out in discussion and debate at this Legislature.

Another thing that Jerry does talk about is the fact that the minister can give permission for the conservation officers, when they are accessing property, to take other people along with them. The current concern that Jerry has brought forward is the fact of: Who are these people that are coming onto the properties? Could it possibly be OSPCA inspectors coming on board to look for things that aren’t really related to the Invasive Species Act? It’s kind of an opportunity for other agencies to hop on board with conservation officers with regard to inspection for invasive species and looking for other things.

Mind you, at this point you don’t need a warrant to do that, and that is a huge concern. It’s basically looking at the intent of the legislation, as Jerry says.

He mentions Minister Leal. “I know the member from Peterborough—knowing his rural community, some of the farming community would have concerns about these sorts of things happening, and establishing guidelines or the ability to ensure that the correct individuals—that the intent of the legislation is being followed out. Many times we bring these things forward, and the intent sometimes happens to open up doors for other activities that cannot be part of the intent.”

This Legislature definitely, when creating legislation, has the right intent behind the laws, but as they’re interpreted down the road it could deviate from the intent, causing unforeseen problems. That’s when we start getting phone calls in our constituency offices about land rights, per se, in this one.

The other aspect which I do agree with—and I’ve heard from my stakeholders—that Jerry brings up is that there “doesn’t appear to be any funding specifically allocated that’s going to ... ensure that what needs to be done gets done in the province of Ontario.” Jerry realizes that “the ministry is trying to look at ways of cost recovery. We constantly read petitions, because there are some strong concerns about the hunting and fishing regulations are not being readily available ... and accessible to individuals.”

The point is that the ministry has now cut back, and now hunters and anglers aren’t getting access to the regulations. It’s pretty hard, when you’re out on a boat in the middle of Lake Erie, to pick up a signal on your cellphone and actually download the regulations that you’re supposed to have on hand.

What Jerry is basically saying is that there have been no funds allocated to enforcing this new Invasive Species Act. From what I’ve heard from conservation authorities across the province, without any new funding available for this Invasive Species Act, it’s going to be very, very hard for anybody to deal with the wide array of invasive species throughout this province, especially phragmites.

Speaking of phragmites, Jerry Ouellette goes on and talks quite a bit about the MTO having to be involved with the solutions. It’s not just one ministry specifically. The fact that if you drive along the 400-series highways—particularly, in my area, the 402 and the 401—you’ll notice nothing but phragmites all the way down the sides of the 401, and on the median as well. It’s a terribly noxious weed, and I will also touch on phragmites during my speech.

I just thought I’d take the opportunity to reiterate what Jerry had spoken about during his last few months here at the Legislature, and to thank him again—and Toby Barrett behind me—for quite a bit of the activity and work they have done on invasive species.

Basically, Bill 37 is a bill that’s about time. If you look across the province at the number of invasive species that we do have, we’re behind the eight ball.

1700

I’m glad the ministry has brought this bill forward again. It’s not perfect; I don’t think any bill that ever comes to this Legislature is perfect. However, I am hoping that this government does take the time to listen to the opposition’s concerns, and stakeholders’ concerns, and make amendments, not time-allocate the bill and not time-allocate committee. This is a very important bill for our natural resources, our environment, throughout the province, and they need to take the time to listen not only to the opposition but to the stakeholders and make change.

I feel this bill is a more reactive bill than a proactive bill. I’d like to see a bill that prevents the invasive species from entering our environment. This bill is mainly dealing with, “They’re going to be here no matter what. Let’s deal with them.” Once an invasive species takes hold, it’s pretty hard to get rid of them, and they become an expense that is lifelong. Spending a little bit more of the money at the start, to prevent an invasive species from entering our province, in the long term is a far better cost-saver than waiting for them to come and then dealing with the invasive species.

The bill talks about four points for a species to be qualified as an invasive species. You look at the biological characteristics, mainly how the species is going to interact with the ecosystem, and what effects they will have on other species within the environment.

They also look at whether they’re available to disperse throughout the environment. How much are these

invasive species going to take over the environment and grow beyond the area that they infect? In fact, if you look at phragmites, they're just drying out our wetlands and wreaking havoc in our farmers' fields.

Number 3 is the threat: What threat do they pose? Again, if I go back to phragmites, for instance, phragmites not only grows wildly but also chokes out all the other vegetation and plant life around it by releasing toxins into the soil so they cannot grow. Or you look at Asian carp, which is just on the cusp of entering our waters, and how they will reproduce four times a year. I found that quite troubling. Population control is unbelievable. Not only that, but they of course will compete with our current native fish stock. Also, they jump out of the water, and to boaters, jet skiers, water skiers and anglers, that could be quite a hazard to have these fish jumping all over the place.

Number 4 is the impact on society and the economics. I think a very important consideration to be made in this legislation is, what's the economic impact on areas throughout the province? You look at the commercial fishing industry based in Wheatley, Ontario, which is in the Chatham-Kent riding. The second-biggest port for commercial fishing is in Port Stanley, which is in Elgin county, naturally, in my riding. The effect of these Asian carp on commercial fishing—it provides well-paying jobs for people. It's hard work. Not a lot of people like to do the commercial fishing role. But for those who are participants in the commercial fishing industry, the devastation that Asian carp could possibly make to that sector of the economy could really hurt Port Stanley and Wheatley, and really generate higher sales for food, if the fishing agency is devastated. Just look at what happened out in eastern Canada when their fishing industry disappeared, the effects it had throughout the eastern provinces. We'll feel that same effect here.

