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des débats
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Wednesday 11 March 2015

Mercredi 11 mars 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Wednesday 11 March 2015

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mercredi 11 mars 2015

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

**AGRICULTURE INSURANCE ACT
(AMENDING THE CROP INSURANCE
ACT, 1996), 2015**

**LOI DE 2015 SUR L'ASSURANCE
AGRICOLE (MODIFIANT LA LOI DE 1996
SUR L'ASSURANCE-RÉCOLTE)**

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 10, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Crop Insurance Act (Ontario), 1996 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 40, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'assurance-récolte (Ontario) et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It is an honour to rise in this House and to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 40. Of course, we know that Bill 40 is the Agriculture Insurance Act. It's an act to amend the Crop Insurance Act of 1996.

This particular bill sounds impressive at first; however, Ontario farmers actually grow and raise more than 200 different commodities, so less than half are currently covered by production insurance. And so far too long, Ontario farmers have been at a disadvantage compared to their counterparts around the country. Ontario is the only province left in Canada that does not have legislative authority to offer plans for a broad range of agricultural products. Ontario is once again left having to play catch-up.

If passed, Bill 40 would extend this coverage to farmers who produce products other than crops and perennial plants. They will finally have access to the insurance they need to protect their livelihoods, the same basic protections that other farmers across the country have had for years. This will of course increase the stability within our agricultural sector, and it is a move that I wholeheartedly support.

There are just about 2,200 farms in Chatham-Kent, which account for, surprisingly, 3.8% of Ontario's total farms. This is down from the 2001 census, but it's still a lot of farms.

Leamington is known as the greenhouse capital of North America, with an astonishing 1,500 acres under cover or, as I like to say, under glass. In addition to these farms, greenhouses in Chatham-Kent also now account for 3.2% of Ontario's total greenhouse area. One of note—and I worked with this particular company to help them get established in their location in Chatham—was Cedarline Greenhouses, which recently partnered with GreenField Ethanol, which was actually a very unique opportunity. With the partnering of GreenField Ethanol, they now are able to use surplus heat and carbon dioxide to save about 40% on heating costs. It was an amazing opportunity, an amazing business approach to reducing their costs and yet creating jobs and employment right in Chatham-Kent.

As an industry, agriculture provides about 16,000 jobs and is a \$3-billion sector in just Chatham-Kent alone. Chatham-Kent-Essex is home to some of the most fertile land in Ontario and Canada. Cash crops include wheat, soy beans, corn—and apparently wind turbines. They're sprouting up all over prime farmland, Mr. Speaker.

My riding is also the number one producer of tomatoes, seed corn and pumpkins in all of Canada, and in addition produces nearly 20% of all vegetables grown in Ontario. We're the number one producer of sugar beets, green peas, broccoli, lavender, cauliflower and quail in all of Ontario. I'm very proud of my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex.

Another group that comes part and parcel with agriculture is the food producers of Ontario. Food processors know the importance of local food. Nearly 40% of food manufacturers are in fact located in rural Ontario. They realize the value in using local food in their products. Of the total food produced on Ontario farms, roughly 65% of it is used by the province's food producers. Food processing is a \$33-billion industry that employs 110,000 Ontarians in related industries.

In my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex, the food production industry has been hit hard over the last few years, most notably with the closure of the Heinz plant in Leamington. They used to employ 740 full time, roughly 200 part time, and they had roughly between 45 and 50 growers. Well, that number has been slashed, cut, reduced, almost cannibalized, and now roughly 250 people work full-time at the company that actually took over Heinz, which is Highbury Canco.

Last July, the Canadian Association of Professional Apiculturists released a report that indicated a mortality rate of 58% of Ontario's bee population. The typical winter bee loss rate is around 15%, according to the

report. This is a big reason why the neonics issue has become such a hot topic over the past year. Imagine a cattle farmer heading outside to tend the cows only to find that nearly 50% of them had died. Bees are in fact essentially livestock for beekeepers, and the past year has been devastating to the industry. In December, the member for Haldimand–Norfolk asked the Premier why her government had not implemented an insurance model to help the province’s beekeepers. Manitoba currently offers such a program. Well, the government’s response was less than encouraging. The Premier declined to confirm if Ontario will be getting a similar program and then referred the matter to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Of course we understand that we need to address the root causes, if you will, but beekeepers need a relief strategy that is more immediate than stopping climate change. The government needs to have a long-term plan to try to resolve the bee mortality issue, but in the short term, Ontario beekeepers are going to need some help. We want to hear the input of the entire agricultural industry on this particular issue. It is incredibly important that we listen to them, as they’re the real experts.

We have some concerns when it comes to ease of use and the response time of government when it comes to compensating for unexpected emergencies. Some 300,000 customers were left—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It’s a little bit noisy. The member is right here, and I can hardly hear him. It would be nice if some of his colleagues would listen to him. Thanks so much.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

You know, when we talk about the fact that 300,000 customers were left without hydro in Toronto alone, similar damage occurred throughout the greater Toronto and Hamilton area in the aftermath of that storm. Again, this ties into the government’s response to emergencies. After the storm, it was estimated that the cost would be somewhere around \$190 million to cover the damage from the ice storm. It took numerous cities and municipalities over a year to get the application completed, as the application itself was not immediately available.

0910

A recent article in the Hamilton Spectator showed just how disastrous the whole process was. “Hamilton needed most of a year, special training for 15 staffers and thousands of pages of supporting documents just to ask for \$4.1 million in provincial ice storm relief.” Hamilton councillor Chad Collins was quoted in the article as saying, “I think everyone was kind of shocked at the hoops we had to go through.... If you think about it, we routinely apply for hundreds of millions of dollars for infrastructure projects and the process is far less rigorous.”

When we talk about this particular bill—another thing is that our government in Ontario has paid nearly \$3 million to a company called LandLink Consulting to train

municipal staff to fill out applications. With that in mind, we’re concerned about what the production insurance application and claim process will actually look like. If farmers are forced to wait over a year for relief from natural disasters or other impacts to their crops or commodities, they might not be in business by the time the insurance payment is actually issued. On this side, we call it red tape.

In conclusion, I just want to reiterate my support for Bill 40, the Agriculture Insurance Act. It finally delivers on an issue that Ontario farmers have been championing for over a decade. As previously mentioned, Ontario is the only province left in the entire country that does not have the legislative authority to in fact offer plans for a broad range of agricultural products. While I am concerned that it took the government this long to act on the bill, it’s better late than never.

But what I don’t want to see is the loss or reduction of current programs that help farmers with the implementation of new measures. “‘Agricultural products’ means a product that is designated by regulation.” This means that the minister could make changes to the policy at a later date. The true test of the legislation will come long after it’s passed.

One of the things that I’m concerned about is the process of payment, but something else as well is the fact that you have a situation with dairy farmers and ground current, which is in fact affecting milk production. It’s killing the cattle itself. The fact is that they cannot put any dollars on lost milk production right now, and dairy farmers are going under. That is not right, and I stand in support of those dairy farmers. I believe that this particular act needs to support those dairy farmers. We need to get the ground current problem under control before it’s way too late, because it not only affects cattle, it affects humans.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I have to applaud the member’s passion, particularly for dairy farmers. I think it goes without saying how much we all appreciate, and should appreciate, our farmers and how much they’ve done for us and how much they do for us every day.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: We can’t survive without them.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: We literally couldn’t survive without our farmers. It’s a robust part of our economy; it’s an essential part of our lives. Food is something that we all use to celebrate; it’s something that brings us together. And the people who are responsible for putting that food on our tables that helps us come together, that helps us celebrate, that helps us have those moments we all cherish and remember, are farmers. They are the ones who make that possible.

This bill, hopefully, if it’s implemented in the right way, will protect them and will benefit them. It’s something that speaks to our priorities. As a Legislature, we should ensure that the laws we pass speak to what we think is important. What’s really important is that we

protect the people who are fundamental to our society. Farmers are absolutely fundamental to our society, and we should implement laws that protect them.

One of the realities is that the climate change we are seeing and the unpredictability of weather are putting farmers in a more and more difficult position. There is less ability to predict what is going to happen, and for farmers it's crucial that they have some anticipation, some ability to know: "Okay, the weather patterns are going to be a certain way, so we can anticipate what our crop is going to be like this year," or if it's livestock, they're able to predict the conditions so they can prepare for them. The growing uncertainty with weather is impacting farmers in a very difficult way. It's important for us to make sure we do whatever we can to assist, given the unpredictable nature of weather and climate now.

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

Mr. John Yakubuski: Surprise, surprise. The Liberals didn't even want to comment, I guess.

I'm here this morning to speak to this bill. I only have two minutes in the questions and comments. You know the standing orders here, Speaker, as do the folks on the other side. I'm hoping to get a chance before the 10:15 recess before question period to speak to this bill, to speak to the importance of agriculture in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

As of this moment, we still have 16 members of our 28-person caucus who have yet to speak to this bill, a crucially important bill to folks in rural Ontario, which many of us represent. Only 12 of our members have had a chance to speak to this in debate.

We're hoping that the government is not going to bring in or call for closure. If they do, I make an impassioned plea to you, Speaker, to not recognize it at this time, because we understand what has been happening here in this House.

I want to have the opportunity to speak to this bill. I know that Mr. Hardeman, Ms. Munro, Mr. Hudak, Mr. Arnott, Ms. Jones, Mr. Bailey, Ms. Elliott, Mr. Hillier, Mr. MacLaren, Ms. MacLeod, Mr. McNaughton, Mr. Miller, Mr. Pettapiece and Ms. Thompson want to speak to this bill as well. So I hope that the government will allow us to do that and not try and shut this debate down here this morning.

I'm anxious to have that opportunity to speak about the wonderful people who are employed in and make their living by and make our lives better by the work they do in agriculture, not only in Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke but all across this great province. I hope this debate does not get shut down before we have the opportunity to do so.

I want to speak about the bill as well, Bill 40, the Agriculture Insurance Act—changes that I'm very supportive of. I want to have that opportunity to offer my views on the legislation in a more complete way.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good morning, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Good morning.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a pleasure to rise from my seat here today on behalf of the constituents in Windsor and Tecumseh, and talk about this very important bill dealing with farmers and agriculture.

Before I begin, I just want to mention that this is Sarnia–Lambton Day at the Legislature today. I know Mr. Bailey has invited us all to meet with the people from his community, most of them—a large portion of Sarnia–Lambton being rural—from the agricultural area. I know we would learn a great deal if we did take Mr. Bailey up on his generous offer to spend time with the chamber of commerce and others from Sarnia–Lambton today.

I listened very intently to what the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex had to say about the importance of this bill to his community. It's important to all of us in this House, because as I've said before, and as you've all heard, farmers feed cities. We can't take that for granted anymore. No matter where we go, no matter what we eat, the food on our table comes from the farming community.

So whatever we can do to expand insurance for farmers—to give them some kind of a rainy-day fund, if you will, if something goes wrong—we should be doing. And we should be listening to every voice in this House.

We all come here, 107 voices strong, 107 equal voices, and if we wish to be heard on a certain bill, we should be afforded that opportunity. When the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke spoke about the possibility of closure on this bill, I think he hit it right on. There are people who still wish to be heard, and if that's the case, we should all listen intently, because farmers feed cities.

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

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased to rise once again to speak to this bill. But I think it's important to recognize that we've already had 78 members—78 members—of the Legislature who have spoken to this bill or participated in the debate during questions and comments.

0920

This bill has now been debated for 12 hours. We've heard from the opposition the importance of the farmers and the farming community in their ridings. I think it's important to understand that they're needlessly extending debate on Bill 40 by continuing to put up speakers. As I mentioned, 12 hours—12 hours—have already been debated on this bill and the government has extended debate by 6.5 hours, the threshold, so more members would have the opportunity to speak to this bill.

Listening to the debate, it's been clear that the majority of the members are in support of this bill, so that signals that there is no true desire to have further meaningful debate on this bill and their only goal is to delay it.

I'm calling on the opposition parties to stop stalling and to help us move forward this important piece of legislation so that we can continue to debate other im-

portant bills, bills like Bill 6, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act; Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act; Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act; Bill 49—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I believe that if the member wants to have a one-on-one he might want to go outside with the member from Sudbury.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It will be a problem. I don't want to hear it.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just ending, we have Bill 52, the Protection of Public Participation Act. Those would be great bills that we could also start debating.

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

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry; the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: First of all, I'd like to thank the members from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and Windsor–Tecumseh, which used to be the home of—ho ho ho—the Green Giant. I recall that, especially as a young gaffer.

Of course, the comments issued by the member from Sudbury—I will challenge him on the fact that this is an important bill. This bill does need further consultation. We can get it into committee, I agree, but it needs to be heard because there are members, especially on this side, who in fact represent more of the rural community.

I do have a concern. This bill will, in fact, protect farmers, and I agree wholeheartedly with that. It needs more—no pun intended—beef in this particular bill, because it needs to protect farmers: not only those who grow cash crops, but what about our beef farmers? What about our dairy farmers? What about the beekeepers? And the list goes on.

I've had discussions with a member of my riding who, in fact, claims that ground current caused not only the death of his prize cattle, but also the death of his wife, because of the fact of what ground current does. We need to get that problem solved. We need to get that problem straightened out.

I visited a dairy farmer about a month and a half ago, and there were about 30 of us there. The OSPCA was there. Of course, cruelty to animals—do you want to bring that into this bill? It should be there as well. Because I'm very, very concerned about the livelihood of dairy farmers. And this particular farmer, who I know very well, back in my riding, has a prize Holstein. I saw that Holstein; it was healthy. He called me last week in tears. He said his prize Holstein, which he has \$10,000 invested in, is dying and is unable to produce milk simply because of the ground current. That, sir, needs to be taken care of. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order.

Mr. Ted Arnott: It is my hope to speak to Bill 40 this morning. I represent Wellington—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That's not a point of order. Thank you.

Minister without Portfolio.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm pleased to participate in the debate on Bill 40 this morning. I know that the government House leader spoke to this bill yesterday as well. I want to reiterate some of what he said yesterday.

We're committed to helping our agricultural partners manage risk. That is why it's so important that we move forward on this bill as soon as possible and refer it to committee for further study. We know that business risk management programs like production insurance help producers deal with situations that are outside their control, such as weather, disease and extreme market fluctuation. Production insurance makes timely payments to producers and eliminates the need for costly ad hoc responses to adverse conditions.

Our province's inability to offer production insurance plans for commodities beyond crops and perennial plants represents a significant gap, as most members have agreed. When producers suffer losses and don't have production insurance coverage, they may come to us for direct or ad hoc assistance. We've seen ad hoc programs cost the province millions of dollars in a single year. Further, production insurance is also premium-based. This means the costs are shared by farmers and government, which encourages best practices and appropriate sharing of risk. This bill, if passed, will help our farmers better manage risk and encourage greater innovation, job creation and growth in the agri-food sector.

Mr. Speaker, our government introduced this important piece of legislation way back in November 2014. We've been debating the bill over nine different days, and our government allowed the debate to continue when we reached 6.5 hours of debate on this bill so that more members would have the opportunity to present their views of this bill that all members have indicated they support.

Further, speakers from the government side shared their 20-minute speaking segments among three or four members. Moreover, members from this side of the aisle stood down their speeches, following almost nine hours of debate, in order to allow the opposition members to have more opportunity to share their views on this bill that all three parties are on record as saying they are supporting.

Mr. Speaker, this bill has seen approximately 12 hours of debate and, according to my count, I think about 80 of the members have either spoken to this bill or participated in the debate during questions and comments. I believe there has been extensive debate on this bill. We have heard a wide range of viewpoints, opinions and perspectives, and I have enjoyed listening to all of them at that time. It is—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order: the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I

hope there are not going to be too many points of order while the member is speaking, but go ahead.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I can't determine that, Speaker, but I'm just raising my point of order. I'm only speaking for myself. Thank you very much.

Speaker, it's clear where the member is going with this. We see what's coming down the road very shortly—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That's not a point of order. Thank you. Sit down.

Go ahead.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I believe there has been extensive debate on this bill, and we have heard a wide range of views, opinions and perspectives. It is time that this bill is put to a vote for second reading and referred to committee, where some of the real and genuine work takes place.

As members know, in committee—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Excuse me, Minister.

Does the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke have a problem with my decision to tell him to sit down?

Mr. John Yakabuski: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Oh.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The decision? No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Oh. Good.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Not your decision—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Excuse me?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Not your decision, no.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It is my decision.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I said no, I know that. I don't have a problem with your decision.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Good.

Continue.

Hon. James J. Bradley: As members know, in committee, members from all parties will hear from presenters who will have their invaluable opinion and perspective presented.

Also in committee, members from all three parties will have an opportunity to move amendments to change or strengthen the bill.

At the same time, this House can move on to debate substantive matters. There are a number of pieces of important legislation already introduced which the government would like to debate and move through the legislative process: Bill 6, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act; Bill 9, the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act; Bill 37—I know a lot of members are interested in the Invasive Species Act; Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act; Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act; Bill 52, the Protection of Public Participation Act; and Bill 73, the Smart Growth for Our Communities Act.

We'd like to spend time debating some of the other important bills currently before the House, but we cannot until Bill 40 is dealt with. As a result, I move that this question be now put.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister without Portfolio has moved that we end debate on this particular item.

After listening to the pleas from certain individuals from the Conservatives about their lack of membership being allowed to speak to this, at this time, I believe the debate will continue.

The member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, I appreciate your ruling, and I appreciate the opportunity to provide a couple of questions and comments.

We do have a number of members here today who are prepared and will be speaking to this motion. I know that the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke mentioned the same point earlier.

I want to take the opportunity to again talk about some unfinished business when it comes to our agricultural community and Bill 40.

0930

I was at the Grenville Federation of Agriculture meeting in my riding on Friday. It's one of the most successful and well-attended agricultural meetings in the riding. I did have some discussion about this bill, and I know that farmers are very interested in the legislative process that brings this bill through the House and into a committee for public hearings and then back to this House for third reading debate.