It's very important that these matters are looked at very quickly. Hopefully, the bureaucratic process that is created in order to identify invasive species isn't as cumbersome as the member from Oxford was saying about getting the relief funding, for disaster relief from the storm; it has taken up to two years just to get through the bureaucratic process. We can't have a process that is that cumbersome when dealing with these invasive species, because if they do invade the area, we need to act as quickly as possible to avoid their spread and their economic devastation to the area.

Those are the four points that the ministry is going to use to determine if a species is in fact an invasive species or not.

Again, I prefer the proactive route to prevent them from coming in—what measures can we take to ensure that they don't enter our environment?—as opposed to reactive. We do need the reactive part of this bill, definitely, to deal with what we have to deal with already, because we are so, so far behind the eight ball.

I thought I'd just go through the bill and outline some of the situations that will occur during this bill and maybe highlight some points that I think need better

clarification or more discussion before we get this bill into committee. Again, I'll keep on this: Let's not time-allocate this. Let's keep the debate open for everybody, and let's have a truly good committee process where we can let Ontarians—we're going to have to leave Toronto on this committee, guys. There are not a lot of invasive species in downtown Toronto because there's not a lot of environment—there's a lot of cement, and I'm pretty sure cement is not going to be invaded by invasive species.

We've got to talk to people in the north—the forest industry. We've got to come down to the south where there's the phragmites and the agriculture—we've got to go to eastern Ontario. We've got to tour around the Great Lakes. We've got to hear from the people who are drastically affected by the invasive species. They have to have their input, and they're not going to be able to drive to Toronto to have it, because they're working hard every day, and to take a whole day off to come here for five minutes—it's not the right thing to do with this legislation.

I'm hoping the government House leader is listening to this debate and will take those points seriously, because it's important that we hear from Ontarians on such an important piece of legislation. As was said before in committee during our rushed process, if you rush through legislation, you're going to get unintended consequences down the road, and when you get unintended consequences down the road, then we're going to bring legislation back here to fix it, because it's usually costly to the system.

I would like to get this bill done correctly, maybe take the extra month to get it passed, and ensure that at the end of the day we have an Invasive Species Act that is good for all Ontarians and not needing to cause commotion and problems to our farmers or landowners, or just about anybody who enjoys the use of their land or the natural resources that we do have.

This bill will enact the Invasive Species Act, and will have the identification of invasive species and carriers throughout the province.

“The minister may authorize a person in writing to engage in activities that would otherwise be prohibited. The authorizations” would be “issued for purposes set out in section 10” of the bill. “An authorization may be amended or revoked by the minister.” Basically, the minister will now be able to allow people to engage in an activity that they have banned over the last few years, most likely with regard to pesticides or herbicides, where you can't get access to them in this province anymore. This will allow the minister to allow landowners to get access to those pesticides or herbicides to deal with the invading species. Mr. Speaker, I just hope, again, that the bureaucratic process that it takes to deal with accessing these needed agents to destroy the invading species is not too burdensome.

I just want to go through some of my concerns with the bill before we go forward here. Invasive species have the potential to impact Ontario's economy. We've talked about that. Ontario's location within the Great Lakes

basin and its shared border with numerous jurisdictions puts our province at greater risk for invasive species. Basically, we have so much border with the Americans that are in the waterway in southern Ontario that the threat of aquatic invasive species is quite high. We need to ensure that we have the partnerships going forward with the Americans so that we can go down on their side of the lakes and deal with the invasive species as more of a proactive approach as opposed to waiting for them to fail in their efforts and the invading species comes forward.

The approach of the act is to create a discretionary species blacklist, which requires harm from a species to be identified before it's regulated. Again, that's a reactive approach. It's reactive because you wait until you figure out the species is harmful as opposed to studying the species beforehand—a lot of people call that a proactive list.

The pathways approach is another idea that I would put forward. If this government could adopt more of a pathways approach when dealing with invasive species: The regulation of the invasive species is based on the risk of species via certain pathways. In regulating those pathways, the risk is managed and this can be controlled. They have tried it before. Jerry Ouellette tried to pass a bill where regulation of ballast water near boats, wood products coming into the province, making sure they're sterilized, making sure Asian carps are eviscerated before entering into our marketplace—there are many pathway-oriented measures that we could take in this legislation to ensure that we're more proactive as opposed to reactive, as I mentioned earlier.

1710

The other route to go, which may be something that we could have a topic of discussion about, is to ban all species entering Ontario and have them risk assessed before we let them come in. That's ensuring that there's basically a whitewash of every species entering into this province and having this ministry-controlled committee, which is going to be assessing the species at risk, decide whether the species is definitely going to be invasive or not. Instead of letting everything in our borders and seeing what causes a problem and what doesn't, this would be the optimal way to ensure that the species are in control and checked.

The act does not provide for a process involving independent scientists to identify significant-threat invasive species and recommend them for prescription for regulation. You see, that one I'd like to discuss. It's kind of iffy because we can see how some of these things can get out of control, if you look at the Endangered Species Act, where they do have that body at arm's length from the government; however, any time there is a problem, the government throws their hands in the air, saying, "We can't do anything about it." It's a hands-off committee, and sometimes that committee is a little off base in which direction they're going because they don't look at other circumstances, which I'm glad the ministry has done with the Invasive Species Act, where they're actually looking

at the social and economic impact on an area, and when they hit the Endangered Species Act, that's thrown out the window and not discussed. Maybe a hybrid model needs to be developed going forward, where we do allow for independent scientists to have their say with regard to the Invasive Species Act, but continue with the four points that the ministry has set forth in deciding what is an invasive species.

There is no process to identify invasive species or recommendations. The act—this is a concern of mine—effectively requires ordinary citizens and community groups, including private landowners, to apply for an authorization to eradicate significant- or moderate-threat invasive species under section 10 and to comply with conditions of the authorization or an eradication under section 12.

My concern is that we're going to create this massive bureaucratic system that the poor farmer just outside St. Thomas, Ontario, wanting to deal with his phragmites, is going to have to wait an inordinate amount of time in order to deal with it. From my understanding, dealing with phragmites, you tackle them in the fall, and in the early spring. You cut down the phragmites, you spray, and when the shoots start growing up, you spray again, and then in the spring, you do it again. If it's tied down in a bureaucratic system and you miss that window of opportunity, you are therefore having this farmer not only having to keep his invading species for another year but also that invading species will continue to spread and grow and take over his land, ruin his crops, maybe his wetlands, and it's really a trickle-down effect. My concern here is how they are going to develop the regulations and how bureaucratic this process is going to get, and I'm hoping they are listening to this speech.

The other concern I have here is this act could possibly be very heavy-handed on innocent people in this province, innocent people who find the invasive species on their property through no fault of their own, or maybe it was the fault of a neighbour down the road, but the cost associated with dealing with invasive species is now downloaded on that property owner, let alone the fines that may follow afterwards. I'm hoping there's some flexibility in dealing with the invasive species that are already here. I mean, how many people have invasive species on their property that are going to be deemed invasive species that don't really know about it? The phragmites people, certainly, they definitely are not enjoying the phragmites. But there are other species out there that people might even plant in their front gardens that are going to be there. Is there going to be leeway for them to eradicate these species? Are they going to get a notice: "By the way, you happen to have this invading species that needs to be removed," or are they just going to be fined, saying, "You have an invading species here and this act has been implemented"? There are unopened questions there of really where they are going to be going with that Invasive Species Act and the innocent people out there who don't really understand or know that the invading species is on their property or it's part of their garden. How are they going to be treated?

The inspector's power is quite large. The inspector can declare land, a building, structure or conveyance as an invaded place, and that's extremely broad in their powers. An inspector needs to only find evidence that a single threat of species is present and have reasonable grounds to believe that an order is required to control, remove or eradicate the invasive species. Under section 22, the inspector has the power to "take any other measure that the inspector considers appropriate to assist in preventing the suspected invasive species from spreading and restricting access."

The possession offence effectively prevents landowners from taking due diligence measures themselves; then the remaining scheme imposes harsh enforcement measures. Yes, the landowner can't see the invading species and go at it and deal with it; they must go through the bureaucratic process the government is going to create. Again, I'm hoping that's not too cumbersome. In an ideal world, once a species is listed as an invading species and the landowner notices it on his property, we would hope that they would be able to remedy it themselves without having to get permission from the government.

This last point I'm going to mention about this bill at this point is a concern of mine. It's a lack of respect for landowners in this province. I think there's some wording that needs to be changed. Under section 29, it leaves compensation of those affected as something the minister "may authorize." If a person is at fault and is subject to property loss or damages due to government intervention, they "may" be compensated, meaning if there is an invading—the ash borer, for example. The ash borer is a concession down the road in this forest cover. The minister has the power, in order to stop that spread of the ash borer, to go to the neighbour's woodlot and clear-cut it to take it out, because that was a remedy to get rid of the ash borer: take out all the trees so it can't spread beyond the area. Under this legislation, they can walk onto a person's property, clear-cut the property and walk away. "May". If they feel like it, maybe they will compensate him for his loss. A woodlot is quite valuable to people; it's also the land value.

I believe that we should have a discussion on how they should compensate the landowner. Have respect. The landowner is a landowner for a reason: He's bought that property; it's his property. He pays taxes on it and, more than likely, he'd be willing to work with the ministry to ensure the invasive species is contained. However, the way this legislation is written, the landowner is left out of the equation; he doesn't even have to be part of the solution. The government can walk in on his land, take care of the invasive species and anything on his property that they deem associated and walk out at the end of the day, and that landowner, that farmer, that person, that young couple who just bought this land thinking they'd have a great investment down the road would not be compensated for their loss. That is another contention of this bill that will come up, I believe, in discussion, and definitely should have an amendment going forward.

I know the government doesn't have a lot of money. However, the government doesn't need to be stripping the rights of people to own property. It's our right in this province to own property. It's our right, it's our freedom to express who we are. This government has done a few too many things with regards to property ownership. We just look at the Green Energy Act, where they stripped away the power of municipalities to have a say in where wind turbines are being placed. This is more of a microcosm effect on individual owners, and coming from rural Ontario, which this act is going to mainly affect, they need to be cognizant of the fact that we need to have respect for ownership of our properties.

Other points that I have heard from stakeholders are that the bill was rushed and hasn't received adequate public consultation. The ongoing theme from any stakeholder I talk to is that the enforcement officers are already underequipped to deal with existing legislation. This bill is not providing any more resources for them to handle the added resources.

If you look in my area, the Aylmer district, which basically covers—I don't know the definite details, but basically the Woodstock to Windsor area, there are eight conservation officers to cover that area. These people have to watch the land during the hunting season, and they're torn apart on that. They often have to do partnerships with the OPP when they're available. The fact that they already have those enforcements jobs to do, the fact that this is going to download a heck of a lot more—because these people are going to have to go to inspect; that's part of the mandate of this legislation. They're going to be inspecting everyone's property in Ontario and accessing the property without any permission from the landowner.

1720

I don't know if, at the end of the day, they pass this legislation and there's no resources behind it, because if you look at the MNR, the Ministry of Natural Resources is the ministry that gets cut no matter what budget comes forward. I'm not just blaming this government; if you look at any government throughout the ages of the history of Ontario, the Ministry of Natural Resources is usually one of the first ministries to be cut down. It's a shadow of itself from years gone by, and continually decreasing. In fact, they've run out of so much money that they go after the hunting and fishing community to pay more fees, and increased their licences so they can take that money and utilize it through accounting games to show that they're looking after natural resources, but really, it's subsidizing the entire ministry. For them to come out with this large bill, this Invasive Species Act, without the necessary resources for the employees—either they're going to see a downloading of costs to the municipalities that take it up, or it's going to be totally shifted onto the landowners to deal with these invasive species after dealing with the bureaucratic process that this ministry is going to create.