But still, it's been one year since the University of Guelph made their decision to shut our Kemptville campus, and regardless of the decision by this government to only fund the Alfred campus and not move forward with funding to help a new cohort of students for 2015-16, I still think it's a priority. I still think it should be a priority of this government, and I believe we should be able to use that opportunity to talk about the importance of agriculture education.

This bill is very important to our farmers, and I know that previous speakers this morning outlined—Mr. Nicholls, from our caucus, outlined some of issues in his riding. Agriculture education is crucial. We've got an issue in this province right now where the demand of students at the diploma and degree levels is three times the supply. It's high time that this government stopped hiding behind funding one college and not the other. They need to make a commitment to the community, they need to put some dollars on the table, and we need new, young farmers in college at that campus this fall.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? Questions and comments? Are we organized? The member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was standing, Speaker. Thank you very much.

First of all, I just want to say that one of the things a number of us have been saying about this bill, and it was commented on in the member's speech, is that the bill itself is a step in the right direction. I don't think there's anybody in this House who is saying otherwise.

But one of the questions that has to be asked is—normally, if the government is going to make the type of

announcement where they're going to announce a shift in policy, when it comes to crop insurance in this particular case, you'd think that the government would have made an allocation for the dollars in the budget, so that when the bill was introduced in the House, the money was already appropriated and the government was able to say, "Here's the bill that gives us the mechanism to expand crops and others as far as risk management, and by the way, here's the money. We've appropriated it in the budget." In this particular case, I'm not aware that the government actually appropriated any of the dollars we need within the budget to deal with the additional dollars that will be needed, essentially in the risk management program that they've now expanded.

So the problem that we've got is: You've got a risk management program with a budget this big, you have a number of various types of farming activities that are covered under the current program, we're going to expand those things to other types of farming activities, but we have the same amount of money. As a result, it means to say that we could end up in a situation where we actually have less money to compensate farmers under the risk management program because the government hasn't appropriated the dollars. Neither the parliamentary assistant nor the minister nor anybody on the government side has ever responded to: Has the government appropriated the dollars necessary to make sure the uptake to this program when it goes into effect?

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

Mr. Mike Colle: On Bill 40 here, I guess the question is: What is the purpose at this point? I think the purpose at this point is to get this bill to committee so the work can be done to help farmers. It has to go through committee. I think there's agreement on all sides that this is urgent and that this work to give crop insurance and risk management insurance to farmers across the board in Ontario is urgent.

So the government is saying, "Yes, we agree with you, the opposition. We need to act to get out there to help farmers go through the committee process so we get input from farmers who come in and make representations." Yet the opposition is saying, "No, we don't want it to go ahead. We want to keep talking."

Let's stop the talk and walk the walk by bringing this to committee so that we can respond to the urgency of helping our agricultural communities all across Ontario. That's all that really should be discussed: Do we want to stall this, delay this? I think the opposition parties are basically saying, "Yes, we want to help farmers, but not right now. We want to talk some more." Let's bring it to committee, get the work done to iron it out, make amendments, make some changes and get out there and help farmers.

Why they want to delay and stall is something they're going to have to explain. I just want to hear the explanation of why they think they should stall this urgent bill to help farmers.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise to add some question and comments to the member from St. Catharines, although to be frank, it's really hard to talk about Bill 40 when in his six minutes, he didn't actually speak to the bill. He spoke to why it needed to be moved forward. He gave examples of other bills that he would rather bring forward and debate. I think it's important for the viewers to understand that it is in fact the deputy House leader who chose which bill we were debating this morning. If he felt it was critically important for us to debate other pieces of legislation which are also on the order paper, he had every right and ability to bring those forward for debate instead of Bill 40. We are speaking about Bill 40 because the government put it on the order for speaking this morning.

There are issues that need to be dealt with. It is not a perfect bill. I know that's hard for the Liberals to understand, but they actually didn't draft a perfect bill. Part of our responsibility as legislators—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Newmarket–Aurora, I see you.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thanks, Speaker. As we—my train of thought there was dropped for a minute.

As difficult as it is for the Liberals to understand, they often don't draft perfect bills. Part of our responsibility in the opposition is to highlight those inequities, to highlight those items in the bill that are missing. I believe we are doing that in an effective way. Many of our members have talked about specific issues in their riding that would not be covered under Bill 40. I trust that that debate will continue.

As I say, it's not a perfect bill, so we have every right to debate it and add our voices to the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister has two minutes.

Hon. James J. Bradley: It is highly unusual, may I say, that this debate was not concluded on this occasion. Yesterday and today, normally following the practices of this House, debate would have ended on this bill. To see this bill continuing at the present time is really, really surprising to me because all of us in this House agree on this bill. This isn't one that's contentious. I can understand when there's disagreement taking place. But here we have a bill to which members have spoken, and all of us agree. Yet we have the debate continuing in this House after 12 hours and after 80 members have participated in one way or another, with other important legislation being there.

I could understand if it were contentious. I really do understand that. Having seen contentious bills over the years, it's good to have more views canvassed. But I am extremely surprised that this debate has not concluded second reading and is not now going to committee.

To the member, Ms. Jones, who mentioned that I had not dealt with the bill: In fact, in the early part of my speech I dealt exactly with the major provisions of this piece of legislation, which we all agree with.

I can only come to the conclusion that the purpose of this is now simply to thwart the agenda of the govern-

ment. I understand that; I've been in opposition. But to pretend that there's a compelling reason for further debate at second reading on this bill is certainly surprising to me.

What it does as well is, it starts to compel governments to begin with time allocation as opposed to allowing the free flow of debate. If that's what the opposition wants, that's a consequence of the kind of unnecessary delay that I see today.

0940

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a very high personal regard for the member for St. Catharines, the Chair of Cabinet and the deputy House leader. He has served here with distinction since 1977. He's a long-serving member. But I have to say that I disagree with him on this.

I remember, in the early days of the Harris government in 1995, the introduction of Bill 26. The opposition of the day was the Liberal Party and the New Democrats, and the Liberal Party in opposition was so incensed with Bill 26 and so violently opposed to it that they actually found a way, through the standing orders, to stop a vote in the middle of the vote. There was a member of the Legislature who sat right along here somewhere, who sat in the House for more than 24 hours to prevent the vote from continuing on a bill that the Liberal Party was violently opposed to.

In retrospect, that bill did need public hearings; that was what the Liberal Party and the opposition wanted. There were weeks of public hearings that followed what happened in the House that day, and there were a significant number of amendments to the bill.

Again, I would concur with the member for St. Catharines that this bill does need to go to committee, but, at the same time, for them to suggest that the bill doesn't need debate—I would totally disagree.

We see with this bill, I think, a division in the House—even though we support the principle of the bill, and I think all three parties are going to support it—but the way that this bill is being handled, we see a division in the House.

Why is that? Again, I think, more and more in my riding, we hear people talking about the rural-urban divide. On this side of the House, the vast majority of MPPs in our caucus represent small-town and rural ridings. We have agriculture as a huge, important, economic industry in our ridings.

The government members, by and large, represent urban and suburban ridings. I think most of them should understand the importance of agriculture to their ridings in terms of the food that we produce in rural Ontario, that they consume in their ridings. They should understand that. The old saying, "If you ate today, thank a farmer," maybe needs to be brought up again.

The fact is that we have not had any agriculture debates on bills since the election—the election being last June. Here we are now in March, not quite a year later, and I believe this is the very first piece of legislation that

the government has introduced that is related to agriculture. When we have debate on agriculture and agribusiness, we have a chance to talk about not just the bill, but of course the issue as it affects our riding and some of the general issues affecting agriculture in the province.

We have other ways of bringing those issues up, whether it's opposition day motions, perhaps, or whether it's through petitions, or whether it's letters that we send to the minister or—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There are a few discussions going on. I'd like to remind the minister, when he crosses the floor, to acknowledge the Chair. Is the minister listening? The minister can hear the Speaker? Hello? Thank you. It's a little loud—he's right beside me and I'm having trouble. There are a few sidebars going on. Take it outside, please.

Go ahead.

Mr. Ted Arnott: The fact is that we have lots of issues pertaining to agriculture in our ridings that those of us on the opposition benches would like to raise, and I only have 10 minutes to talk about them.

In my riding, in fact, in the county of Wellington, we are the third-largest milk producer in the province. We are the third-largest beef producer in the province in terms of number of cattle. We are the fourth-largest hog producer in the province. We are a significant producer of grain corn in comparison to other counties across the province. We are the second-largest producer of mixed grain, county by county, across the province. We are the second-largest sheep producer in the province of Ontario, in Wellington county.

I'm privileged to share the representation of Wellington county with the member for Perth-Wellington, and I know that he's looking forward and hopeful to have the chance to debate this bill as well. He's in committee today—there's a committee that's meeting concurrently with the House—but I'm sure that he would hope to have a chance to speak to this bill as well to talk about the importance of agriculture in his community.

I know that the farmers in our ridings would expect us to bring forward their ideas, their concerns, their aspirations, their hopes and their challenges when there is a debate on agriculture. I also know that they would hope that this bill would pass in some form—hopefully, getting it right in due course.

I think most farmers in my riding, and certainly the representatives from the commodity groups as well as the general farm organizations, recognize that there is a legislative process, that we debate issues and we discuss issues here; that there's a committee process whereby public hearings are possible and people can come in and talk about the bill and offer suggestions for improvements; and that we all will have that opportunity in due course.

In my riding, during the last provincial election, I talked about agriculture as an important responsibility of government. I recognize the hugely positive impact of agriculture and agribusiness in the Ontario economy. We

see, in terms of primary agriculture on the farm, \$13.7 billion in terms of an agricultural contribution to Ontario's annual GDP. We see 158,000 jobs generated by the farm sector across the province; \$8.1 billion in wages and salaries supported by Ontario's farm families; \$12 billion spent on farm inputs, with 58% of those jobs actually being in rural areas; and \$1.4 billion in provincial tax revenue.

This is a very, very important segment of Ontario's economy, and I think we need to repeat those numbers, to continue to remind everybody in this place of how important the agriculture sector is in terms of the overall economy of the province of Ontario.

More than 70% of Ontario farm products remain within the province. Some \$21.3 billion is the annual contribution of the food-and-beverage processor part of the industry to Ontario's GDP in 2012. We need to know, I think, and be reminded that food processing directly employs more than 91,000 workers across Ontario—and more than 193,000 secondary jobs in other areas of the economy. It's vastly important to the overall economy of the province of the Ontario.

I also want to again reiterate my support for supply management. I know that that has been brought up a couple of times during the course of this debate, and questions have been raised about the support that some people might have for supply management. I have never once wavered, in 25 years in the Legislature, in my support of supply management, and I will support it as long as I breathe.

From time to time, the Liberal Party has tried to make suggestions and cast aspersions on the support of supply management on the Conservative side of the House. I wish they would stop doing that, because they're playing a silly political game that is beneath them.

I think that we need to continue to find ways to reduce red tape in the province of Ontario, in terms of agriculture, and I talked about that during the election. I think we need to continue to find ways to enhance business risk management programs. I know that we've got some good programs in that respect, but we need to strengthen them and improve them. From time to time, we hear from farmers that the programs are not working for them, and we've got to work on that.

These are things that should be added, in my opinion, to agriculture legislation in the province of Ontario.

I strongly support research into agriculture and will continue to do so, because that's the future of agriculture for our province and for our young farmers coming forward. I think we need to continue to review ways to ensure that we have fair assessment of farm values, and that's an issue that has been a concern in my riding. Also, we need to take steps to preserve good-quality farmland, because that is the future of agriculture.

I also believe that if we preserve the future of agriculture, and we give young people a sense of hope that the agriculture industry is going to be a great opportunity going forward in the next decade—in the next millennium, Mr. Speaker—that will encourage young people. If

we preserve the family farm, they will, in turn, preserve our best-quality farmland.

Again, Mr. Speaker, with respect to Bill 40, we say that Ontario is currently the only province without the legislative authority to offer plans for a broad range of agriculture products, and Bill 40 is intended to address that issue.

In Ontario, we know that production insurance is delivered by Agricorp, a crown agent, and of course, Agricorp is based in Guelph, which is a community very close to my riding. In fact, my riding surrounds it on all sides, and I have a significant number of constituents who actually work there. They're good people, and they do a great job on behalf of our farmers in the province of Ontario.

Our farmers have long requested production insurance plans that move beyond just crops to include insurance for additional agricultural products. Bill 40, I gather, is an effort to address that concern, and we're pleased that it has been brought forward. Currently, we know that Ontario has available production insurance for almost 90 commercially grown crops, including grains and oilseeds, corn, soy, wheat, tree fruits, grapes, vegetables, specialty crops and forage.

0950

Mr. Speaker, again, I conclude—I only had 10 minutes to talk. Unfortunately, I spent about the first five minutes of my speech talking about the way the government is managing this bill in the House and my concerns about that. But I would again express support on second reading for the principle of this bill, and my hope that the bill, in due course, after the members have had an opportunity to debate the bill and discuss the issues—especially with respect to their ridings—that in fact this bill will move forward in the legislative process.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always a pleasure to speak in this House, particularly on an agriculture issue, and to follow the member from Wellington–Halton Hills. I always enjoy listening to his comments because he's thoughtful, talks about his riding and talks about what's important to the issue at hand.

What's most important to the issue at hand here is—we hear from the other side that this bill is being delayed. But actually, this bill should have been proposed in 2003. This government has been delaying it. A majority government for most of that time, a Liberal government, has been sitting on its hands while the other provinces moved ahead. They've been sitting on their hands for a decade, and now they're worried if it takes another half-hour or an hour. Really, it's the decade that's the problem.

What is a big issue with this bill—and we've brought it up several times, and it's the crucial part of this bill: There is no money attached. To increase the coverage to more products: great idea. But the way it works, the farmer pays 40%; the province, 26%; and the feds, 34%. Unless it's identified where that 26% is going to come from, and since we don't see any new money coming

down the pipe, if more products are covered, that means that the government is going to take money out of some other pot. And if it's the agricultural-risk-management pot, then that's a direct loss to farmers. That's not beyond the pale, because when the risk management program was developed—it's a very good program, but it needed about \$200 million to work financially, to balance, and what this government did is, they capped it at \$100 million. Farmers know very well that this government can and will actually take money from one pot and put it in another pot, and make it look like it's a net gain when actually it's a net loss. That's why it's so important we discuss this bill and home in on where the money is coming from.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: If members of this House want to know why governments bring in time allocation motions, it's because of what we have witnessed in this House for the last two sessions. When normally the time for the legislation passing on second reading would have passed, normally it would have been approved, and it is not. So don't be surprised when you get time allocation motions when this happens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from—

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Carleton–Mississippi Mills; sorry.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It's a pleasure to speak to this bill. It's unfortunate that there are those who would choose to thwart the democratic opportunity to debate this bill to its full potential, as many of us would like to do.

Beyond that, I would say that this bill is a very good bill; great idea. It's going to do something that needs to have been done for a considerable length of time. That was pointed out by the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

The year 2003 created an incident where there was a great need to provide the kind of coverage, protection, endorsement and support of farmers in Ontario that was provided by all the other provinces of Canada. So we have a great lack over the last 10 years or even 12 years of addressing a problem that is 12 years old. That was mad cow disease, when government chose—because of one cow—to close the American border—to tell the world about the one cow, which resulted in the closing of the American border, which was 50% of the exports of beef cattle from Canada.

Overnight, cows went from being worth 60 cents a pound to as little as two cents a pound, which covered less than the trucking and the auctioning costs of the cow. It literally became more economical for the farmer to take the cow out behind the barn and shoot it and bury it in the manure pile than ship it to market. That was good food that had no value because of a government decision to so-called protect people from a problem that didn't exist, because never has anybody in Canada ever gotten sick

from or died from eating Canadian beef that had mad cow disease. So it was a problem that didn't exist that cost billions of dollars. This legislation will help fix that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I think the point has been made by my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane about the dollars part.

I just want to say that for the member from St. Catharines to get up in this House and say, “Oh, my God, we've talked about this too long and we should move things along”—first of all, New Democrats have pretty well finished debating this bill, so let's put that on the record.

The bigger thing is, I remember that the member for St. Catharines, when we had rules in this House that you could speak without limit, would take the floor for two or three days on a regular occasion. I sat exactly in the seat you sit in now, and I remember the member—because the opposition of the day had a strategy that they were trying to hold the government to account on either a budget or on a particular matter that they were rightfully worried about. I remember the member for St. Catharines grabbing the floor for more than a day at a time on more than one occasion. And you know what? That was perfectly within his rights, because the rules of the day allowed members to speak and there was no limit to how long they could speak.

In the opposition at that day, which was a Liberal opposition under Lyn McLeod—or it might have been Bob Nixon; I can't remember what particular time it was—the member used the floor in order to hold the government to account and put points on the record in regard to what was important to him and to others in this province, not only his own caucus, when it came to the issue at hand. You know what? That's democracy. I didn't like it as a government member. I know that the member from Wellington–Halton Hills would have been here at the same time, and he would remember the same thing, where the member did that.

I also remember at times some of your caucus doing the same. I remember—I don't remember the riding—Mr. Stockwell doing the same thing. I forget what budget bill it was. I remember the leader of the third party, Mr. Harris, reading into the record the names of every lake and river in the province of Ontario. They used the rules in order to hold the government to account. That's what it was all about, so we shouldn't take it personally.

Democracy is about checks and balances. At the end, the government always gets its way, and that's the way the system works, but the opposition has the right to be able to express concern.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Wellington–Halton Hills has two minutes.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the members for Timiskaming–Cochrane, St. Catharines, Carleton–Mississippi Mills and Timmins–James Bay.

The member for St. Catharines, in his brief response, alluded to the responsibility of government to get its

legislation through the House, but I would again suggest to him that the opposition has a responsibility to draw attention to the flaws and drawbacks of government policy, generally speaking, and to ensure that there is thorough and adequate debate.

There is another mechanism, and the member for St. Catharines definitely alluded to it, to terminate debate in the House, and that is through time allocation motions, for some reason more recently. In fact, the government has used that mechanism on a number of occasions, especially in the minority Parliament prior to the election, and now has chosen strategically to move to this other way of terminating debate, shutting down the opposition through motions to close off debate.