I'm going to outline a few more concerns that I do have with the legislation. I mentioned briefly earlier—

Jerry Ouellette, actually, mentioned it. It's inter-ministerial co-operation. Usually in government, I think a way we terribly waste money is that the ministries are run in silos. Situations that occur in one ministry which may affect another one are ignored between the two, and it may cause potential problems. I mentioned the MTO. The Ministry of Transportation has to be fully on board with this new legislation because they're going to have to provide the resources themselves to deal with the 400-series highways, which are inundated with phragmites.

But I'd also like to raise the issue of the Ministry of the Environment. They have strict rules with regard to pesticides and herbicides. They have quite a huge bureaucratic process. A lot of the phragmites treatments that we will have to use to treat phragmites will be over some of our water systems. A lot of the wetlands are being tackled by the phragmites. To use herbicides over water lands us in a whole new boatload of regulation and legislation that the landowner and/or the Ministry of Natural Resources is going to have to deal with in order to deal with these invasive species.

It's quite hopeful that not only do we have this legislation for the Ministry of Natural Resources, but there are also talks going on between the different ministries so that they can work together for positive solutions and cost-saving solutions in order to deal with invasive species.

I'd hate to see this bill pass and there are no resources and no interministerial co-operation: The bill is passed and they can congratulate themselves on passing the Invasive Species Act; however, nothing gets done, because it's caught in the quagmire of government, and government tends to get in the way of some good ideas.

I was happy to attend on Friday. The federal government made an announcement in London with regard to aquatic invasive species. I sat in on a round table and I thought it was a great program that the federal government came forward with. I'd like to just mention a bit about it, because it kind of ties into our invasive species that we're dealing with right now.

Basically, the expected outcome from the federal government's new aquatic invasive species regulations is to "reduce the potential damage to aquatic environments by preventing the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species"—I like the word "preventing"—"which have the potential to drastically alter habitats and render them inhospitable for native species.

"They are also expected to help reduce or avoid some of the costs arising from damages caused by aquatic invasive species which can be very significant once the invader has established itself."

I just want to talk a bit about the invasive species the sea lamprey. The sea lamprey is kind of that ugly worm-looking creature, as I like to call it. It has a bunch of tentacles around its mouth; it's just ugly. But it attaches to fish and is a parasite to them and ends up killing them. Or they fall off, and the fish is damaged and what have you. One lamprey will kill 40 to 50 pounds of fish.

They're talking like there are close to a million lamprey in the Great Lakes. The sea lamprey has no

natural predators in Ontario, so they are free to do what they want. They spawn by swimming upstream, up our tributaries, and they sit there for three or four years and grow. Then they go into our Great Lakes and destroy our fishery.

The rainbow trout is definitely on a decline due to these sea lampreys. Once their targeted species is limited, they go on to others. So now they are affecting our perch. They are affecting our pickerel, or walleye—whatever you want to call it. That's the bread and butter of our commercial fishing industry.

It's really bad. The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound brings it up quite often. They have a big salmon catch out in Owen Sound, and the sea lampreys have been noted to be quite a concern. So anyway, the sea lamprey, which is an invasive species, is a concern.

It's interesting: We had members from the Great Lakes commission—I don't have the proper name of it. They talk about how it's all related. If you look at our dams at the end of tributaries, the dams prevent lampreys from swimming up to spawn. So the dams are a good thing. However, with the lack of infrastructure throughout the province—and I was talking to my conservation authorities. They have \$10 million, \$20 million, \$40 million worth of infrastructure fixes for their dams throughout this province, and they are allocated \$5 million a year. So they're constantly behind. But these dams are breaking down, and there's no money to fix them, which is allowing the sea lamprey to swim up and spawn and create.

They have had great success in destroying 90% of the sea lamprey population with dams. Also they have this special spray they put in the water that dissipates quickly. It's safe for humans and other species; it focuses on the sea lamprey. But with the crumbling infrastructure that's not available because money has gone elsewhere, it's a losing battle.

That's just one aspect of the sea lamprey: the fact that one little invasive species—when you think you're getting ahead, there are other items. That's why I talk about cross-ministerial co-operation to ensure that the infrastructure is there to help fight these invasive species.

I could also talk about the Asian carp, Mr. Speaker. I do want to talk about that for a few minutes here. Right now, the Asian carp isn't in Canada yet, but it's right on our border in the Illinois area and in some of the Michigan areas—very close to entering Ontario waters. The concern is that we're not there enough to help the army corps in the States prevent these Asian carp from entering our waters. They are devastating; I talked about their reproduction. But they have physical barriers up in the waterways—electrical barriers, electrical fences—to ensure that the fish don't go by. They have also hired commercial fishermen to target the Asian carp. They are harvesting these guys like crazy, Mr. Speaker. However, with the way they reproduce, it's hard to keep up.

They are in the midst of developing their own chemical solution to the Asian carp. It's not quite there yet, but they are basically focusing on the gills of the

Asian carp, something with the Asian carp where the chemicals will lock on to their gills and destroy them.

What I found interesting is sound is a great deterrent for Asian carp. You put the sound under the water, and they migrate away from the location. So they are pushing them down. There's a push in the States to add these sound wave machines, or whatever you want—probably AC/DC on the CD player down in the water—in the locks, in canals, in the Michigan area, where they tend to snake through.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Celine Dion—that will get rid of them.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: No; I like Celine Dion. I'm a fan. But that's just me.