I think back to 1957, when the majority Liberal government of Louis St. Laurent in Ottawa was bringing in the pipeline bill. When they brought in a closure motion to shut off the debate from the CCF members as well as the Conservative members in opposition at that time, it caused such a sensation across the country that parliamentary democracy was being usurped by an overly arrogant Liberal government, in this case, shutting down debate, shutting down the voice of the people, in many cases, through the parliamentary process, that it actually led to an election and then in turn to the defeat of the Liberal government. Of course, not too many people study history anymore in Canada, but it's something to think about. If government goes too far and it shuts down the will of the people through opposition debate, it can sow the seeds, certainly, of significant political change when an election comes. Again, I bring that up.

Thank you very much for listening to my comments on Bill 40 this morning.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: It occurs to me that I too have not had my say on Bill 40, so I'd like to do that. I'd like to just talk about how this province, and certainly this government, is committed to helping our agri-food partners manage risk. These are some of the things that I know, in the times that I was out in Perth county visiting our dairy farmers, our hog farmers and our chicken farmers—they told me at the time.

It's very important that we move forward with this bill. We've got to get it to committee because this bill has to get working for our farmers.

I understand the reason that people want to talk about it in here. We all know that we're going to support it once it gets through committee, and we're going to support it when it gets back in here at third reading.

This is a bill that talks about how we help farmers cope with weather, disease, extreme market fluctuations such as what we're seeing now in the up and down of the Canadian dollar. This product insurance makes timely payments to producers and, most importantly for producers, it eliminates the need for ad hoc, costly band-aid responses to adverse conditions in the climate or in markets.

At the moment, Ontario's current inability to offer production insurance plans for commodities beyond crops

and perennial plants represents, particularly for farmers, a very significant gap. When producers suffer losses and they don't have production insurance coverage, they may actually have to come to the province for either direct or ad hoc assistance. They don't want to do that, and we don't want to do that.

This is the kind of bill that, if passed, will help our farmers better manage risk and encourage greater innovation, job creation and growth in the agri-food sector.

Speaker, as you know, this very important piece of legislation was introduced in November 2014. The bill has continued past the point of six and a half hours of debate, so that more members would have an opportunity to present their views. The bill has now seen well more than 10 hours of debate, and I understand that more than 80 members have either spoken—

Mr. Steve Clark: Bill 31 had 13 hours.

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: I got carried away.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Again, the member from Leeds–Grenville will cut it back quite a bit.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm just trying to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I don't know what you were trying to do. Regardless—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'm talking; you're listening. Thank you. So cut it back. Thank you.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm really surprised at my colleague from Leeds–Grenville. He knows that as a goal-tender I'm just impervious to this kind of heckling. I don't understand what would motivate him to try, but if he wishes, he's welcome to do it.

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order: He can stick to the bill rather than talking about me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Listen, I know this is almost like school and I may have to call people out to the principal's office if they continue with this bantering. So, please, cut it back and no more comments about hockey and other things. Let's stick to the bill. Thanks.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Oh, another voice is heard from. Thank you very much.

Go ahead.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Well, Speaker, then let's just get right to the point. Given the number of members who have spoken to the bill, given the hours that it's debated, I move that the question now be put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Mississauga–Streetsville moves that the question now be put.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Listen, there's a lot of pressure on the little old Speaker here, so I'm going to take a five-minute recess and discuss with the Clerks' table and the powers that be where we're going to go with this.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Who's the powers that be?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The powers that be? You'll find out.

The House recessed from 1004 to 1009.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): After in-depth debate, and advice that I have taken through past procedures—for example, Bill 31, which has been mentioned by the opposition, was debated for 14 hours, and Speaker Nicholls moved closure on that. I personally have ordered closure at 10 hours and 10 minutes on the government's anti-SLAPP legislation. These are just some of many, many other examples of varying hours of debate that I've had to kind of have a mean position on, in the middle of the road.

Mr. Delaney has moved that the question be now put. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear noes.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

This will be voted on after question period.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Orders of the day.

MAKING HEALTHIER CHOICES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 POUR DES CHOIX PLUS SAINS

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 3, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to enhance public health by enacting the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2015 and the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2015 and by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / Projet de loi 45, Loi visant à améliorer la santé publique par l'édiction de la Loi de 2015 pour des choix santé dans les menus et de la Loi de 2015 sur les cigarettes électroniques et la modification de la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The last position on this was from the NDP. Further debate, please. The member from Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity. I recognize that my time may be limited.

This bill was addressed at length by my colleague the Ontario NDP's health critic, France Gélinas, a few days ago. I want to refer back to her comments because I think they're quite substantive and speak to the history and the prospects for this bill.

She was very pleased to have the opportunity to talk to this because this bill contains many bills that she, in the past, has put forward. The bill addresses three areas.

The first addresses the question of healthy menu choices. In effect, this will require those who are selling prepared food—food to go, fast food, nice restaurants—to inform people through menu labels as to what they're getting. This is an issue that Madame Gélinas had been

bringing forward since 2009. As much as it would have been a good thing to have passed her bill in its previous iterations, it's probably a good idea that it's incorporated into this one.

The second schedule in this bill deals with amendments to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban flavoured tobacco. Again, this is an issue that she's been working on since 2008. It's 2015. There are a number of years there where this bill could have been enforced, Madame Gélinas's earlier private member's bill, and it would have had a positive impact on reducing the risk of cancer for people in Ontario. The government should have let that bill go forward years ago; unfortunately, it didn't. It's incorporating it into this bill. I guess once again one can say, "Better late than never," but frankly, Speaker, it should have been much earlier.

The third schedule talks about what are known as e-cigarettes, vaporizers or vapers—whichever one you want to call them—but basically brings regulation to e-cigarettes. Those are the three main sections of this bill.

Let's start looking at it in greater detail through menu labelling. The statistics to encourage menu labelling are rather stark. We face a different world than we did 20, 30, 40, 50 years ago, when more people cooked at home. People would go to grocery stores; they would buy food; they would be able to read nutrition labelling on the food that they purchased. People were able to make choices based on their interest and the nutritional information that was provided with the food.

When you look at food labelling in grocery stores, you'll see labelling that tries to appeal to people's health consciousness. A lot of brands will talk about having zero cholesterol, zero calories. I don't know whether you actually get zero calories; maybe with club soda. Who knows? But the simple packaging of food, the attractive label on the cover, is also matched with information on the package about exactly how many calories you're taking in when you consume that food and what other nutritional factors are to be considered.

Mr. Speaker, I sense from subtle indications on your part that I may be running short on time. I appreciate the opportunity to start my address, and I thank you. I know that you'll recess, and I'll have an opportunity to continue at a later point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'd like to thank the member from Toronto–Danforth. Obviously, with time restraints, we will continue where we left off with him.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): As it's now 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Steve Clark: I just want to introduce a fine upcoming business in my riding in the beautiful town of

Gananoque. In the gallery is Bruce Davis, the owner of the Gananoque Brewing Co. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's my pleasure to introduce, in the gallery today, three members from the University of Windsor Faculty Association: Debbie Noble, Pierre Boulos and my buddy Brian Brown. Also joining us today, from King's University College Faculty Association, is Claude Olivier. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's my pleasure today to welcome Verle Thompson, Motion, and none other than Mr. Kardinal Offishall, the great Canadian international artist, here joining us today.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I have a couple of different groups: first of all, my good friends Edward and Carol Vitunski and their son Ed Vitunski, who are here from North Bay—welcome; and also Todd Horton, who is here from the Nipissing University Faculty Association.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I, too, want to welcome Carol and Ed Vitunski to the Legislature this morning. Not only are they from North Bay, but they are the parents of my senior communications adviser, Aly Vitunski, who is with them here at Queen's Park today.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce some members of the Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce, this being Sarnia-Lambton Day: Rob Taylor, Rory Ring, Monica Shepley, Debbie Harksen, Dave Ferguson, Dave Moody, Dean Edwardson, Don Wood, Jim Bradshaw, Jim Janssens, Jonathan Holmes, Keith Stevens, Ken Faulkner, Leo Stathakis, Lianne Birkbeck, Mark Lumley, Marty Raaymakers, Murray McLaughlin, Peter Hungerford, Rick Perdeaux, Shauna Carr, Spencer Dickson. Also, Don McGugan, the mayor of Brooke-Alvinston, is here with us, and Cindy Scholten, Sarnia city councillor.

Everyone is welcome to Sarnia-Lambton Day today.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I hope everyone will join me in welcoming three guests from the universities in Waterloo who are here today as part of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations lobby day. From the University of Waterloo Faculty Association, Jasmin Habib and David Porreca, and from Wilfrid Laurier University Faculty Association, Robert Kristofferson.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'd like to welcome page captain Niko Hoogeveen's family: mother Dr. Kelly Emerson Hoogeveen, father Dr. Paul Hoogeveen, sister Hanna Hoogeveen, grandmother Ann Hoogeveen and grandfather Harry Hoogeveen.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to introduce Larry Savage, my good friend from Niagara. He's a professor at Brock University. Welcome.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to welcome members from the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations visiting the House today. Actually, they have a lobby day today, and I invite all members of this House to visit them in rooms 228 and 230 this afternoon.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd like members of the assembly to join me in welcoming Laura Parker from the McMaster University Faculty Association. She's here today to watch question period as part of the group that's here.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'd like to welcome Diane Beauchemin from the Queen's University Faculty Association. Welcome.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted to introduce Alison Hearn and Kristin Hoffmann. They're from the Western faculty association in the great riding of London North Centre, and they're here with OCUFA.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to introduce three individuals from the Ontario Hospital Association's northern leadership council. Welcome to Queen's Park. We have Ray Hunt, who's the CEO of Espanola Regional Hospital and Health Centre; Allan Katz, CEO of Riverside Health Care Facilities; and Derek Graham, CEO of Manitoulin Health Centre and a board member of the Ontario Hospital Association.

I'd be remiss if I didn't also point out Bruce Davis, who wears many hats, among which is his involvement with the Ontario Film Review Board, the president of Gananoque Brewing Co. and my former campaign manager.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd like to welcome somebody who I think will be arriving shortly, a visitor from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Mike Radan. Mike has been very actively involved in the community there for many years but he's also the father of my staff member Mackenzie Radan. Welcome to both for question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): With us in the Speaker's gallery today is a friend and a professional firefighter, Gavin Jacklyn, along with his daughter, Grace Jacklyn, to learn about democracy in action. We're glad you're here with us.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. Since we don't seem to be getting any answers from you in this House regarding the Sudbury bribery scandal, and you apparently are having scheduling problems trying to meet with the OPP, may we suggest that the best use of your time in the next hour would be to leave question period and go meet with the OPP? Will you do that, Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand that the member opposite is now going to take a facetious tack. I actually take this very seriously.

The fact is that that meeting is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please—stop the clock. A quick announcement: I'll be jumping quite quickly on all of the interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The fact is that that meeting is being set up. I've said all along that I will co-operate with the authorities; we are co-operating with authorities. That meeting is being arranged.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the Premier: Premier, you met with the Chief Electoral Officer sometime between January 26 and February 3 in relation to the investigation he started in mid-December into the Sudbury by-election. On February 9, you told reporters that you would be meeting with the OPP in relation to the investigation they restarted on January 16, and you just reiterated that right now. Yet, here we are nine weeks later, and your so-called scheduling issues are holding up the meeting.

Premier, wouldn't you agree that delaying a meeting with the OPP for over two months is tantamount to interfering in the Sudbury investigation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm not delaying anything. We are in the process of setting up that meeting. The member opposite can twist this any way he chooses, but the fact is the meeting is being set up. We're in the process of organizing that—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's not just about my calendar; there are other factors. I will have that meeting when it's arranged.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the Premier. Premier, when you were chosen as Liberal leader, you loved to talk about how different you were going to be from your predecessor Dalton McGuinty.

Premier, the OPP investigation into the gas plant scandal started in June 2013, yet Dalton McGuinty didn't meet with the OPP investigators until April of the following year. So I ask you, Premier, will it take 10 months for you to meet with the OPP just like it took 10 months for Dalton McGuinty to meet with the OPP?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I was chosen as the leader, and then we went to an election and we won a general election. Then we won a by-election in Sudbury. I have a feeling that that's actually what this is about.

It's actually about the fact that we are implementing an agenda that we took to the people of Ontario. It's a positive agenda. It's building the province up. It's investing in the infrastructure and in the talent and skills of people that we know are necessary for the 21st century. That's not the platform that the party opposite ran on, and I think it's sticking in their craw.

Interjections.

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

New question.

1040

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Premier. On February 9, the media reported that you and your deputy chief of staff were going to meet with OPP investigators regarding the alleged bribery allegations.

Premier, on exactly what date were you, your office or your lawyers contacted by the OPP to schedule that meeting?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I go again to the answer that I have been giving in this House and will continue to give. There is an investigation going on. Part of that investigation is the arrangement of meetings with a number of people. I don't have access to all that information. The authorities are doing that. They are talking to people; they're talking to the people to whom they choose to speak. They're setting up meetings as they choose to. We are working with them to set up one specific meeting between me and the authorities. We'll continue to make those arrangements.

But in the interim, there are other things happening, but we don't have access to those, because as I have said many times, this is an investigation that's happening outside the Legislature, not inside the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Premier: Again, it has been over five weeks since we learned that you were asked to meet with the OPP.

But, Speaker, tonight is the annual Liberal Party Heritage Dinner. Before anybody goes out to rush to buy a ticket, it's \$1,550 a ticket. My question is, Premier, why is a \$1,500-a-plate Liberal fundraiser more important to you than having a meeting with the OPP?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I know that this is the frame that the party opposite wants to put on the public discussion.

The party opposite is trying to construe the situation so that, somehow, I am avoiding meeting with the OPP. Mr. Speaker, that is tantamountly not true. It is not true. The meeting is being set up. I am working with the authorities. As soon as that arrangement can be made, I will have that meeting. That is the truth.

Interjections.

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

Final supplementary.

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Premier: Premier, the maximum punishment for bribery under the Election Act is two years less a day. The Criminal Code offence attracts a far stiffer penalty: A bribery conviction could mean up to 14 years in prison.

The Chief Electoral Officer can't lay charges. He can only pass his findings on to the Attorney General. Premier, is the reason you were so quick to meet with Elections Ontario but not with the OPP the fact that, if criminally convicted, your deputy chief of staff could be facing a lengthy prison term?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's just be clear that in the same way that Elections Ontario organized a meeting with me—we worked with them, and we had that meeting—that's how we're working with the other authorities.

Let's just be clear on what the Chief Electoral Officer said. He clearly stated, "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order and not discuss issues while the questions and answers are being put. The deputy House leader will not engage in the same conversation—and I don't need any coaching. That's the second time for both.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I had the meeting with Elections Ontario.

The Chief Electoral Officer said, "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges."

Mr. Speaker, that investigation is ongoing, and I will meet with the OPP when that meeting is arranged.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs will come to order.

Hon. David Oraziotti: It's the member from Miami Beach.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The tendency is to try to bring the temperature down. If that member wishes to identify anyone, they know that it's by their riding or their title only.

New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The Premier says she's working with the OPP, but she hasn't met with them. The Premier says there were no bribes offered to Andrew Olivier, but there are calls and warrants and independent reports that show evidence of bribes. The Premier insists she's answering questions. Sure, she stands up and talks, but she hasn't answered anything, Speaker.

Will the Premier start answering questions about her role in the Sudbury bribery scandal both in this House and with the OPP?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I will absolutely—first of all, I do answer the questions that the opposition asks of me and I will answer substantially when the question is appropriate to the place.

The fact is, there's an investigation going on. Members of the opposition and the third party want to direct that investigation themselves. The fact is that they are not the authorities to undertake that investigation. The authorities are outside of this Legislature and we will work with those authorities, as it should be, outside of the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's been five weeks since the Sudbury bribery scandal and four weeks of questions, but the Premier seems to believe that she's above answering questions either in this House or with the OPP. She doesn't seem to think that Ontarians deserve the respect of having the Premier give an honest answer to an honest question.

If the Premier won't meet with the OPP to answer their questions, then surely she must see the responsibility that she has to answer questions in this House, so I'm going to ask yet another one: Who gave the orders to Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party is absolutely inaccurate when she says that I will not meet with the OPP. That is just not the truth. I am going to meet with the OPP. That meeting is being set up. It hasn't happened yet, that's true, but it will happen and I will co-operate fully, as I have said I will do, with the investigation which is taking place outside of this Legislature.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberal government is under the cloud of a bribery scandal, but there is something deeper than that. There is a question of transparency and integrity that's part of every action of this government. If the government refuses to answer questions about a criminal investigation, one that goes to the very heart of the Premier's very own inner circle of advisers, how can they be trusted with anything?

Is the Premier avoiding meeting the OPP in an effort to influence the timing of the charges being laid?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I am avoiding nothing. There is a meeting being set up. I will take part in that meeting. I have said that consistently. The fact is, the meeting hasn't been set up yet. There are many, many aspects to an investigation, but the fact is I don't know all of those. I don't know what else is going on in terms of the investigation, for a good reason, and that is that the investigation is taking place outside of this Legislature, not inside the Legislature. I will work with the authorities as part of that investigation.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Political corruption, bribery, protecting insiders, refusing to answer basic questions, dirty deals and dodging the OPP investigators: Will the Premier commit to doing better and start by answering questions about her role in the Sudbury bribery scandal either in this House or in the OPP investigation room?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have said repeatedly that I will work with the authorities, I will answer the questions that I am asked. But for the leader of the third party to try to again construe this situation as somehow me avoiding having those conversations is just inaccurate. She's just not speaking the truth. The truth is, the meeting is being set up. I have committed to having that meeting and as soon as it's arranged, I will take part.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There is something truly ridiculous when the Premier won't even tell Ontarians whether Pat Sorbara is attending cabinet meetings, claiming that she can't because there's an investigation ongoing by police—an investigation she is stalling and hampering by

refusing to be interviewed by investigators. The Premier must realize that this is absurd. Few, if any, citizens in this province would be able to dodge being questioned about a criminal offence for this long.

1050

Will the Premier stop dodging the OPP investigators, stop stalling this investigation and agree to meet with the OPP immediately?

Interjections.

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

While it is my task to listen carefully to the questions and answers—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): While it is my task to listen carefully to the questions and answers, I believe I did hear something said previously that should not have been said, so I'm going to ask the Premier to withdraw.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I withdraw.

Hon. James J. Bradley: After what she said over there?

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): At any time, anyone wishes to challenge the Chair, the option is there.

Premier: answer.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let me just repeat that I have every intention to meet with the authorities. That meeting is being set up. I would never want to stall or hinder the investigation. I have been clear that I will work with the authorities.

In terms of answering the questions that in this House are questions being asked by people who, I think, want the investigation to happen in here—I just want to refer back to the comments of the member for Timmins–James Bay. He was talking about me, but his principle applies to everyone. He said, on February 27, “You do have a larger responsibility to make sure you’re careful in the use of your words so you don’t interfere in any ... way.” I think that he’s right, and we need to pay attention to that on all sides of the House, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, after five weeks, the Premier can’t seem to find a single hour to sit down with the OPP anti-rackets branch investigators. Though she—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: Tell the truth. Tell the truth. Be honest.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Economic Development will come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Though she seems to have lots of time for the Liberal Heritage Dinner tonight, I have to wonder if Gerry Loughheed is going to be there, Speaker. Might I suggest to the Premier that she actually skip question period tomorrow and instead schedule a meeting with OPP investigators? It’s not as though she’s answering any questions here.

Would the Premier agree to stop stalling the investigation, skip question period tomorrow morning and allow the OPP investigators to do their job, sit down with them and start answering their questions?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have been very clear in this House, and with the people of Ontario in statements that I’ve made publicly, that I have every intention of meeting with the OPP when that meeting is set up. The meeting is being set up.

I actually think it does the people of Ontario a real disservice to characterize behaviour in such a way that suggests that we only do one thing at a time, that, in fact, I can’t co-operate with the authorities and still govern the province. That’s just not the case.

There is a lot of work that needs to be done, whether it is legislation that is going to make sure we invest in infrastructure, whether it’s legislation that puts in place an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, whether it is making sure that on all fronts we are responding to emergencies, like the emergency in Gogama. There is a lot of work to be done, and, as government, we have to do a lot of things at the same time.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Premier. I noticed that you have been smiling and grinning through much of question period this morning, but I’m very concerned about the attitude demonstrated by you and your government.

You’re the first government that has been accused of breaching the Election Act, and you’re under four separate OPP investigations. But there’s more: We are seeing a disturbing level of abuse across all of your government, a complete disregard for ethics not just by you but by individuals across the public service who are following your example.

Premier, if you don’t demonstrate leadership, it will only get worse. Will you take a step in the right direction and meet with the OPP immediately?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I remind the member opposite again that there is an ongoing investigation, and it would be highly inappropriate for anybody to engage in any conjecture or presumptions here, as the case may be. The Premier has been very clear: She will co-operate with the authorities, and then we will do so.

I think what we need to really focus on are issues that are at hand. We know the agenda of the party opposite, which is to cut 100,000 hard-working Ontarians’ jobs. We know that they want to cut about 22,000 jobs just from teachers.

We need to make sure that we let the independent authorities do their work and focus on issues that are important to Ontarians. I ask all members to respect how our system works when it comes to independent police investigations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I see the House leader is grinning as well.

Back to the Premier. How about these for issues: our Ontario Provincial Police union, Ornge and a Ministry of Labour bureaucrat? When you fail to lead by example, others take note. Whether it's a failure of ministerial oversight or a bureaucrat under investigation for extortion and shakedowns, the buck stops with you. When you won't meet with the police over an ongoing investigation, you send a very clear message to everyone that you think you're above the law.

This needs to stop, and it needs to stop now. I can't imagine it getting worse, but it probably will. Premier, will you do your job? Will you lead by example, set a tone that your government is not above the law and meet with the OPP now?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I would argue that the Premier is leading by example because she is focusing on issues that are important to Ontarians and because she is investing and making sure that we are growing our economy all across the province. She is taking actions to ensure that we have good-paying jobs for hard-working Ontarians. She is investing in building our infrastructure, both public transit and other critical infrastructure.

That is how the Premier is leading, and we ask the members opposite to really focus on issues that are important to Ontarians on the mandate that was given to us by the people of Ontario in the election that happened just recently, almost a year ago.

Any investigation that is taking place outside this House, we should respect that process and let the police and other authorities do their work.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, when were you first briefed about the plan to offer Andrew Olivier a job so he could get out of the way of Ms. Wynne appointing Mr. Thibeault as a candidate?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can tell you that I was delighted to learn that the Premier had met with Mr. Thibeault and that he was indeed interested in leaving in the New Democratic Party and joining the Liberal Party, leaving the House of Commons to join the Ontario Legislature. I was thrilled, and the more I learned about that man, the happier I was and the more I knew he was making the right decision.

He is a man of enormous integrity. He has contributed to his community. Glenn Thibeault is already making a contribution. He was up in Gogama. He visited the site and was there representing the government at that disaster. He's a fine MPP, and he's going to get even better the more time he spends here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Back to the Deputy Premier: Seeing as the Deputy Premier seems to know the intimate details of the Premier's discussion with her soul, has she spoken with the OPP anti-racket investigation to share her version of the Sudbury bribery scandal?

1100

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have not been invited to participate in such a conversation. If I were, I would be more than delighted to participate.

But I do want to really underline—because you asked the question about the decision of Glenn Thibeault to leave the New Democratic Party and join the Liberal Party. It must have been a difficult decision to make. I know it's difficult to tell your campaign team, tell your staff, tell your friends that you've made a decision, but he made that decision for all the right reasons. He made that decision because he knew that the Premier and this government were in tune with his values, his priorities. He knew that sitting on this side of the House and in this House he would make a contribution that would make the lives of people in Sudbury better.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: My question is one of interest and concern to all Ontarians, and it is for the minister responsible for women's issues. We know that one in three women will experience some form of sexual assault in her lifetime. We also know that 28% of women say they've been on the receiving end of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours or sexually charged talk in the workplace. This is not okay; in fact, it's never okay.

Last Friday, when our government released *It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment*, I was incredibly proud of the work of our Premier and our government on this issue. In fact, it took me back to 1992 when, while at the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, I had the incredible privilege of working with women across Canada on the development of the rape shield legislation.

I've heard very positive comments on our plan from my constituents in Burlington and our local women's shelter in particular. Speaker, through you, can the minister share some background on our plan for the benefit of this House?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm just so excited, and I want to thank the member from Burlington for the very important question, for her work on this important cause and for being appointed to the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment.

Our action plan is something that we're very proud of and deepens our commitment to ending sexual violence and harassment. We've committed \$41 million over the next three years to support the plan's implementation. It includes a public education campaign, a curriculum that develops a deeper learning about healthy relationships and consent. It includes a focus on stronger workplace safety legislation, an enhanced prosecution model and a focus on post-secondary education. There's so much more. These are not our first steps, Speaker, and won't be our last either.

Hearing the Premier say—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles:—that the problem of sexual violence and harassment is rooted in deeply held beliefs in women and men, power and equality, was very powerful—

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

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I think this is about active—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When I say “Thank you,” you sit.

Supplementary?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'd like to thank the minister for her leadership on this issue.

As the Premier has referenced, recent incidents have brought this discussion from the sidelines into the spotlight once again. A lot of time has passed since the rape shield law, but clearly we have much more work to do.

Every day across this province in cities and towns, in boardrooms, on shop floors and university campuses, women are experiencing violence and harassment. Our commitment to eliminating harassment and violence is clear. We've increased funding to organizations and programs targeting violence by 63% since 2002. We grew those investments last year to \$145 million. Now the new investments to support the action plan will allow us to do even more.

Can the minister outline what concrete steps these new investments will achieve in helping to change attitudes, provide support to survivors and make workplaces and campuses safer and more responsive to complaints about sexual violence and harassment?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thanks to the member for the supplementary question.

Speaker, the plan is very comprehensive. I'll just highlight a few of the key elements here: strengthening provisions on sexual violence and harassment in legislation; enhancing laws to strengthen enforcement; access to quality and timely care in hospital-based assault and domestic violence treatment centres; a public awareness campaign; a creative fund to provoke conversation and dialogue on consent, rape culture and gender equality; updated training for front-line workers; an enhanced prosecution model; legislation requiring universities and colleges to have sexual violence and harassment policies, including prevention and response protocols; stabilizing and increasing funding for assault centres; a pilot program to provide free, independent legal advice to survivors where cases are proceeding to a criminal trial; and establishing, of course, a permanent round table on sexual violence and harassment.

We're very excited about these initiatives, Speaker—

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

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. Premier, it's become apparent to everyone that despite your assertions otherwise, you have no intention of aiding the Ontario Provincial Police in their investigation into this Sudbury bribery scandal.

It has been more than five long weeks since the OPP made it known that they would like to speak with you regarding your involvement in this sordid affair. If you had nothing to do with this scandal, you would have been eager to speak with the police. You would have done it over five weeks ago.

Premier, are you stonewalling because you are the central player in this investigation and all the orders can be traced back to you?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'll be meeting with the OPP when that meeting is arranged. I've been very clear that I will work with the authorities. As I've said over and over again in this House, that meeting is being set up, and I will take part in it when it's arranged.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier, I suppose I shouldn't be surprised by your reluctance to speak to the OPP or to answer questions, because we all know that dodging and ducking has become your MO.

I remember very well your questionable testimony to the gas plants committee.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Where did you get your information?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Education, come to order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The difference here is that you'd be answering questions directly—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Stop the clock. Right through my request for you to come to order, you continued speaking. Minister of Education, come to order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier, the difference here is that you would be answering questions directly in front of the Ontario Provincial Police. You can't get your MPPs to shut them down.

Criminal investigations into breaches of the Election Act and bribery allegations will eventually hold everyone involved responsible. The OPP are not going away. We, the opposition, are not going away. Will you finally do the right thing, co-operate, meet with the police and, in the meantime, suspend Pat Sorbara and Gerry Loughheed?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: First of all, on this side of the House, we don't want the opposition to go away either. We want them to stay where they are. It suits them well.

Let me tell you, Speaker, what the Premier's strategy is. The Premier's strategy is simple: It's to serve the people of Ontario. She is doing so by working on issues that are important to Ontarians. That's what she ran on in the last election and that's what we received a majority mandate on: to focus on building Ontario up, making sure that we are investing in our infrastructure across the province, making sure that we have retirement income security for hard-working Ontarians.

There is a process that is going on outside of this Legislature. The Premier has been absolutely clear that she will co-operate and that all of those details are being

worked out. But what we need to focus on in this House is issues that are important to Ontarians. We should not interfere in an independent investigation, and I urge the members to please focus on issues.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Attorney General. When did the Attorney General learn about the plan to offer Andrew Olivier a job in order to get out of the Premier's way?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Monsieur Speaker, as you know, the process is very clear. I am not involved in all of this. Also, the election commissioner was very clear. He informed both parties—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: The commissioner informed both parties. So I'll say to the member that he should ask his House leader, because his House leader received a letter from the commissioner explaining the process and how my position is left out of this exercise.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Again to the Attorney General: The Attorney General was scheduled to speak at a Liberal campaign event in Sudbury, but she cancelled at the last minute. I can only imagine it's because she realized the optics were quite terrible.

For weeks, New Democrats have called on the Attorney General for assurances that the bribery investigation would be independent. It took weeks to get results. Has the Attorney General spoken to the OPP anti-racket investigators about her knowledge of the Sudbury bribery scandal?

1110

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: As I explained in the House previously, the Attorney General is left out of this process and this was explained very clearly by the election commissioner. I wanted to make sure that I protected the integrity of the position, so that's why I stayed out of the exercise. And yes, I didn't go to Sudbury because I wanted to make sure that I respected my position. I respect the integrity of the position.

GOVERNMENT ASSETS

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's unfortunate that the opposition haven't been asking any questions about government policy today. It's unfortunate they're not focused on the priorities of Ontarians. However, on behalf of the residents of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, I do have a question for the Minister of Energy on the recent news regarding Hydro One.

Minister, the government has asked Ed Clark to conduct a review of government assets in order to increase investments in—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Put your question, please.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There were reports yesterday that the government is considering issuing an initial public offering for Hydro One. Minister, could you please inform this House on the validity of these reports and what the government is planning on doing in regard to asset review and, more specifically, Hydro One?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'd like to thank the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for this relevant question regarding government policy. This is a very important and very topical issue, and I'm glad the member is taking the opportunity to ask it.

The Premier's Advisory Council on Government Assets has yet to provide its final recommendations to the government, and at this time it would be premature to suggest any decisions have been made. Let me be clear: none have.

Despite what the NDP says, we asked the council to retain the government's long-term ownership of OPG, Hydro One and the LCBO. We need to find ways to generate revenue so that Ontario can invest in its long-term energy needs, build badly needed highways, schools, hospitals and transit, and invest in important projects like the Ring of Fire. We look forward to receiving the council's recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: Thank you, Minister, for that very detailed response. Investing in infrastructure is very important to the people of Etobicoke–Lakeshore and all residents of Ontario. They rely on our roads, our public transit and our hydro system in order to be able to go about their daily lives. I'm happy to hear that the government will await the final recommendation of Ed Clark's panel before making any decisions.

When it comes to Hydro One, it's important that the government maintain ownership of the asset. It's also important that whatever decision is made respecting Hydro One doesn't negatively impact the ratepayers.

Minister, could you please inform this House on how the government—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: —is ensuring that the needs are met of both of these very important objectives when it comes to the review of our energy assets?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member again. The member is correct when he says that investing in infrastructure is important to people, not only in his riding but across the province. This is about improving people's quality of life, improving opportunities for the people of Ontario and building our economy. Whether it's a new highway that lets you get home faster from work or a new project that will bring jobs to a community, this is about making Ontarians' lives better, and that's our priority.

The people of Ontario can also be sure of two things: First, Ontario would always retain an important ownership stake in an asset as vital and strategic as Hydro One;

and second, rates in Ontario are and will continue to be set by the Ontario Energy Board.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning. My question is for the Premier. It's been over five weeks since the OPP wanted to sit down with you. That's five weeks where Pat Sorbara has had full access to your office.

Let's put this in comparison to your gas plants scandal.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: From the time your transition team leader—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I did ask for order and some people just talked right through it. I find that personally insulting.

Carry on, please.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: From the time your transition team leader met with the secretary of cabinet to the time the deputy chief of staff's partner wiped hard drives in the Premier's office—well, that was just 16 days. That was plenty of time to tie up loose ends, wasn't it?

Premier, what assurance can you give us that this Deputy Premier isn't tying up loose ends that may form part of the OPP investigation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, clearly we see that the members opposite are engaging in conjecture and speculative hypotheses here. I think we really should do the right thing and let the authorities do their work. There's a reason that we have a system in place, that these types of investigations are separate and apart from the government, and I think we should respect that process in order to make sure that they are done appropriately and in a valid fashion.

We even received the same advice, actually, from both the member from Leeds–Grenville and the member from Timmins–James Bay. They keep telling the Premier, "Don't interfere in this police investigation." I think they're giving good advice. We should respect that and really focus on issues that are important to Ontarians, which really is making sure that we're building Ontario up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Again to the Premier: I'm sorry, but you don't get the benefit of the doubt here. Let me remind you, it was your signature on the original gas plant cabinet document that started the whole scandal. Now we see Beckie Codd-Downey, who is shown in the OPP warrant to be deleting her emails, still working in your office. Leon Korbee had his computer added to the list to be wiped, and he's still advising you. And now Pat Sorbara, under criminal investigation, has had run of your office for five weeks.

Premier, is the reason you haven't agreed to meet with the OPP simply to give your staffers enough time to bury the bodies from Sudbury?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think the smear campaign that the opposition is engaging in is beneath them. The people they're naming are hard-working servants of the public. They work day in and day out to serve the people of Ontario and this government. We should respect them and we should thank them.

What we need to ensure is that we continue to focus on what's important to Ontarians. Clearly what the opposition is doing is scandalmongering and not focusing on the issues because they have nothing to add to that debate, because they have washed their hands of anything meaningful, because their idea of public policy is to fire 100,000 hard-working public servants. We reject that notion, Speaker. Even Ontarians rejected that notion in the last election.

Let's let the independent authorities do their work, let's respect the work that they're doing and let's focus here on the job that was given to us by the people of Ontario, and that is to grow our economy and ensure that there is retirement income security—

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

Interjections.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Ted, Ted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're offering traffic cop duties that I don't want you to have.

New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. When was the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services first briefed about the plan to offer Andrew Olivier a job in order to get out of the Premier's way?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I very much appreciate the strategy the third party is engaging in because they really have no other strategy to talk about. They're having a really hard time justifying to themselves and their party members why they cannot win any more elections. They voted against one of the most progressive budgets in the history of this province. They took a gamble, and guess what? They got relegated back to the same spot they belong: in third place in this House.

They can't get out of their heads that they won the Sudbury seat, they went into a by-election and they lost that seat also to a very credible individual who moved from the NDP to the Liberal caucus.

There's a reason the people of Ontario have elected a Liberal majority government. It's because they believe in our values, they believe in things that we're focusing on: making sure that we're raising the minimum wage, making sure that we're raising the wages of personal support works. We ask the NDP to support those important initiatives because that's what the people of Ontario want.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Has the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services been interviewed by the

OPP anti-racket investigators to share his version of the attempt to bribe Andrew Olivier?

1120

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, I think the member opposite knows that when it comes to independent police—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. I need the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Energy to allow the minister to answer without interrupting.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Isn't that amazing? They heckle their own members.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew is warned.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Minister, put your answer, please.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As I was saying, as the member opposite knows, there is an independent investigation, and we respect that process. Really, Speaker, I think what we should be doing is focusing on issues that are important to them, to all of us.