Earlier, they mentioned the four different types of carp out there that are going to be disastrous to our fishing communities. The other invasive species I'm just going to mention quickly before going on is the phragmites. Phragmites, if you talk to Ducks Unlimited, is devastating because if you look at what phragmites does, it squeezes out our wetlands, because it loves to grow in that little wet area. It destroys all our vegetation.

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When you start destroying our wetlands, not only do you destroy the habitat for ducks and other animals, but you destroy the ability for people to go hunting. For those of you in Toronto, if you're not hunters, it's a huge economic boon in rural Ontario to have the hunters come for duck season or deer hunting. If you go up north, you've got the moose hunting. What you need to do is ensure that when you have duck hunting going forward, they have the wetlands for them to protect.

So not only are the wetlands being destroyed and the hunting being affected, which is affecting the local economies, because hunters spend a lot of money when they're in an area on food and the local economy and buying their supplies, but the other aspect you have to look at—you've seen a lot of flooding increase over the years. You can talk about climate change and such, but you've got to look at what's going on with our wetlands. Wetlands are the natural filter, the natural sponge for our environment. When there's an abundance of water, the wetlands are what are sucking up the extra water. We've destroyed so many wetlands in this province and paved over them, and now it's causing tons of flooding.

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's right.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you. The minister of—he was the Minister of the Environment and now he's the minister of everything: Jim Bradley. We call him the minister of the Toronto Blue Jays here, but we're not too sure. He says I'm right: We've destroyed too much of our wetlands, which is causing a lot of flooding.

Now add this invasive species phragmites into the situation. Not only is man destroying the wetlands, but now we have an invasive species doing about the same thing. So not only is it going to affect our hunting and fishing—well, hunting, and I guess fishing opportunities as it grows out into the deeper waters—and destroy our agricultural land, but it's also causing undue hardship to

our areas with the increased amount of flooding going on. That's the other importance of what's going on in the area.

I'm just going to touch on a few letters from different stakeholders I've received regarding the Invasive Species Act as I continue on my debate. I'm going to talk about Long Point Region Conservation Authority. They're in Toby Barrett's riding; they're also a bit into my riding, the watershed. We just had Christmas dinner there on Friday night in Delhi: pork schnitzel and cabbage rolls. It was a beautiful dinner out in Delhi. The member from Oxford, Ernie Hardeman, was also present because he's also part of the watershed.

Anyways, the Long Point Region Conservation Authority has been actively working on the phragmites issue for the last four years. LPRCA, Long Point Region Conservation Authority, owns 850 acres of marsh west of Port Rowan called the Lee Brown Marsh. The conservation authority uses this marsh to provide recreational hunting opportunities to people from across Ontario and the United States. There, you see that the bonus of having strong areas for the hunting community is that not only do we attract people from Ontario, but we're also attracting people from the States, and with the dollar going lower, it's more of a benefit for them to come here. So it's a great economic boon for rural Ontario.

The LPRCA staff has developed a technique that appears to be successful in controlling phrag. The challenge is that neighbouring marshes are being choked out by phrag, either because they lack resources or knowledge. The Nature Conservancy of Canada—which is a great organization, I do say—has now been talking to them about working together to map out the phrag in order to ensure that they're able to deal with the implementation of this act when it gets implemented. They need to get the best practices of the technique. Areas are already starting on developing the best practice techniques to deal with phragmites. It's very concerning because, again, they will be spraying water.

Research shows that phrag is so invasive, typically in freshly disturbed sites—ditches, construction sites—that it chokes out native vegetation. In fact, it's so thick that some species like turtles get trapped in it and die, while it provides no nesting habitats for ducks and other birds. If you get rid of the ducks, you get rid of the hunting opportunities and you destroy ecotourism. You can just imagine the impact that it has on areas, let alone the local environment.

I also have a letter from Ontario Nature. I hope they get an opportunity to speak at the committee level. They have quite a few concerns with regard to the bill. I'll outline a few of their items:

“—The bill is not precautionary or prevention-oriented.

“—The bill does not reflect or support a pathways approach to prevention.”

We agree on two things. Ontario Nature and the Progressive Conservatives usually aren't on the same two pages on anything, but so far we're two for two on what we think with regard to this bill that need to be fixed.

“—The bill does not outline a science-based approach to risk assessment and decision-making.

“—The bill is punitive and presents fairness issues.

“—The bill would prevent swift eradication measures.”

Those five points put out by Ontario Nature, I don't have a problem with. I think they're valid concerns which we need to hash out in debate, but we also need to sit down in committee and come up with detailed changes to this legislation so that it's more fair and balanced.

I might go back to Ontario Nature, depending on my time, because time goes quickly when you're speaking for an hour. I'm just going to scoot through this quickly—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: No, you're doing a good job.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Is that all right?

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Oh, I've got so much more stuff to talk about here.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I do have letters from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, which the minister talked about.

“On behalf of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters ... its 100,000 members, subscribers and supporters ... we would like to take this opportunity to applaud the government ... for the proposed Invasive Species Act.”

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Minister of Rural Affairs, I visited their complex in the summer. It's a beautiful, beautiful place. We need a spot like that down in Elgin county. I think we have some plush areas that—

Hon. Jeff Leal: We can work on that together.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: We should work on that, definitely, because we are “hunting central” in southwestern Ontario, down in Elgin county.