This is the NDP which has lost any moral foundation to stand on when it comes to issues that are important to Ontarians.

This is what Martin Regg Cohn wrote last February: “Why is NDP leader Andrea Horwath doing the bare minimum on the minimum wage?”

“Anti-poverty activists and union leaders are wondering. And seething.

“I am profoundly disappointed that the NDP has not taken a public stand on this,” said Sheila Block, of the non-partisan Wellesley Institute.

Speaker, that is one of the biggest challenges the NDP has got: They have lost their own supporters and they have nothing else to talk about, so they are engaging in scandalmongering.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE ACCÈS À LA JUSTICE

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: My question is for the Attorney General of Ontario. This question is important to me in both a personal as well as a parliamentary capacity, representing, as I do, Etobicoke North, a diverse riding.

It's unfortunate that the opposition hasn't been asking questions today that relate to government policies or are focused on priorities that matter. So my direct and earnest question is this: Will we ensure that the justice system remains equally available to every Ontarian from any and all socio-cultural backgrounds?

Madame la Procureure générale, nous devons nous assurer que le système de justice est accessible pour les Ontariens de tout milieu socioculturel.

The justice system can be complicated at times, and it matters to me and to my residents in Etobicoke North that every Ontarian, regardless of background, is respected.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je veux remercier le député d'Etobicoke-Nord pour sa question très intéressante. Pour nous, les Ontariens et Ontariennes s'attendent à ce que leurs valeurs soient respectées dans les initiatives de leur gouvernement. Le député a raison quand il affirme que la justice doit être assurée pour tous les Ontariens, indépendamment de leur origine culturelle.

Mon ministère a travaillé avec le Centre d'assistance juridique en matière de droits de la personne afin d'améliorer le processus de la fonction de juré. Des coordonnateurs de l'information sur l'accessibilité aux palais de justice sont disponibles en cas de besoin, et une formation supplémentaire est offerte pour assurer qu'ils soient prêts à accueillir toute personne ayant besoin d'assistance.

Notre gouvernement travaille avec ardeur pour répondre aux besoins changeants de la société multiculturelle ontarienne en fournissant un service d'interprétation dans toutes les langues. Lorsque requis, nous assurons que des interprètes qualifiés sont disponibles en cour.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci. Question?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I feel grateful and privileged to be part of a government that allows me not only to pose such a question but also furnishes me with that answer, a government led by Premier Kathleen Wynne—especially Kathleen Wynne.

Speaker, I have to say, it is sad, remarkable, anachronistic and startling that in 2015, we still have to remind ourselves that diversity and religious freedoms should be respected everywhere. Ontario is an incredibly diverse province. Nearly 40% of Canada's immigrants settle here. It's important for people to know that their cultures and belief systems are honoured.

What are we doing as a government, at least here in the province of Ontario, to uphold this sacred trust?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Le ministre de la citoyenneté et de l'immigration.

Hon. Michael Chan: I'd also like to thank the honourable member from Etobicoke North for asking the question.

As an immigrant myself, I know first-hand how difficult it is to come to a new country, learn a new language and experience a new culture, and how important it is to feel welcomed.

From its earliest days, Ontario was built on immigration. With the exception of our aboriginal populations, we all come from somewhere else.

We know that diversity is one of our greatest assets. This is why in 2012 we introduced our immigration strategy which aims to attract newcomers, leverage diversity and help successfully transition immigrants.

As well, we are reintroducing the Ontario Immigration Act, Bill 49, which will allow us to have more control in our immigration system.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Premier. On the 11th of December, Gerry Loughheed was recorded as

saying to Andrew Olivier, “The Premier may stay with the nomination, she may go with an appointment, you don’t know. I think you and her need to talk about it.”

By all accounts, you spoke with Mr. Olivier that very night. Premier, if you were able to make room in your schedule so quickly to speak with Andrew Olivier, why has it been over five weeks and you still can’t find time to meet with the OPP?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Speaker, let me just take another shot at this; I know the minister would like to chime in on the supplementary. Let me just say once again that I am committed to working with the authorities. There is a meeting being set up. I don’t have access to all of the work that’s being done as part of the investigation. I repeat: That’s because the investigation is taking place outside of this House, not in the Legislature. That’s as it should be. As soon as that meeting is arranged I will be there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Again to the Premier: Gerry Lougheed goes on to say to Andrew Olivier, “Then you need to say, ‘So, why would Andrew Olivier be motivated to do this? What’s in it for me? Politically, what’s in it for me? In my long term, short term, is there an appointment, are you gonna let me head up a commission ... what are you giving me, for me to step down, that is worthwhile? Otherwise, guess what, I’m gonna go sell memberships and see what my chances are.’”

Premier, this pitch comes on December 11, weeks after you insist having appointed Glenn Thibeault as your candidate. How do you explain this discrepancy in timing in your version of events in the Sudbury bribery scandal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, I remind the members opposite that we have a basic principle of fundamental justice in our system and that is called presumption of innocence. I don’t think anybody should be drawing any conclusion whatsoever.

I would be remiss if I did not remind the members opposite exactly what the Chief Electoral Officer said in his finding. He said, “I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone’s guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges.”

I remind members that they are neither prosecutors nor judges in this House. We should let the independent authorities, as always the case is, do their job. They are the most capable and trained to do that.

As the Premier has affirmed again and again, she will co-operate with the authorities.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question this morning is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Good morning, Minister.

When was the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change first briefed about the plan to offer Andrew Olivier a job in order to get out of the Premier’s way?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I can remember two great days in my life: One, when Premier Wynne told us who our candidate in Sudbury was going to be, someone I’ve known and have great regard for. And even better, when I found out that the MPP for Sudbury was going to be the parliamentary assistant with me.

The only person—the biggest rail safety issues of our time; we have terrible concerns in Gogama. The third party has the privilege of representing a lot of those folks. It is shameful that we haven’t even had a question from them on Gogama. It is shameful we can count on one hand the number of questions on climate change. That’s shameful.

Interjections.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: It’s shameful that you’re the government.

1130

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change has a vested interest in whether his parliamentary assistant is embroiled in a bribery scandal. Did the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change ask his parliamentary assistant about that bribery scandal—what he knew, when he knew it—and did the minister relay any of that information to the investigators at the OPP anti-rackets squad?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I hope the Minister of Transportation will get a question soon, too, because he’s very excited about that.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thank you so much. I appreciate that. I owe you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, it’s interesting to me, because the MPP from Sudbury talks to me about climate change. He talks to me about blue-green algae in Sudbury lake—very concerned about those things. The member for Windsor might be concerned about the condition of the Great Lakes, or climate change, or the fact that in 2012 we lost 80% of our apple crop—very important to farmers and people in southwestern Ontario.

The one thing that I’m confident of is, we now have the opposition only a government could love, Mr. Speaker: out of touch with people, off topic, missing every important point of the day and trying to bring what should be in the courts and in investigations inappropriately into this House. I encourage them to keep on this track, because, I can tell you, my aunt in Sudbury, who is 92 years old, who actually had some fondness for that party, has lost it all. She represents a lot of people—

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

Interjections.

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

New question.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I say to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and the Minister of Agriculture: I did not get quiet for you to heckle.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Daiene Vernile: For a moment there, I was quite excited, because I thought we were going to actually get a different question.

My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. It is somewhat disappointing that we have a great deal of important government policies before this House and we're not being asked about them. So let me ask you.

The Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada held their annual conference in Toronto. They welcomed close to 25,000 delegates from around the world.

We know that Ontario is a top jurisdiction in Canada for mineral production and exploration, and the effects of this industry are very important. They go way beyond northern Ontario. The mining sector is a remarkable contributor to our provincial economy.

At last week's event, our government was very busy promoting new mineral opportunities. Mr. Speaker, can the minister please tell us what our government is doing to ensure that we continue to attract investment in the mineral sector in Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Great question. Thank you so much to the member for Kitchener Centre.

Certainly, last week was a remarkable event—almost 25,000 people. I was very pleased to host the opening of Ontario's pavilion. It was a remarkable opportunity to meet with industry, First Nations, the Métis Nation and people from all around the globe.

We spoke about Ontario's Mineral Development Strategy, which was launched in 2006, which moved Ontario's mineral development agenda forward.

I'm very proud of the fact that, since that time, with the strategy, we put together a modernized Mining Act, a tax system that creates a very competitive investment climate, and clear consultation practices and meaningful collaboration.

We also recognize how important it is to renew that strategy, so last week, at the opening of the pavilion, I announced the renewal of Ontario's Mineral Development Strategy. This renewal is going to make us an even more positive investment climate all around the world.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you to the minister for his answer. It's clear that the minister is committed to making sure that the province continues to have a very comprehensive edge in the mineral sector and the most productive mineral sector in this nation.

National mining production and exploration stats for last year were published very recently, and the data shows again that Ontario has a lot to be proud of. In 2014, we saw the value of mineral production reach a record \$11 billion.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, this is a very important sector for us. So I'd like to ask the minister: How is he ensuring that ideas from industry experts, aboriginal communities and northerners are all being heard as our government plans its strategy?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you again to the member for Kitchener Centre, because it really is a great story. The \$11 billion in mineral production is a record, and obviously we continue to lead in terms of mineral exploration across the country. We've got new mines opening up. I wish I had more time to tell you about all the new mines that will be opening up both this year and next year, let alone the ones that have.

The mineral development strategy represents an extraordinarily important commitment from our government, obviously related to public engagement, the environment, and aboriginal communities, but, may I say, also maintaining, if not growing, a positive investment climate. It very much articulates, I think, our commitment to modern and progressive business practices, to ensure that continued sustainability and certainty that the industry is so keen to have.

We began workshops in northern Ontario. This week, it will be Kenora, Thunder Bay and a whole bunch of other communities. So 2015 is off to an exciting start. Great news in the mining—

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

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Premier. As all members of this House are aware, your administration is currently under not one, not two, not three, but four police investigations. It's unprecedented. Yet your stated principle in these matters of misconduct, including the Sudbury bribery scandal, is that your staff have to be in jail before you remove them from your office.

Surely, everyone agrees that you need to clear the air and restore confidence so that your office can operate under absolute integrity. Premier, do you think your principle of protecting your backroom adviser and avoiding your interrogation by the OPP inspires confidence in the people of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I remind the member opposite again that there is an independent investigation that is going in this matter. I can assure you that the Premier, the government and I have full confidence in our hard-working OPP officers. But we also respect their autonomy, and we urge all members not to interfere in an ongoing investigation. We've got a system that makes sure it is at arm's length from the government so there is no interference. That's the advice—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. The member from Lanark will come to order. The member from Leeds–Grenville will come to order.

The deputy House leader: Just as a note, when those two microphones are on, you seem to be very active, and when they're not on, it's not—so I'm going to advise the member to only talk when his microphone is on.

Carry on.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. As you just reminded me, when you mentioned the member from Leeds–Grenville—because he actually said, and I agree with him when he said, that the Premier should “stop interfering in an ongoing investigation and let it run its course.” He’s absolutely right. I remind him, and through him, all his members as well, that they should take his advice and let the authorities do their work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the Premier, Mr. Speaker. Premier, the integrity of your administration continues to be grossly compromised. I don’t know who is advising you on the matters of integrity, but I do know you want to put these matters behind you. You want to sweep them under the carpet.

The only way forward, Premier, is to (1) admit that your principle of “people have to be in jail” is unbecoming, and (2) ask Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed to step aside during the police investigation. Will you do that, Premier?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, I remind the member opposite that we have a very strong principle of fundamental justice in our system of democracy, and that’s called the presumption of innocence. A person is presumed innocent until proven guilty. I remind the members opposite again that in this matter, these are mere allegations. There is not even a criminal charge laid in this matter whatsoever. So we should let the independent authorities do their investigation.

I think, really, what’s at the heart of all of these lines of questioning is the official opposition’s desire to sweep under the carpet their—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Speaker. What the members opposite are trying to do is sweep under the carpet their commitment to cut 100,000 public service jobs. You know, they still haven’t denounced what they stood for. Clearly, the people of Ontario sent a clear message: They want a government that will build Ontario up.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Why is it that you’re able to schedule an interview with the Chief Electoral Officer so quickly, and you’re having so much of a problem trying to find time to meet with the OPP investigation squad?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —that question many times. I will meet with the OPP when that meeting is set up.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Premier, we have suggested that there are a number of times that you could do it. For ex-

ample, our Premier—the future Premier, I should say—our leader—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That was a Freudian slip.

Our leader suggested that you could take tomorrow, when it comes to using your time during question period, to meet with the Ontario Provincial Police.

I’ll be seeking unanimous consent shortly, in order to ask the House to make sure that we free you up tomorrow morning during question period so that you in fact can go and meet with the OPP and do what has to be done, so that they can continue their investigation.

Will your members of the assembly vote with our unanimous consent motion in order to allow you to do what has to be done?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I’ve been clear: I will meet with the OPP when that meeting is arranged.

CARBON MONOXIDE

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, a question, I might add, that is actually on the priorities that matter to Ontarians.

Minister, the people of my community, and people in communities across the province, are concerned about the threat of carbon monoxide. In fact, not too long ago in my area, a mother and daughter had to be rushed to hospital because of a carbon monoxide leak at an Oakville hotel.

Carbon monoxide is a danger to our families, our loved ones and our neighbours. It’s an odourless and colourless gas that’s a silent killer. More than 50 people in Canada die from carbon monoxide poisoning each year. But the real tragedy is that each and every one of these deaths is preventable. As the minister charged with the safety and security of Ontarians, it’s important that you work to prevent these deaths.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister please tell us what steps he has taken to help protect our friends and families from the threat of carbon monoxide?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member from Halton for raising a very important issue.

As many members know in this House, carbon monoxide gas is a silent killer that continues to claim too many lives in our province. That is why our government is committed to working with all MPPs and stakeholders to ensure that no more Ontarians lose their lives to carbon monoxide.

Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the member from Oxford and yourself on this very important issue.

Last year, we in this Legislature, passed Bill 77, the Hawkins Gignac Act, making it mandatory for all homes in Ontario to have a carbon monoxide detector.

As of April 15, there is a deadline for landlords to install carbon monoxide detectors in dwellings of up to six units, and that deadline is fast approaching. Installing a carbon monoxide alarm is perhaps one of the simplest

and most effective ways to alert you and your family to the presence of this lethal gas.

We encourage all residential homes and landlords to install carbon monoxide detectors.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Timmins–James Bay.

Hon. James J. Bradley: No.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: How can you say no when I haven't even asked?

Hon. James J. Bradley: No.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You don't even know what I'm going to ask.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I know what you're going to ask.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent of this House that this Legislature give the Premier time tomorrow morning during question period to go and meet with the Ontario Provincial Police.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay is seeking unanimous consent to provide the Premier—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I did hear a no.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I would like to correct my record. Earlier, I said, "What assurance can you give us that this Deputy Premier isn't tying up loose ends that may form part of the OPP investigation?"

I meant to say "deputy chief of staff."

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

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General on a point of order.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I believe that in the answer to my critic, the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, I said "the election commissioner." I meant the Chief Electoral Officer.

I was so excited; I thought this was a question on access to justice.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener Centre on a point of order.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This morning we were joined by a person from my riding, and I'd like to introduce him. Tony Stortz is from Kitchener Centre. He is a valued member of my team in the constituency office.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Beaches–East York on a point of order.

Mr. Arthur Potts: If I can beg the indulgence of the House on a point of order, I also have two young gentlemen from my riding, Alec Tuck and Ben Quinzon, who are members of the Toronto Youth Cabinet. I'm delighted to see them here.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: On a point of order: I'd like to invite all the members, the cabinet ministers and all of the opposition down to rooms 228 and 230 for Sarnia–Lambton Day. Come on down and enjoy some Sarnia–Lambton hospitality.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services concerning the Sudbury investigation. The matter will be discussed today at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Leeds–Grenville has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Premier concerning the Sudbury by-election. This matter will be debated at 6 p.m.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Will she show up for this investigation?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to be able to make an announcement without being interrupted.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Attorney General concerning the Sudbury by-election. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Timmins–James Bay—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's a very large net—has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Deputy Premier concerning the Sudbury by-election. This matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Windsor–Tecumseh has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change concerning the Sudbury by-election. This matter will be—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry. Let me correct my own record: Tuesday after next week.

The member from Windsor–Tecumseh has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change concerning the Sudbury by-election. This matter will be debated the following Tuesday—two weeks—at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Windsor West has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services concerning the Sudbury by-election. This matter will be debated two weeks Tuesday at 6 p.m.

DEFERRED VOTES

SUPPLY ACT, 2015

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2015

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

Bill 72, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015 / Projet de loi 72, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2015.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1147 to 1152.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On March 10, Mr. Bradley moved second reading of Bill 72. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

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

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Harris, Michael	Pettapiece, Randy
Arnott, Ted	Hatfield, Percy	Sattler, Peggy
Bailey, Robert	Hillier, Randy	Scott, Laurie
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Singh, Jagmeet
Clark, Steve	Jones, Sylvia	Smith, Todd
DiNovo, Cheri	MacLaren, Jack	Tabuns, Peter
Fedeli, Victor	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	Martow, Gila	Vanthof, John
Forster, Cindy	McDonell, Jim	Walker, Bill
French, Jennifer K.	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	Yurek, Jeff
Gretzky, Lisa	Natyshak, Taras	
Hardeman, Ernie	Nicholls, Rick	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 57; the nays are 40.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

SUPPLY ACT, 2015

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2015

Ms. Matthews moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 72, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015 / Projet de loi 72, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2015.

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

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote? Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 57; the nays are 40.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

AGRICULTURE INSURANCE ACT (AMENDING THE CROP INSURANCE ACT, 1996), 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'ASSURANCE AGRICOLE (MODIFIANT LA LOI DE 1996 SUR L'ASSURANCE-RÉCOLTE)

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Crop Insurance Act (Ontario), 1996 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 40, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'assurance-récolte (Ontario) et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1157 to 1158.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On December 3, 2014, Mr. Leal moved second reading of Bill 40, An Act to amend the Crop Insurance Act (Ontario), 1996 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

Mr. Delaney has moved that the question be now put.

All those in favour of Mr. Delaney's motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	French, Jennifer K.	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Anderson, Granville	Gates, Wayne	Miller, Paul

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gélinas, France	Moridi, Reza
Baker, Yvan	Gravelle, Michael	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoon, Bas	Gretzky, Lisa	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Ballard, Chris	Hatfield, Percy	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoggarth, Ann	Natyshak, Taras
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Oraziotti, David
Bradley, James J.	Hoskins, Eric	Potts, Arthur
Chan, Michael	Hunter, Mitzie	Qadri, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Colle, Mike	Kiwala, Sophie	Sandals, Liz
Coteau, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Sattler, Peggy
Crack, Grant	Lalonde, Marie-France	Sergio, Mario
Damerla, Dipika	Leal, Jeff	Singh, Jagmeet
Del Duca, Steven	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Malhi, Harinder	Tabuns, Peter
Dhillon, Vic	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dickson, Joe	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
DiNovo, Cheri	Martins, Cristina	Thibeault, Glenn
Dong, Han	Matthews, Deborah	Vanthof, John
Duguid, Brad	Mauro, Bill	Vernile, Daiene
Fife, Catherine	McGarry, Kathryn	Wong, Soo
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMahon, Eleanor	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Forster, Cindy	McMeekin, Ted	Zimmer, David
Fraser, John	Meilleur, Madeleine	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Martow, Gila	Smith, Todd
Fedeli, Victor	McDonnell, Jim	Walker, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Harris, Michael	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Hillier, Randy	Nicholls, Rick	Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 77; the nays are 21.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Leal has moved second reading of Bill 40. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Minister of Agriculture?

Hon. Jeff Leal: On behalf of the agriculture community across the province of Ontario, I would ask that this bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So ordered.

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1202 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Today, I rise in the Legislature to question the government on the lack of funding for joint surgeries for my local orthopaedic department at the St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital.

Currently, the orthopaedic department in my riding is giving up OR times due to the lack of funding from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. It's very frustrating when OR times are available, with an outstanding team of doctors, nurses and support staff available to perform the work; unfortunately, they were unable to schedule any joint replacement surgeries for half of February and all of March due to a lack of funding from this government.

The government is hiding the fact that they're unable to provide adequate health care services due to a lack of funding, and it can be directly linked to their mismanagement of our financial dollars in our province.

The current funding allows for 174 joint replacement surgeries a year. However, that is not enough. They would need funding to cover at least 220 replacements during the fiscal year.

We have an award-winning hospital in St. Thomas, Ontario, winning awards for their wait times. However, they are being restricted on the number of joint replacements they can do. Why would you penalize a hospital when in fact they are exceeding expectations?

Currently, patients are waiting four or five months just for the surgery, and due to this lack of funding, it's being pushed further down the road. OR times will continue to be cancelled until the start of the new fiscal year.

I call upon the government to quit eroding our health care services, get your financial house in order and fund adequate health care services for my riding.

SPEAKER'S BOOK AWARD

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, I want to put you on the spot this afternoon. Try not to be too embarrassed, but I wish to compliment and congratulate you on your annual awards ceremony, the Speaker's Book Award, which was held earlier this week.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Take your time—three minutes.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It has been three years since you began promoting Ontario's non-fiction authors, and this is proving to be a highlight of the legislative calendar.

For those who don't know, 11 books were shortlisted this year, everything from a women's history of western Manitoulin to the tragic failure of Ipperwash to the history of the black experience in Chatham-Kent to *The Ashes of War: The Fight for Upper Canada in 1814*.

Medals were awarded to all 11 authors who were shortlisted. A judging panel chose one book overall as deserving of the top prize, and that was Paikin and the Premiers, Steve Paikin's personal reflections on a half-century of Ontario's leaders. It's published by Dundurn Press.

Speaker, you also made sure that our young writers continue to be encouraged and rewarded for sharing their stories about this great province. This brings greater public awareness to their work and helps inspire them and makes their books more available to a wider audience.

This year, the judges chose Giles Benaway for his Ceremonies for the Dead, which examines the haunting themes of intergenerational trauma, cyclical abuse and inherited grief. It was published by Kegeponce Press.

The books will be available for sale at the gift shop on the main floor in the Legislature.

It was a delightful evening, Speaker, as always, and a very distinguished ceremony. Congratulations to all who were shortlisted. And thank you, Speaker, for promoting literacy, the arts and our publishing industry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): He can take all the time he wants.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: And so he should.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Cambridge.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Today I rise to discuss the International Women's Day celebrations in Cambridge. On Saturday morning, more than 200 residents of Waterloo region gathered at the Galt Country Club in Cambridge to celebrate International Women's Day at a breakfast organized by the local chapter of the Canadian Federation of University Women.

Later in the day, a flash mob organized by Soroptimist International of Cambridge, gathered around Cambridge to march to Queen's Square. Women, men and children came together, holding ribbons and carrying signs in denunciation of sexual violence and in support of women everywhere.

At the breakfast event, a speech was given by Megan Lambe, director of communications and public relations for the Cambridge YWCA. Megan spoke about the importance of focusing on under-representation of women in positions of leadership.

In Ontario, we should be proud that we elected a record number of women to Queen's Park last year.

Megan also spoke in support of the direction that our Premier has taken with the introduction of It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment. Megan said, in reference to Premier Wynne's leadership on sexual violence and harassment, "I have never been so proud to be an Ontarian."

We should all be proud of this groundbreaking initiative, and we should take International Women's Day and every day to reflect upon how far we have come in forwarding women's rights and how far we will go.

ONTARIO HERITAGE AWARD FOR YOUTH ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise in the House today to recognize young students from my riding in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound whose group project to memorialize the sacrifice of Canadian soldiers was recently recognized by Ontario's Lieutenant Governor. This past Friday, students from Owen Sound Collegiate and Vocational Institute in Owen Sound, along with students from

Smiths Falls and District Collegiate Institute and Garth Webb Secondary School in Oakville, received the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Youth Achievement group awards for their work on the Juno Beach project from the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell.

The students researched the 371 Canadian servicemen who fell on June 6, 1944, D-Day, by using primary source documents, including Library and Archives Canada service files, war diaries and military histories. In some cases, the students made contact with surviving family members or regimental associations from across Canada to access photographs of the fallen servicemen.

This information was uploaded onto a Lest We Forget database, and students at Smiths Falls and District Collegiate Institute created a phone app on which users could peruse details regarding D-Day and these fallen servicemen.

Additionally, the Juno Beach Centre in Courseulles-sur-Mer, France, used our students' research for a special memorial that has been placed on-site. Tribute markers for each of the fallen soldiers were equipped with a QR code on the back. When swiped with a cellphone, details of the fallen servicemen would upload onto the user's phone. Juno Beach Centre officials have reported that this special feature at the memorial has been very popular with local French citizens.

The annual Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Awards recognize individuals and groups who have made outstanding contributions to conserving Ontario's heritage.

Mr. Speaker, I invite the House to join me in expressing our congratulations on this important project to students Molly Boley and Dylan Williams, and teachers Dave Alexander and Ryan McManaman.

DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today I would like to talk about developmental services. I meet with a lot of constituents who want services for their children with developmental handicaps. Here is a typical encounter, Speaker: My constituent Mrs. Lisa Godin is the mother of two adult children who require developmental services. Mrs. Godin expected that her two young adult sons would graduate from their local school and transition into a day program. Far from it.

First she had to get her sons assessed by Developmental Services, which she did before her sons' 18th birthday. Then she made her own inquiries into a maze of agencies and services in order to seek appropriate services. Well, by the time her eldest turned 21 and graduated from high school, he still had to wait a full year at home before being accepted into a program.

Then her youngest son also had time to graduate, and he's presently sitting at home, still waiting. Mrs. Godin has made endless calls trying to determine how much longer she must wait, but receives no answer. She wants to tour a day program but she's not allowed. Her request is simple: "I want transparency.... How long do I have to wait? Have they forgotten about us?"

The basic questions from all those families are simple: Why are children not transitioned from high school into adult day programs? I talked to the Minister for MCSS about this. She was kind and she agreed to follow up, but time is of the essence, Speaker. How much longer will those families have to wait?

FAMILY SKATE

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon in the House to announce an upcoming event in my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, the March Break Free Family Skate.

The family skate event in my riding will be taking place on Thursday, March 19, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. I'm very excited to be hosting this event at the MasterCard Centre for Hockey Excellence. The building is the official practice facility of the Toronto Maple Leafs NHL hockey team and their AHL affiliate, the Toronto Marlies. I am proud to call this facility a pillar for sports excellence in my riding, and it's a fantastic place to spend the afternoon skating.

1510

Mr. Speaker, this free family skate event will give families in my riding an opportunity to stay active during the March break. After all, this is the perfect season for everybody to lace up some skates and perfect that triple axel that they've been working on all winter. I won't be doing any triple axels, though.

I look forward to enjoying the afternoon skating with my community, and I invite everyone to join me in Etobicoke–Lakeshore for the free family skate on Thursday, March 19.

PROMPT PAYMENT

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, it has been close to two years since the introduction of legislation to ensure prompt payment to contractors in Ontario who are forced to wait, sometimes four months or longer for work they've long since completed. Some two years later, they are still waiting.

Speaker, where I come from, when you do the work, you should get paid; I can tell you, there are many in my area who feel the same. I have a stack of letters from my local contractors asking me why it hasn't been a priority for the government to finally ensure the fairness that prompt payment legislation would provide. I've heard from so many great contractors in my area: Dordan Mechanical and the Grand Valley Construction Association, who represents many of them—all impacted by the lack of prompt payment legislation and all continuing to wait for government to finally move on legislation it brought forth two years ago.

As G&A Masonry recently wrote me, "The existing inequity imperils employment and apprenticeship growth, and inhibits the ability of small and medium-sized contractors to invest in machinery and equipment,

as well as bid on additional work ... that means fewer jobs and slower economic growth."

Jurisdictions right across the world have gotten this right. Some 49 states and the federal government have prompt payment for publicly funded infrastructure projects—Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the European Union as well. It's time for our province to follow suit.

It's time to make this a priority. It's time for prompt payment in Ontario.

CRESCENT TOWN URBAN AGRICULTURE PROJECT

Mr. Arthur Potts: Today I'd like to speak about the Crescent Town urban agriculture project.

Many times, you'll hear me speak, as the PA to agriculture, food and rural affairs, of the great agricultural riding of Beaches–East York, and many of you may have read last week in the Metro News about an exciting project: a fish farm we're creating in a little area called Crescent Town.

Crescent Town is a part of my riding. It was founded in 1887 when Walter Massey purchased a one-square-kilometre country property around Dawes Road and Victoria Park Avenue. The Massey farm sold fresh eggs and poultry as well as fresh trout that they got from the many streams and rivulets that meandered through the property. The Massey farm, Mr. Speaker, was also the home of the City Dairy Company, which produced the first pasteurized milk in Canada.

Crescent Town has now become a property of 10,000 people in five high-rise buildings, and at the centre of the property is a retail market of about 10,000 square feet, which the management of the group have not yet been able to rent out. I went there with a bunch of community leaders to see if we could energize that space to bring it back—a local retail operation. As it turned out, there are two floors underneath which lend themselves to urban agriculture. So I'm working with a whole bunch of community leaders to see if we can grow fish and food in the basement of Crescent Town.

I'd like to thank Hasina Quader and Dr. Reza of the Bangladesh Centre and Community Services, and Lorie Fairburn of Neighbourhood Link, for their excellent leadership in this regard, and Mr. Tom McGee, who has been shepherding this project forward.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

Mr. Yvan Baker: In November, I was in Ukraine with constituents of Etobicoke Centre when we met with soldiers who were wounded during the Russian-backed invasion of Ukraine. These fathers, brothers and sons all said they were fighting for freedom and democracy—values that, as Canadians, we hold dear.

I am proud of what our Premier has done to support the Ukrainian people. She called on our federal govern-

ment to impose sanctions, called on international observers, and provided humanitarian aid.

Today, Ukraine is at war and the situation is dire. Russian-backed forces have occupied part of eastern Ukraine and continue to advance.

The soldiers I met with are fighting state-of-the-art equipment with outdated equipment, outdated weapons, some from World War II.

This conflict touches all of us. Some 14,000 civilians are dead, and one million have been displaced. The invasion is a global threat. It is a violation of international law and the international order that was achieved at such great cost after World War II.

The West's words and sanctions have not worked. Efforts at peace have failed.

For months, Ukraine's president has been asking for defensive weapons so that his nation stands a chance against the larger and more advanced Russian military. Others such as John McCain and John Boehner have echoed this call, and the US Congress has passed authorization for the US to arm Ukraine.

I urge our federal government to act on the Ukrainian Canadian Congress's February 21 statement, which calls on Canada to "dramatically increase sectoral sanctions ... increase the provision of communications and intelligence capabilities ..." and "provide Ukraine with the defensive weapons, equipment and training it needs to defend its territorial integrity...."

This is important, not only because the Ukrainian people stand little chance without our help, and not only because there is a humanitarian crisis and civilians need our help, but because the war in Ukraine is a threat to Europe, to global security, to our security and to the values that Canadians hold dear.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Ottawa South on a point of order.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to correct my record. Two days ago in question period, when asking a question about the CN train derailment, I referred to the Minakwa River. It is indeed the Makami River where that incident occurred.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know my afternoon is not going well when I have to stop somebody from heckling somebody who is correcting their record.

I do say that is a point of order. All members have the opportunity to correct their record, and I thank the member for doing so.

REPORT, OMBUDSMAN OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table a report from the Ombudsman of Ontario on Hydro One.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NATURAL GAS SUPERHIGHWAY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'AUTOROUTE DU GAZ NATUREL

Mr. Bailey moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 76, An Act to encourage the purchase of vehicles that use natural gas as a fuel / Projet de loi 76, Loi visant à encourager l'achat de véhicules utilisant du gaz naturel comme carburant.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: The bill amends the Highway Traffic Act and the Taxation Act, 2007.

Part 8 of the Highway Traffic Act currently sets out weight limits for vehicles. The new section of the act enables the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations prescribing different weight limits for vehicles that use liquefied natural gas as fuel. The Minister of Transportation is required to table a progress report in the Legislative Assembly every year until a regulation is made.

The Taxation Act, 2007, is amended to provide for a non-refundable tax credit to taxpayers who purchase certain vehicles that use natural gas as a fuel. The tax credit would be equal to half of the Ontario portion of the HST that the taxpayer paid for the vehicle.

To qualify, the HST on the vehicle must be paid within a period of seven taxation years, beginning with the first taxation year that ends after the bill receives royal assent. Any unused tax credits in a taxation year may be carried forward and deducted in the following five years.

AFFIRMING SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'AFFIRMATION DE L'ORIENTATION SEXUELLE ET DE L'IDENTITÉ SEXUELLE

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 77, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act and the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 regarding efforts to change or direct sexual orientation or gender identity / Projet de loi 77, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé et la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées à l'égard des interventions visant à changer ou à influencer l'orientation sexuelle ou l'identité sexuelle.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The bill amends the Health Insurance Act and the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, with respect to efforts to change or direct the sexual orientation or the gender identity of patients.

The amendments to the Health Insurance Act prohibit such efforts from being insured services.

The amendments to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, prohibit such efforts from being carried out as part of providing health care services to patients under 18 years of age and make it an offence to do so. The amendments also make the carrying out of such efforts with respect to patients under 18 years of age an act of professional misconduct.

1520

TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE
HEALTH CARE ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE FINANCEMENT
TRANSPARENT ET RESPONSABLE
DES SOINS DE SANTÉ

Mme Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 78, An Act to promote transparency and accountability in the funding of health care services in Ontario / Projet de loi 78, Loi visant à promouvoir le financement transparent et responsable des services de soins de santé en Ontario.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: The bill enacts the Transparent and Accountable Health Care Act. Under this act, major health care organizations are required to comply with the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act and the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act. These organizations are also deemed to be governmental organizations for the purposes of the Ombudsman Act. Further, the Auditor General of Ontario is authorized to audit any aspect of their operations.

The same requirement applies with respect to publicly funded suppliers. A publicly funded supplier is a person or entity that receives directly or indirectly at least \$1 million in public funds in a year from a major health sector organization or from other publicly funded suppliers.

The act also provides for the disclosure of payments made by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is required to publish an annual disclosure statement. It must disclose the total amount paid to a person or entity for services provided during a year, if the person or entity receives at least \$100,000. The disclosure statement must include a caution set out in a subsection of the act.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

GROWTH PLANNING

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I rise today to speak to Bill 73, the Smart Growth for Our Communities Act. This proposed legislation would, if passed, help Ontario communities grow and thrive in the 21st century.

In the fall of 2013, our government held province-wide consultations on the way our cities and towns plan and pay for growth. We heard different perspectives from the public, community groups, aboriginal communities, municipalities and the building and development sector on what changes need to be made. To sum up, Ontarians told us we needed to make some improvements.

Ontario is a dynamic place to live, work and raise a family, and we need to make sure that growth in Ontario is managed smartly. If we plan well today, we can assure a high quality of life for tomorrow, for us and for our children, and we can attract industry, create jobs and further protect green spaces.

The reforms that we are proposing would, if passed, improve the processes communities and residents use to determine how their neighbourhoods will grow and improve how to pay for this growth. These reforms will benefit all Ontarians, whether they live in large urban centres or smaller and/or rural communities.

The amendments we're proposing would give residents and local councils greater say in what happens in their neighbourhoods. We would do this by encouraging something that we call the community planning permit system. This system would allow a community to plan their neighbourhood in a way that addresses their real, local needs. The best part, Mr. Speaker, is that our changes, if passed, would mean that once a community planning permit system is in place, it would not be subject to any appeals of private applications for five years.

Municipalities would also have a more predictable planning system and have more control over official plans and plan reviews. The proposed amendments, if passed, would help our municipalities recover capital costs for important infrastructure like transit projects.

Our proposed reforms would build more transparency and accountability into the development charges system.