Going back to his letter:

“While we do not yet have details of specific proposed regulations, the OFAH would like to ensure the consequences of the new legislation do not negatively impact sustainable heritage activities such as fishing and hunting. As you know, angling and hunting conservationists are very much a part of the solution to the threats posed by harmful invasive species—not part of the problem. It is imperative that the risk assessment process for both species and pathways ... will be transparent and incorporate social and economic considerations alongside ecological considerations. The OFAH looks forward to actively participating in policy development processes. The OFAH would also like to recommend that the Ministry of Natural Resources ... pay heed to lessons learned through the public consultation and implementation of the Endangered Species Act (e.g. the backlash associated with powers for inspection).” Mr. Speaker, those powers are still in this bill today. There are going to be some problems unless we deal with the inspection powers that this bill gives out. It's black and white here, from the hunters and anglers of this province.

It's not just MPP Jeff Yurek from the PC caucus saying so; I have backup on this. “Anglers, hunters, outdoor enthusiasts and landowners play an important role in invasive species management through public reporting. It is important that we continue to engage these groups in stewardship and avoid discouraging their participation because of fear of legal implications and property interventions.

“For over 20 years, the OFAH has worked in partnership with the MNR to deliver the Invading Species Awareness Program. The Invading Species Awareness Program takes a proactive”—I love that word, “proactive”—“public education approach to preventing the spread and/or introduction of invasive species. We have had tremendous success in engaging millions of Ontarians on the issues of invasive species and how they can prevent their spread or introduction.”

I think those are strong words from the hunters and anglers of our province, and I'm proud that they're such a strong organization. Really, Mr. Speaker, when I talk to people, hunters and anglers have got to be one of the best—

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: —and farmers—have got to be one of the best environmentalists this province has ever seen. They care about their environment, they care about the resources, and we need to help them in their activity to ensure that they are not only able to carry out their hunting and fishing activities, but they're also supported in ensuring that our wetlands are secure and strong and our environment is strong.

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I also have comments from the Ontario Forest Industries Association on the Invasive Species Act: “So far, the response to the act is really positive ... [The] forest industry has a pretty good track record for invasive species management.” Their concern, of course, is the emerald ash borer and Asian longhorn beetle, which are huge threats for ash, maples and other hardwoods, and also impact southern Ontario regions. They would like to see those species addressed as priorities once this act is implemented. It's my hope that it's one of the top species that will gain government focus once this act is proclaimed and put into law.

Their only flag with this bill—and I brought it up earlier: The intent is great, but the implementation of the act and its efficacy will depend on whether or not there's adequate funding. MNRF has such an important mandate. It's chronically underfunded, as I mentioned earlier. Our success with invasive species will rely on our ability to prevent them from entering or establishing, and eradicating them once they become a problem. Both will require tremendous resources.

I also want to just add in a little bit from outside of the country, what's going on in the rest of the world—just a quick tidbit. If you get the chance, you should look up the New Zealand Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act. They introduced this act in 1996, so New Zealand is way ahead of where Ontario is, or Canada, for that matter.

Their basic rule is that anybody wanting to introduce, import, develop or manufacture a hazardous substance or new organism into New Zealand must apply to the Environmental Risk Management Authority in order to do so. Basically, New Zealand has brought forward something I think we might need to talk about: You can't bring anything into the province unless it's approved. That should decrease the amount of invasive species in the province, and in the long run be cheaper for the people of Ontario in dealing with invasive species, if we can actually prevent them from coming into the marketplace in order to deal with the hazards of invasive species.

As I mentioned in other speeches since I've been here, I don't want this bill to be time-allocated. I don't want this government to come forward as soon as we come back in February after the Christmas break and bring forth a time allocation motion which will halt the discussion on this legislation. I think it's very important that we have it to give the members on this side of the House, the opposition, the time to talk about the Invasive Species Act. This is where rural Ontario is. It's how the electorate decided: Rural Ontario is in the opposition, and this bill affects rural Ontario. If the government came forward and limited the debate for the members of the opposition in order to possibly ramrod this legislation through committee and into legislation, possibly causing problems and not hearing the voice of rural Ontario, I think that would be troublesome for the people of Ontario.

Then once we get into committee, to time-allocate committee—I mentioned earlier today about Bill 8, how, in the middle of committee and in the middle of the discussion of the amendments and having a discussion back and forth and votes, their time allocation motion shut down all debate, and every amendment was deemed read. So all you did was vote on the next amendment, which totally took away from the reasoning behind the committee. I'd hate to see that occur with regard to the Invasive Species Act. Going forward, we need to have proper legislation, proper discussion and debate, and we need to reach out to the people of Ontario to hear what is actually going on with regard to the Invasive Species Act.

There are many species out there which are at risk—or invasive species; I'm getting my species mixed up here. But there has been talk about zebra mussels. Zebra mussels cost around \$90 million a year, the government is saying, in this province. That's because they got in through the ballast water. We're not even talking about what other costs the zebra mussels have. I don't know if that government cost includes Hydro One having to deal with the zebra mussels on their parts of the waterways that they have to clean up. Those costs get tallied on to our hydro bills at the end of the day.

We can talk about sea lampreys, phragmites, the emerald ash borer—you've just got to look at Chatham-Kent, at the devastation that occurred down there—the Asian long-horned beetle, the Asian carp.

Mr. Speaker, while reading on this bill and trying to learn more about invasive species, I thought it was quite interesting, the types of aquatic species that are invasive. It really shocked me. Lake Erie is full of perch. I really enjoy yellow perch. I went to Wheatley a few weeks ago to talk to the commercial fishermen—amazing yellow perch—and I was informed at that time that white perch is an invasive species. I did not know that. White perch isn't as tasty as yellow perch—that's probably why they're invasive—but apparently white perch has a little more fat in it. It has adapted to the system, but it's an invasive species. I thought that was kind of neat to know. Rainbow smelt is an invasive species. Some of these, I haven't even heard of—common carp, of course. We also have the Asian clam. The rusty crayfish is an invasive species, and the spiny water flea and zebra mussel.