To encourage parkland and green space, proposed amendments would also ensure more municipalities put in place a parks plan to inform where resources are directed, and municipalities would need to detail how development charges and other growth-related fees are actually spent.

Mr. Speaker, all Ontarians should be able to count on a planning system that's predictable in terms of what is or is not likely to be approved, and all Ontario residents should have a say in what is built in their neighbourhoods.

I urge all members to support this bill. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to respond to the minister and speak to the Smart Growth for Our Communities Act. I want to start by acknowledging that the minister's staff and his ministry gave us a briefing earlier this week. It was very helpful, and I want to thank him and the ministry for that.

Mr. Speaker, over the next few years the minister and his staff are going to be very busy. According to the minister's mandate letter, he has to review the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, the building code, the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program, the Municipal Act, and the ones that are relevant to this debate: the Ontario Municipal Board, or the OMB; the growth plan; the greenbelt plans; and a coordinated review of provincial land use plans. While I'm pleased that the government has indicated they're going to consult on these issues, it's a little concerning that the minister has introduced a bill that impacts the Planning Act and the OMB before these consultations have actually taken place.

According to his mandate letter, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Attorney General are to work together with key stakeholders and "recommend possible reforms that would improve the OMB's role within the broader land use planning system." Mr. Speaker, from what I've heard, that review is still coming. But if it hasn't even started yet, how can the minister introduce changes to the OMB? How can we be sure that any changes made today are going to be reflective of the results of the review? Wouldn't it make more sense to conduct a full review and come up with a comprehensive plan and then introduce legislation to implement it?

This is not the only review that we've seen conducted before this legislation was introduced. Less than two weeks ago, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing launched a review of the greenbelt, the Niagara Escarpment, the Oak Ridges moraine and the growth plan. This is going to be a comprehensive review of the land use in these regions. In the government's discussion document for the review, it says, "The four plans work with many other acts, plans, policies and strategies to achieve provincial priorities and goals. This coordinated review is an opportunity to consider how well the plans support and align with broader provincial initiatives, legislation and long-term goals for the region. It is also an opportunity to consider whether other initiatives can be more effectively leveraged to achieve the goals of the plans."

Given how much these plans are required to work together and that the government is about to start on months of consultation, it seems ironic that in less than a week after the land use consultation was announced, the government introduced legislation which would change both the land use planning process and the development charges, which we all know impact community growth.

1530

This bill is entitled the Smart Growth for Our Communities Act. To me, the concept of smart growth should

not only include policies that protect our land, but a comprehensive plan for how our communities will function: a plan for transit, a plan for how to accommodate growth, a plan for economic development. If the government is in the process of developing these plans for the Niagara Escarpment, Oak Ridges moraine, green belt and Golden Horseshoe, shouldn't that plan come before legislation making changes to the Planning Act? How can you determine the legislative changes needed to get you to your destination if you don't know where you're going?

Development charges require a balance between encouraging economic activity and ensuring that municipalities have the funds needed to provide services for the added growth. I know that some organizations have already expressed concerns about the potential increases in development charges under this bill, and I look forward to working with them and municipal organizations to determine what the impact will be.

There are some specific sections in this bill that cause me concern, Minister, such as the addition of municipal planning committees that include at least one member of the public. While they sound great in principle, for municipalities like mine that currently make planning decisions in open council, it will result in duplication and, in some cases, less transparency. Those decisions are currently being made in an open meeting in front of members of the public and the media. This proposed change could result in those discussions and planning decisions taking place in the back room, where very few people will get to witness what happens.

I look forward to the opportunity to raise more of these specific concerns in second reading debate. I hope that will occur much later, after much more consultation and the reviews have been completed.

I want to thank the minister for giving me this opportunity. I hope he pays some attention and actually has the consultation that I'm suggesting.

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's an honour, as always, to rise on behalf of New Democrats and our leader, Andrea Horwath, and as the NDP critic currently for municipal affairs and housing, to respond to the minister's comments on Bill 73. It's good to see some positive changes included in this bill. New Democrats have advocated for a long time for changes to this particular ministry.

It seeks to give local municipalities more input on how their communities develop, and to provide opportunities to fund growth-related infrastructure, like transit, through the development charge system. Unfortunately, the bill falls short of long-standing promises by the Liberals to consider much-needed reforms to the OMB, the Ontario Municipal Board, and changes that require developers to factor in affordable housing within the local zoning plans.

I don't have to remind anybody that we are in dire need of these changes. In fact, this government made repeated promises going back over a decade, and yet there has been no action on any of these issues. In 2003, OMB reform was a significant part of the Liberal

government's platform during the election. Since then, promises have been made by various ministers on this file to look thoroughly at the OMB and to bring greater balance into decision-making, but it hasn't happened.

In August 2013, the Liberal Premier and then-Municipal Affairs Minister Linda Jeffrey, in a presentation to AMO, promised to reform the controversial OMB. Specifically, they promised to make it more accountable to the public. But despite this, OMB reform was specifically excluded from the land use planning review announced that same fall.

Why would this element be excluded from the bill? Two years, no action. Conflicts between municipalities, developers and community groups around land use planning have been ongoing for decades and we can't fix them without addressing those problems. The government needs to deliver on their promises.

Currently, the odds are stacked against municipalities and local communities. Some stats show that when you end up at the OMB, the municipalities lose 65% to 70% of the time—in their own communities. If there's a developer involved, they lose even more than that. Victories are significantly higher when it's a developer.

No other province has a tribunal that has the power that the OMB has in Ontario. Part of the problem is that local residents and community groups don't have the money to fight developers, or to fight municipalities, for that matter, around land use issues.

A prime example is Waterloo. In 2013, they had a 10-year plan that was overturned by the OMB, which allowed residential development sprawl that was 10 times larger than what the municipality was asking for. The OMB tore it up, allowed it to happen, defied the official plan of the municipality and defied the province's own Places to Grow Act. Something needs to change here.

I want to talk a bit about the issue of inclusionary zoning and the fact that we still have a lot of homelessness in this province. In fact, my colleague from Parkdale–High Park, Cheri DiNovo, reintroduced her bill for the fifth time last year. It would have allowed municipalities to pass inclusionary zoning bylaws that would have set minimum requirements for affordable units within new developments as a low-cost way to ensure that Ontarians have much-needed access to low-cost housing—five times over the last, I think, eight years.

The Liberal member for Ottawa Centre is quoted as saying that both municipal board reforms and inclusionary zoning remain on the government's to-do list. When? Unfortunately, there are no time frames; there are no specifics. Like the OMB issue, I fear that this will just turn into another empty Liberal promise.

It's about time, Speaker, that the Liberals take some action on these issues. They're important elements that begin to address some of the issues in this particular bill. However, there are critical issues that are actually left out. When I met during the briefing earlier this week, we had no time frame from the government on when they're going to move forward with the actual review of the OMB.

What we're asking here is that the government keep their promises, that they deliver on their promises and that they move on the OMB issue and the inclusionary zoning issue today.

PETITIONS

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's my pleasure to affix my signature and give this petition to page Vaughn.

TRESPASSING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas when private property is damaged it is left to property owners to repair these damages, and the costs can quickly add up to thousands of dollars. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has asked for a minimum fine for trespassing and an increase on the maximum limit on compensation for damages;

“Whereas Sylvia Jones's private member's Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act, will amend the current Trespass to Property Act by creating a minimum fine of \$500 for trespassing and increasing the maximum compensation for damages to \$25,000; and

“Whereas the Respecting Private Property Act will allow property owners to be fairly compensated for destruction to their property, and will also send a message that trespassing is a serious issue by creating a minimum fine;

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

“To support Sylvia Jones’s private member’s Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act, and schedule public hearings so that Bill 36 can be passed without further delay.”

For obvious reasons, I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Muntder to take to the table.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, did I tell you you’re my favourite Speaker? I just thought I would throw that in.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, my God. Look at that. The other Speaker is right there. That wasn’t very smart.

Miss Monique Taylor: We thought you’d left the room.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes, exactly.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Liberal government of Ontario is currently reviewing proposals to sell off a significant amount of our shared public assets such as Ontario Power Generation (OPG), Hydro One, and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO); and

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“Whereas our shared public assets provide more affordable hydro, develop environmentally friendly energy, create thousands of good Ontario jobs, and are accountable to all Ontarians; and

“Whereas our shared public assets put money in the public bank account so we can invest in hospitals, roads and schools; and

“Whereas this Liberal government is more interested in helping out wealthy shareholders and investors than they are in the hardworking Ontarians who are building this province;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“Stop the selling-off of our shared public assets. Keep our public assets in public hands.”

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

TRESPASSING

Ms. Laurie Scott: “Petition to pass Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas when private property is damaged it is left to property owners to repair these damages, and the costs can quickly add up to thousands of dollars. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has asked for a minimum fine for trespassing and an increase on the maximum limit on compensation for damages;

“Whereas Sylvia Jones’s private member’s Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act, will amend the current Trespass to Property Act by creating a minimum fine of

\$500 for trespassing and increasing the maximum compensation for damages to \$25,000; and

“Whereas the Respecting Private Property Act will allow property owners to be fairly compensated for destruction to their property, and will also send a message that trespassing is a serious issue by creating a minimum fine;

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

“To support Sylvia Jones’s private member’s Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act, and schedule public hearings so that Bill 36 can be passed without further delay.”

I agree with this and pass it on to the page.

SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

Ms. Cindy Forster: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas over 100 workers in Fort Erie lost their jobs when Vertis Communications declared bankruptcy under the ESA (Employment Standards Act) and closed;

“Whereas Vertis Communications declared bankruptcy in the United States, circumventing Canadian and Ontario labour law and refusing to pay workers their due severance to the amount of \$2.7 million;

“Whereas the Canadian federal government’s Wage Earners Protection Plan does not apply to workers from Vertis because they did not apply for bankruptcy in Canada;

“Whereas the federal government has refused to apply an exemption under the WEPP for these workers;

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

“That this government stand up for workers’ rights and end their ‘no-strings-attached’ relationship with foreign corporations;

“That this government ensure that these workers and any workers in this situation get their due severance.”

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

LEGAL AID

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly that has been provided to me by a number of people here, mostly in south Mississauga but including a number in Meadowvale and Lisgar. 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 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 allocated funds ... 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 Muntder.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

I couldn’t agree with this more. I’m going to affix my name to it and give it to page Dhairya to bring to the Clerk.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Liberal government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

“Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn’t necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

“Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

“Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

“Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

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

“To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses.”

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Natalie.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

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

“Whereas the Liberal government of Ontario is currently reviewing proposals to sell off a significant amount of our shared public assets such as Ontario Power Generation (OPG), Hydro One, and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO); and

“Whereas our shared public assets provide more affordable hydro, develop environmentally friendly energy, create thousands of good Ontario jobs, and are accountable to all Ontarians; and

“Whereas our shared public assets put money in the public bank account so we can invest in hospitals, roads and schools; and

“Whereas this Liberal government is more interested in helping out wealthy shareholders and investors than they are in the hardworking Ontarians who are building this province; and

“Whereas Ontario is stronger when there is shared prosperity;

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

“Stop the selling-off of our shared public assets. Keep our public assets in public hands.”

I sign this petition and give it to the page.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: Again, I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly that has been sent to me many, many times by countless people at this point. It’s called “Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water.” It reads as follows:

“Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

“Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

“Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices

across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

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

“That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and to send it down with page Natalie.

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have more petitions to do with improved winter road maintenance, from the Huntsville area. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the area maintenance contract system has failed Ontario drivers the past two winters;

“Whereas unsafe conditions led to the maintenance contractor being fined in the winter of 2013-14, as well as leading to a special investigation by the provincial Auditor General;

“Whereas the managed outsourcing system for winter roads maintenance, where the private contractor is responsible for maintenance, but MTO patrols the region and directs the contractor on the deployment of vehicles, sand and salt, has a proven track record for removing snow and ensuring that Ontario's highways are safe for travellers;

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

“That the Ontario Ministry of Transportation take immediate action to improve the maintenance of winter roads based on the positive benefits of the previous delivery model, where MTO plays more of a role in directing the private contractor.”

I support this petition.

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DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from Madame Dorothy Groulx, from my riding, on Radar Road in Hanmer, and it reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

It has been a long time, Speaker, but I don't give up easily. We will get a PET scanner. Hannah will bring my petition to the Clerk.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition from the CAA with regard to the “Slow Down, Move Over” legislation.

“CAA petition in support

“Slow Down, Move Over legislation

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Highway Traffic Act requires drivers of a motor vehicle to slow down upon approaching an emergency vehicle that is stopped on the same side of a highway as that on which the driver is travelling; and

“Whereas over 40 states in the United States and five provinces in Canada have included roadside assistance workers in ‘Slow Down, Move Over’ legislation, providing protection for tow trucks assisting motorists; and

“Whereas everyone deserves a safe place to work;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to safety precautions to take when approaching roadside assistance vehicles.”

I support this petition and will sign it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Thank you, Speaker—
Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't see you back there. The member from Oshawa. I'm sorry.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario:

“Whereas the community of Windsor–Essex county has one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada resulting in stressful lives and financial inadequacies for many of its residents and businesses; and

“Whereas recently the Ford Motor Company was considering Windsor, Ontario, as a potential site for a new global engine that would create 1,000 new jobs (and as many as 7,000 spinoff jobs) for our community; and

“Whereas partnership with government was critical to secure this investment from Ford; and

“Whereas the inability of Ford and the Ontario” government “to come to an agreement for partnership contributed to the loss of this project;

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

“To insist that the Ontario government exhaust all available opportunities to reopen the discussions around

the Ford investment in Windsor and to develop a national auto strategy and review current policy meant to attract investment in the auto sector.”

I support this wholeheartedly, affix my name to it and will send it to the Clerk with Andrew.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO IMMIGRATION ACT, 2015 LOI DE 2015 SUR L'IMMIGRATION EN ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 9, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Bill 49 was last debated from the government side. Seeing that the members are not here for that, we are moving on. The official opposition will now further debate.

The member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you for that kind introduction. I'm pleased to speak to Bill 49 today, the act with respect to immigration to Ontario.

Immigrants are an important part of what makes up our population here in the province of Ontario and, as well, in the region I come from, the region of Waterloo. As an innovation hub and manufacturing hub for the province of Ontario and the rest of Canada, Waterloo region plays an integral role in attracting skilled workers from around the world to develop our technologically inclined sector.

About a year and a half ago, the National Household Survey reported that 23% of people in Kitchener-Waterloo and Cambridge were foreign-born. This is a large factor of our population that needs to find well-paying jobs, good education and affordable housing to become strong members of our community so that they can live and thrive in the province of Ontario.

Of course, I'd like to highlight some of the work that our region has done in collaboration with the federal government's immigration strategy.

In 2009, Citizenship and Immigration Canada put a call for proposals out to communities in Ontario that might be interested in developing a local immigration partnership to develop community-based partnerships that plan services around the needs of immigrants. At that time, the Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network established a local immigration partnership. During 2009 and 2010, a large number of stakeholders in Waterloo region worked to develop the strategy and establish three key pillars: (1) settle, (2) work, and (3) belong.

The Settle Steering Group is responsible for working in collaboration with community partners to carry out

strategic activities to improve the coordination of and access to services that facilitate immigrant settlement. Their activities include mapping of services, identifying barriers and access to services, coordinated planning, and training opportunities for enhanced service provision.

The Work Steering Group is responsible for working in collaboration with community partners to carry out strategic activities with respect to job creation. Members represent businesses and community sectors, including financial services, education, manufacturing, small business, health care, municipal government, employment service providers and members of the immigrant community. The Work Steering Group also supports the government-funded immigrant internship and mentorship programs for internationally trained professionals.

The goal of both programs is to support a newcomer's efforts to become professionally established in our community through paid work placements in their field, gaining valuable Canadian work experience; or through an opportunity to be mentored by local workers, where they can learn about working in the Canadian culture. The mentorship program, provided by the YMCAs of Cambridge and Kitchener-Waterloo, matches foreign-trained professionals with experienced professionals from Canada based on shared education, similar work experience and common career goals. The immigrant internship program delivered by Conestoga College, located in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, matches immigrants with a post-secondary degree or journey person status from another country with employers through paid internships. The length of the internship can vary. Participating in the internship program is a great way for employers to connect with international talent in our region.

Some of those employers participating would be COM DEV of Cambridge, Conestoga College, Deloitte, the Greater KW Chamber of Commerce, Scotiabank, Teledyne Dalsa technologies—the list goes on and on.

Finally, the Belong Steering Group will focus on coordination and collective action in order to make Waterloo region a more inclusive community. It includes public awareness and inclusion, as well as immigrant leadership and civic participation across the following areas: education, community supports and information, justice, arts and culture etc.

Recognizing all the work done by Immigration Waterloo Region, it's time that the province get up to speed with supporting our immigrants in my riding and across the entire province. Bill 49, an act with respect to immigration to Ontario, aims at working with the federal government's extensive changes to the immigration system in Canada over the last decade, including the federal skilled worker program and the provincial nominee program, to name a few.

This past January, the federal government introduced the expression-of-interest immigration reforms to make the system more responsive to labour market demands, to ensure that immigrants can find well-paying jobs and become strong citizens of Canadian communities across the country. As such, the federal government is encour-

aging provinces to develop systems that will allow for them to participate in the EOI system that is now implemented.

EOI really works in two steps. First, prospective immigrants would indicate their interest in coming to Canada by providing information electronically about their skills, work experience and other attributes. Individuals who meet certain eligibility criteria will have their expressions of interest placed in a pool and ranked against others already in that pool. Citizenship and Immigration Canada would only invite the best candidates, including those with in-demand skills or with job offers, to apply for a visa. Expressions of interest that are not chosen after a period of time may be removed from the pool. As a result, application backlogs would not accumulate and processing times would be kept to a minimum.

Of course, CIC also assesses applicants on a variety of other factors, such as education, work experience and language ability, with a greater emphasis on the ever-changing needs of the Canadian labour market. The Canadian government is working with provincial and territorial partners to make EOI a success, as we see outlined here in this bill. In partnership with Ontario's employers, the hope is to be ready to find candidates in the EOI pool that meet their skills requirements when the domestic labour force cannot.