The cost of the zebra mussel—this is interesting. It wasn't really the zebra mussel, but I'm just talking about aquatics when we go into an area. We were going to build a bridge in Dorchester—the government was building a bridge—and they found a few mussels in the waterways there. What they had to do was tag these mussels and watch them for a year and then move them. They put off the project of building a bridge for over a year. That was a species that wasn't at risk. That was a species that we want to protect and look after, but the bureaucracy of protecting those mussels not only delayed the project but cost.

If this is transferred to the Invasive Species Act and we find these zebra mussels, and we have a way to destroy them but we're going to have to wait to study them and tag them and treat them—we've got to make sure that that process is clear at the end of the day, when we get this legislation passed.

The fishhook water flea: I haven't even heard of half of these things.

But that's just the fish. I mean, when you look at the plants—I don't know how many of us would see these aquatic plants every day and not think they're invasive species. The yellow iris—that's not an aquatic plant, but the yellow iris is an invasive species. The watercress, the purple loosestrife—I've heard a lot about that.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Purple loosestrife is a very big problem.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Yes, and I think they've given up on trying to deal with it. It's just such a problem.

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Did you get a special permit, though? Because I know you can't use any herbicides or pesticides; they're gone.

Hon. Jeff Leal: My son did it. It was a summer job.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I hope you paid him well.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I sure did.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: The narrow-leaf cattail is an invasive plant, the yellow iris, the European frog-bit, the European water chestnut, fanwort—you know, I think I have fanwort in my ponds to feed my fish. I have koi fish in a pond in my backyard, and I'm pretty sure this fanwort is sitting there, and it's an invasive plant. However, it must be a good plant, because it's keeping my fish alive.

Water lettuce: That stuff spreads like crazy in your ponds. Yellow floating heart—anyway, my point is that invasive species are on their way. They're going to migrate into our area, whether we like it or not, via the natural path of plant or animal progression or via the man/woman ways of getting things into the area.

I'm hoping that this government will use this bill and make amendments to make it proactive, so that when we bring products and animals into this area, we deal with them appropriately and don't let them become invasive species and become problems.

I look again at Asian carp. We need to ensure that these carp are gutted on the trucks coming into Ontario, because these carp, from what I've learned, can live through anything. You can put them on ice, and you think they're dead. You get them in the marketplace, take them home, and they can still be alive. The problem is if there is a truck crash and they get into our waterways via the culverts and such. Or, with new regulations going on board, if they're turned around at the border because they're not eviscerated and the company that's obviously creating an illegal act decides just to dump them, are they going to dump them in our waterways and incorporate them?

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We need to ensure, working with our American friends down to the south, that proper methods are in place to ensure that invasive species do not come into this province, and the best way to do that is to become proactive, to reach out. Take the example brought forth by member Toby Barrett from Haldimand-Norfolk. He went down to the States. He testified before Senate committees. He gave them ideas of how Ontario and Canada can work with them to ensure that we keep these invasive species out of Canada.

We need this to happen from the government's side. They need to incorporate the opposition's ideas, let us be part of the process and stop these invading species, because there's only one Ontario. There's only one environment out there. This is a serious problem, not only socially but economically, that we face in this province. We need to take the necessary steps going forward to ensure that we officially have preventative action on invasive species. Deal with what's already here. Ensure that people are treated fairly and not charged huge fines or huge costs because of no fault of their own. There are invasive species that are going to be classified on their property. Let's work together and ensure that, together, we have a strong environment, which will, at the end of the day, produce a healthier Ontario and a strong, vibrant economy. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to have a quick chance to speak to Bill 37, An Act respecting Invasive Species. I'd like to thank the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London for his comments, and also for highlighting the work done by my predecessor, Jerry

Ouellette, from Oshawa and for reminding us about his extensive work that he has done not only on invasive species but in terms of prioritizing outdoor activities and sharing, over his time here in the Legislature, his deep knowledge of issues impacting natural habitats and our communities that enjoy them.

I certainly come to the Legislature with a different background, but I do come with—my undergrad was in biology and a focus on biodiversity. It's a welcome opportunity to speak to that.

Also, coming from Oshawa, I look out my back window and I don't have to look very far: I see the Second Marsh Wildlife Area, which, if you're not familiar, is 123 hectares of coastal wetland in Oshawa. It's adjacent to McLaughlin Bay Wildlife Reserve and to Darlington Provincial Park, nearly 400 hectares in total, and it's one of the largest publicly accessible waterfront spaces in the GTA. So, of course, it is a priority to preserve and protect over 380 plant species and 305 bird species, plus lots of little critters, mammals, insects, amphibians and reptiles. So the Friends of Second Marsh, and Oshawa as a greater community—their volunteers work very hard to combat invasive species and make sure that this is an area that we can enjoy for many years to come.

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

Mr. Arthur Potts: What a pleasure to speak on Bill 37, our government's bill, the Invasive Species Act. I very much enjoyed the remarks from the member from Elgin-Middlesex—a very knowledgeable overview of so many of the different invasive species. You talked about the great environmental protectors out there, the farmers and the hunters, and I would like to add urban fly fishers to that list of great environmentalists.

I too, as a fly fisher, am concerned about invasive species and the effect that they're having on rainbow trout populations. I had the pleasure to be on the Nottawasaga recently, and I hope to get onto the Maitland River during the break at Christmas to do a little steelhead, because those rainbows come out of the water up the river—we call them steelhead—and I'm starting to think that my inability to hook into one of these fish has less to do with invasive species and more to do with my lousy technique.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Hear, hear!

Mr. Arthur Potts: Yes, thank you very much.

We've all seen the Asian carp videos on YouTube. They're funny. But it belies a very important issue behind the fact that they are taking over and devastating fisheries, and that's why this bill is so very, very important. If you've seen that particular YouTube video, the gentlemen are water skiing behind the boat, and they've got pointy little nails and things on there, and as the carp are coming out of the water, they're actually trying to catch them on spears and such. It's an extraordinarily funny piece but, like I say, it does belie the fact that there's a very important issue behind all this.

I used to have a wood waste processing business up in north Toronto, processing wood waste from around the

world, and I'm sure it's just coincidental that nearby where we had our operations was the outbreak of the Asian beetle. I certainly hope it didn't rise as a result of us bringing in wood and crates and processing them in the neighbourhood. The Asian beetle was a such serious, serious detractor to the forests in Toronto. I hope we've been able to contain it, and I hope this bill will allow us to get on top of these issues fast, quickly, and eradicate them before they become more serious threats.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I just want to thank my colleague the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London for his exceptional leadoff on behalf of our party. I also want to thank him for mentioning the member for Haldimand–Norfolk, Mr. Barrett. I've got Hansard in front of me from back on February 26, 2014. When speaking about the previous bill, he talked about the admirable goals that the bill has. Obviously, the member has been a tremendous advocate that action be taken on Asian carp.

One of the things I note in his speech in February is the fact that he uses the statement, "These invasive species don't abide by borders," and I think that's very important. He also encouraged the minister at that time to talk to our American counterparts on invasive species. I'm thinking about letters that I wrote to the previous minister about cormorants, and about a meeting that I had in my riding with my other representatives, MP Gord Brown and Senator Bob Runciman. We meet regularly with our American counterparts.

I remember meeting with New York Senator Patty Ritchie about all of the things that that state does about cormorants. I wrote the previous minister encouraging him to sit down with our American counterparts and look at what they're doing, and to try to mirror some of their efforts. I have to say that I was very disappointed by the last paragraph in the letter from the previous minister, when he said, "While we are aware that cormorant management actions in New York may disperse birds to Ontario colonies, we respect New York's decision to manage cormorants for their purposes."

I just believe that we have a role to reach out across the border, just as the member for Haldimand–Norfolk suggested with Asian carp. Whether it be Asian carp or cormorants or any other invasive species, we can't have our heads in the sand. These species know no borders. We have to sit down with our American friends and work on a coordinated strategy to deal with some of these issues.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: A pleasure to make comments following the address by the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London. I don't know if the members present know that this member has the largest invasive species in Ontario in his riding, and that's that former military submarine that they use as a tourist attraction out there.

The minister and the member had enunciated a lot of the invasive species, everything from the zebra mussels

to the emerald ash borer, the purple loosestrife, the phragmites, the Asian carp. It's already cost municipalities in my area hundreds of thousands of dollars on the emerald ash borer. We were one of the first that got hit with that many years ago, even before I was on city council, and I was there for seven years. We're still trying to clean up and make up and replant after that borer went through our area. I don't know if we'll ever get caught up.

In our area, of course, we have the border, and we're always hearing about truckloads of Asian carp; the drivers get busted at the border. A lot of these fish—they're on ice; they haven't been eviscerated, so they're still alive, almost in a coma-like state. If they were ever released into our waterways, that would devastate the sports fishing and the commercial fishing industry. I think of communities such as Kingsville and Wheatley and Port Dover. Those economies would be in big trouble without the commercial fishing industry.

The phragmites: In our area we have the tall prairie grasslands. A lot of people confuse phragmites with the tall prairie grasses. They want to use it in their backyards; they think it's an ornamental grass they want to plant. It's very scary.

I applaud the minister. Whatever we can do to combat invasive species in Ontario would be a good thing for all of us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London now can reply.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, I'd like to thank the members from Oshawa, Beaches–East York, Leeds–Grenville, and Windsor–Tecumseh for their comments. I didn't get any questions, so that's kind of nice. I can just speak to the rest of the bill.

Before I finish up, I just found a note that I wouldn't mind adding in with regard to the Asian carp, which I think is very important. Basically, you've got to look for physical connections for how they get into our area. The Chicago area waterway system that feeds into Lake Michigan is the key way they're going to enter our Great Lakes system.

There's enough food and habitat in our Great Lakes for these fish to survive even throughout winter. They're not even going to compete with zebra mussels—there's another predator—with regard to other fishes in the environment. There are suitable spawning conditions for these fish in up to 57 Canadian rivers. There are lots of wetlands for them to inhabit.

It only requires as few as 10 adult females and a similar amount of males for a greater than 50% chance of an annual succession of spawning in our Great Lakes. That's only 20 fish—10 males and 10 females—and we're out of luck with these fish. The spread will be rapid. Within 20 years, even Lake Superior will be affected. Walleye is going to be one of the main fish that is going to be hit with regard to these Asian carp, and yellow perch.

I know how much the minister of everything—the minister of the Toronto Blue Jays—likes his yellow

perch. I'm hoping that this government will work with the opposition and ensure that not only can we protect the yellow perch in our Great Lakes but the economies throughout Ontario and ensure that our hunters, anglers and our wetlands are strong.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. This House stands in recess until 6:45 p.m.

The House recessed from 1802 to 1845.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiques, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
		Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Sudbury	

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COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cindy Forster
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Han Dong
Cindy Forster, Michael Harris
Randy Hillier, Sophie Kiwala
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Monte McNaughton
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Eleanor McMahan, Lisa M. Thompson
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Wayne Gates, Marie-France Lalonde
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
Jim McDonell, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qadri
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Toby Barrett
Garfield Dunlop, Eleanor McMahon
Laurie Scott, Jagmeet Singh
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
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Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
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Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Christine Elliott, France Gélinas
Marie-France Lalonde, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Kathryn McGarry
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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