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As we look at fixing our immigration policy in Ontario, I want to take a moment to look at other provinces and territories in Canada. Of course, the most obvious and cited example is Quebec's immigration policy. As a result of the 1991 Canada-Quebec Accord, Quebec fully assumed responsibility for establishing immigration levels and for the selection and integration of immigrants in areas under its responsibility. Quebec develops its own policies and programs, legislates, regulates and sets its own standards. In contrast, Ontario's immigration policy is tied to that of the federal government.

Recently the federal government released immigration stats for the last year. What they also provided was a table of statistics from 2004 through to the end of 2013 on the amount of permanent residents in each province and territory. There are three categories that make up the definition of a permanent resident. They are based on foreign nationals sponsored by close relatives or family members in Canada and include spouses or partners, dependent children, parents and grandparents. Permanent residents are also based on economic immigrants, who are people selected for their skills and ability to contribute to Canada's economy, including skilled workers, business immigrants, provincial and territorial nominees, and live-in caregivers. In addition, permanent residents are based on refugees, which include government-assisted refugees, privately sponsored refugees, refugees landed in Canada and dependents of refugees landed in Canada who were living abroad.

Here in Ontario, the number of permanent residents is quite startling. Newfoundland and Labrador saw their

permanent resident number nearly double from 2004 to 2013. PEI's permanent resident number has, in fact, tripled. Nova Scotia has increased by more than 1,000; New Brunswick, the same. Quebec's numbers increased the same as well during the same time frame. Manitoba's number almost doubled, and Saskatchewan's number increased from roughly 1,000 to 10,000 during the same time frame.

What is interesting is that you can clearly see that the numbers are increasing around Canada, but here in Ontario that is not the case. In the time from 2004 to 2013, Ontario has lost 25,000 permanent residents. If we look at how many of those permanent residents are economic immigrants, which this bill focuses on, the numbers get worse. In Ontario, in 2004, the number was 67,000. In 2013, that number dropped by 20,000 to just 47,000.

Let's compare those numbers to the western provinces. We continue hearing stories about Ontario-trained skilled workers packing up and heading west. Manitoba, in 2003, had 5,000 economic immigrants. That number almost doubled in 2013 to 9,600. Saskatchewan had 883 economic immigrants in 2004, and due to their job creation strategy and investment in their mining sectors, they increased their permanent residents 11 times to over 9,000. Alberta, for instance, had 8,700 in 2004, and in 2013 they had 22,000.

It is clear that the number of jobs available is reflective of the number of permanent residents in the provinces and territories across Canada. This is why Ontario isn't meeting the mark.

We'll have more opportunity to get into that. I did prepare 20 minutes; I know I'm now on 10 minutes, so I'll conclude in the few seconds that I have left. I look forward to questions and comments, and I'll finish up in the last two minutes that I have. Thank you, Speaker, for the time.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to speak to this bill because, first of all, it is my critic role. I'm the critic for citizenship and immigration and international trade, so it's obviously something of interest to me.

I had a meeting this afternoon with the CFS. One of things that we talk about as well is international students. We are encouraging international students to come to Ontario to attend our post-secondary education institutions. We want them to come here. But when an international student comes to Ontario, the tuition costs are astronomically high. You're talking maybe \$10,000 to \$12,000 a year. One of the concerns the CFS brought to the table was that international students are covered under UHIP, so they have to pay for that as well. That's another \$2,000 to \$3,000 a year.

One of their asks was, if we're encouraging international students to come to Ontario to attend our PSE, why not give them the same opportunity to be covered under OHIP?

Have that window where they arrive in Canada and have that three-month waiting period—they would have

their own insurance that they have to pay—but then, after the three months, they could access our health care system. We're encouraging them to study in Canada, specifically in Ontario, but we're not providing the support services they might need for health care.

The international students have spoken about the expense, and access to UHIP is also limited to a certain number of doctors, which makes it difficult, of course, when they need medical attention.

On that note, I think we could be looking at topics beyond the bill that's here today, so that we can encourage international students but also have the supports they require when they get here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'm pleased to rise and make a few comments in response to the member for Kitchener–Conestoga, and also talk a little bit about Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act.

This bill, of course, had its origin a number of years ago, actually. On November 5, 2012, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration launched A New Direction: Ontario's Immigration Strategy. The proposed legislation in this bill supports the implementation of this strategy.

In 2013, our government reaffirmed that Ontario's Immigration Strategy should respond to the province's demographic and economic realities. The province will be proactive in attracting the best and brightest in the world to Ontario, and helping immigrants and their families to settle and prosper.

Indeed, in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham we have a population of some 250,000. In fact, it is the largest riding in Canada by population. Some 40% of my constituents were born outside of Canada: 20% from China and some 10% from south Asia—India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. I must say that many of these individuals are truly the best and the brightest.

This legislation will allow more immigrants to come and settle here in Ontario. The way we're doing this, of course, is to have an opportunity to set our own immigration targets for Ontario's selection programs. We want to ensure that we align the skills of our new immigrants with the labour market opportunities we have here in Ontario.

There are many other important provisions in this bill, and I certainly urge all members of the House to support it.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's great to listen to my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga when he talks about some of the issues with this bill. I know we will be supporting it, but it's interesting, that when you look at Ontario, which has really been a province of immigrants, and how, for well over 100 years, we've been growing and attracting them. Now we're having a problem, because we have no jobs.

People who are coming to this country are depending on a livelihood; the economic immigrants need a place

where they can actually get a job. The action we see from this government, really, is one of blaming somebody else that we're not getting our fair share. Well, it's a category where we're not getting our fair share because there are no jobs coming here.

We don't see it just with new Canadians, but we see it with our young students and we see it with the general public. No longer is a minimum wage job looked upon as a good job. People come and they want more. They want some growth and some possibilities. Under this government, we've seen the percentage of minimum wage jobs skyrocket, but we don't think that's right. We think that our goal shouldn't really be a basic job; it should be a job where people can grow, raise a family and buy a house. That's why we're seeing new Canadians not stopping here anymore. They're going directly to the other provinces.

It's embarrassing when you look at the drop in population in that segment. I wouldn't have thought that was so, but when you look at what's happening, it's a sign of the last 12 years that this government has gone off course, I think, and they've forgotten what's required for economic growth. No longer are we looking for minimum wage jobs—they think the solution is to raise the minimum wage. But our goal is really about people getting great jobs. I look forward to speaking more on that today.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: We're happy to see some legislation coming forward on this whole immigration issue, because we know that certainly Ontario has been falling behind in attracting the number of new immigrants who actually arrive in this province, but we need to really be aware that there's not a lot in this bill that addresses the many challenges that newcomers actually face when they come to Canada or come to Ontario.

The Liberal government has had more than 10 years to pass legislation. Just like I talked about a few minutes ago on inclusionary zoning and the Ontario Municipal Board, they've been around for 11 years but they haven't passed any legislation to actually assist newcomers.

I had an opportunity to reach out to the Welland Heritage Council about this legislation, and the advice from their immigration expert was that as we proceed with this legislation, it would be good to reflect on what changes Ontario can make to address the wage and opportunity gaps between immigrants and native-born Canadians, because stats show that skilled immigrants are underemployed or unemployed due to barriers that they probably didn't even know about before they landed in this country, in this province, and some of those barriers are more prevalent in the province of Ontario. So while doctors and engineers arrive in Canada and don't necessarily expect to be absorbed immediately into the system, it would help if there was a clearer picture when people are immigrating into Canada and Ontario, to be clear about what adjustments they are actually going to have to make when they arrive in this province.

Thanks for the opportunity, and thanks to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga for his comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener–Conestoga has two minutes.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate those who chimed in: the member for London–Fanshawe, the Minister of Community and Social Services, my colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and, finally, the member from Welland. Thank you very much.

I wanted to get to a recent Auditor General's report in closing. She reported on the provincial nominee program, and I will share, really, her findings with those listening, which are actually quite interesting. The auditor stated that "the ministry needs to have robust, fair and transparent processes to allow it to consistently make the best nomination decisions. It also needs to track and measure how well people nominated in the past have in fact contributed to Ontario's economic development."

In her report, she explains, "Immigration selection programs are inherently at high risk of immigration fraud." A weak immigration program, one not keeping par with today's technologies, can be targeted, she says, which is true in Ontario. This means there is a significant risk that the provincial nominee program "might not always be nominating qualified individuals who can be of economic benefit to Ontario."

In conclusion on Bill 49, the government must implement a better database system, clearer rules and guidelines for ministry employees, enforcement mechanisms and security tracking. At the end of the day, those who immigrate to Canada do so for a better life for themselves and their families. They want a good job that pays them enough to support their family, and employers want skilled labour to help their business. It is the government's responsibility to be the facilitator and enforce these rules.

Speaker, I give the government the task to follow through on their commitment of Bill 49 by cleaning up our immigration and working more closely with the federal and municipal governments. But in addition to that, I ask the government to put forward a job creation plan in partnership with Bill 49 to address the serious issue facing over 600,000 men and women who don't have a job here in Ontario today.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you to the member opposite for the opportunity to speak to this bill, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991.

I would also like to thank my colleague from London–Fanshawe for her work as critic for citizenship, immigration and international trade, and for her thoughtful and poignant remarks on this bill when it was first introduced for second reading.

I would be remiss if I didn't recognize our NDP colleague and former critic Michael Prue, who brought

passion and expertise from this field into this Legislature. Thank you to him for all of his work on the previous Bill 161.

Now I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill today, a bill which has been a long time in the making.

My region of Durham is growing and becoming more and more diverse. We have the fruit and farm industry and opportunities for seasonal and migrant work. Our communities are growing and are expanding to welcome newcomers from around the world. Immigration concerns are by no means localized to any one area of province. While I am pleased to be a part of this debate here in a multicultural centre like Toronto, I am glad to be able to bring voices we don't often hear from this this Legislature.

We are pleased to see the government moving forward on some portions of this bill, but as always, the process has taken too long and the scope is too narrow. What this bill is is a step in the right direction.

In 2012, the government convened a round table of experts to review what changes and improvements were needed to Ontario's immigration system. The report they released, entitled *Expanding Our Routes To Success*, made 32 recommendations of changes the government could and should make, which would eventually inform the government's launch of *A New Direction: Ontario's Immigration Strategy*. From that strategy, we eventually come to the contents of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a long road, and today we will talk about some of the things that made it into this bill and some of the things that didn't; what we feel are steps in the right direction and what we can do to build on those first steps.

I would like to start by looking at one of the recommendations made by the government's Expert Roundtable on Immigration: "Employers and communities need to be champions in the integration of immigrants." This is a fairly broad statement, but its implications are significant. This bill acknowledges the importance of immigration to Ontario's economic future, but it does not properly address many of the fundamental challenges that newcomers face. Whether it is settlement issues such as ensuring that appropriate and affordable housing is available or professional barriers such as the issues newcomers encounter with receiving accreditation in their field, we need to consider the whole process when we are making change. We need to have supports. The lack of necessary bridge programs leads to instability. Whether someone is an expectant mother, diagnosed with a disease, or a victim of abuse, newcomers in their first three months in the province lack the safety nets that otherwise exist for other Ontarians. In Quebec, there are policies in place to protect newcomers if they unfortunately end up in challenging circumstances. In Ontario, however, the lack of policy has a devastating impact on the lives of countless newcomers.

Another concern is that this bill also doesn't do anything to close the existing loopholes when it comes to temporary and migrant workers. This means that this bill

will do nothing to address the fact that migrant workers are immensely more vulnerable to exploitation, and will do nothing to address the crisis of precarious employment that exists, in general, in our province. This is not a small portion of the population.

In 2012, Ontario had over 70,000 migrant workers compared to fewer than 50,000 economic-class immigrants who were granted permanent residency status that year.

Typically speaking, the fastest growth of migrant workers has been in low-wage industries, through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. In 2012, over 17,000 employers applied for migrant labour through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and, as all of us remember from the headlines, the Temporary Foreign Worker Program has not been a resounding success.

Case in point: Earlier this year, more than 150 migrant construction workers filed a lawsuit against Ottawa for discrimination under a program that permits them to work in Canada but allows only English-speaking candidates to stay on permanently.

I'd like to read you a quote from Juvenal Cabral, a 48-year-old Portuguese-speaking custom carpenter from Azores, who is also one of the plaintiffs: "They did not require English to have us work here on work permits. When we wanted to stay, they said we needed to pass the English test to qualify. Why are we good enough to work here but not good enough to stay?"

As we follow this case, we should remain aware of its implications and work to improve the working conditions and living conditions for migrant workers here in Ontario. Hopefully our actions in Ontario will give the government of Canada the inspiration it needs to address these problems on the federal level.

In 2006, a federal government review of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program acknowledged the failure of the program to safeguard migrant workers from exploitation. A 2009 review by the federal Auditor General also noted abuses and inadequate oversight, yet these problems continue today.

Since migrant worker exploitation isn't a focus in this bill, I would like to focus on it here. In a response to these issues, the Ontario Federation of Labour released a report in August 2013 entitled *Labour Without Borders: Towards a Migrant Workers' Bill of Rights*. We know it was also distributed to government. The report analyzes the conditions that migrant workers experience in Canada, and ultimately proposes a bill of rights for migrant workers, to protect them from abuses and exploitation.

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I want to take this opportunity to read into the record the proposed bill of rights for migrant workers from this OFL report.

"All migrant workers should have the following inalienable rights:

"(1) Permanent residency and citizenship rights: ... The capacity for migrant workers to contribute to communities in Ontario should be recognized and they should have access to permanent residency.

"(2) Right to information: All migrant workers should have access to information about human rights, labour rights, workplace health and safety and employment standards....

"(3) Union protection and labour rights: ... Many migrant workers face the threat of being blacklisted or not being invited back to Canada if they try to organize. As per the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the International Labour Organization convention number 98, all migrant workers should have the right to organize in a union and bargain collectively.

"(4) Full benefits and health care rights: ... Migrant workers should have full access to social programs and benefits including Employment Insurance, workers' compensation, social services and settlement services, both by law and in practice. Migrant workers should also have access to health care. Employers are required to provide health insurance until migrant workers qualify for provincial health care; however, there is widespread non-compliance on the part of employers in fulfilling this responsibility.

"(5) Freedom from recruitment fees: ... During recruitment, migrant workers are often charged exorbitant fees. This is entirely unacceptable and employers should bear the cost of recruitment, which is a standard cost associated with running a business.

"(6) Housing rights: ... Employers frequently provide or help migrant workers to find housing during their employment. Housing and living conditions are too often inadequate. Every migrant worker should live in safe, sanitary and comfortable living conditions.

"(7) Mobility rights: ... Currently, migrant workers' work permits are tied to a specific employer. Work permits tied to sectors or provinces would provide workers with more freedom of mobility once they arrive in Canada.

"(8) Freedom from discrimination: All migrant workers should be free from all forms of discrimination including racism and sexism. This should include equal remuneration for all workers regardless of race, nationality or gender."

You can see that there are things that could have been added to this bill and considered by this bill that haven't been.

Speaker, these are not radical or revolutionary ideas. These are the rights that are naturally extended to us as Canadian citizens but denied to migrant workers during the time that they spend in our country every year. We know that Ontario has been falling behind when it comes to the number of immigrants who arrive in Ontario, and we are happy to see some action from this government on immigration issues, but we need to be very aware of the fact that this bill does not address many of the fundamental challenges newcomers face, nor does it reflect the typical low-wage migrant experience or confirm much in the way of protections.

We would ask that during the committee stage, the government consider some of the larger immigration

reforms that are needed, such as protections for migrant workers.

Thank you again to the member opposite for the opportunity to speak to this bill today, and to my colleague from London–Fanshawe for her work as the NDP critic for citizenship, immigration and international trade, and to the experts and stakeholders that have helped to inform all of our positions here today.

There is a significant opportunity for the government to make some real and meaningful changes to Ontario's immigration system, and I sincerely encourage them to take it.

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

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Ça me fait grand plaisir de parler aujourd'hui au sujet du projet de loi 49 sur l'immigration en Ontario. Laissez-moi vous parler de l'importance de l'immigration en Ontario, et puis notre gouvernement bien sûr a mis de l'avant un objectif très ambitieux, qui est d'augmenter l'immigration francophone en Ontario.

Dans le projet de loi, on cite que notre objectif est d'avoir 5 % de l'immigration qui sont francophones. Présentement, c'est autour de 3 %. On a besoin de l'immigration francophone pour remplir des postes ici en Ontario, surtout dans le nord et le sud-ouest de l'Ontario. On a besoin de cette main-d'oeuvre qualifiée, beaucoup dans le domaine de la santé mais aussi dans le domaine des métiers et dans le domaine de l'éducation dans le nord-ouest et le sud-ouest de l'Ontario.

Alors, on s'est donné cette cible de 5 %, et on devra travailler de très près avec le gouvernement fédéral parce que c'est eux finalement, avec Destination Canada, qui peuvent nous aider à attirer ces francophones ici en Ontario.

D'autres provinces, oui, accueillent des francophones, comme le Nouveau-Brunswick, le Québec et le Manitoba, mais en totalité c'est l'Ontario qui attire le plus de francophones. Les municipalités ont maintenant un portail où on peut annoncer les atouts de la municipalité pour attirer ces francophones-ci en Ontario, et nous travaillons en partenariat avec elles.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Dufferin–Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to add my comments to the member from Oshawa. She made passing reference to the fact that our immigration numbers coming to Ontario have been decreasing, but I think you have to look at the bigger picture to talk about why they've been decreasing. Certainly Bill 49, I hope, will be a step in the right direction to encourage more immigration to Ontario—the types of immigrants that we so desperately need to build our economy—but you can't look at this issue in a vacuum. The reality is that part of the reason we have fewer immigrants interested in coming to Ontario and setting up shop—working here—is, quite frankly, because our economy is in decline.

If we're not going to have government policies and government ideas that bring forward and grow our

economy, then how can we possibly expect people who are looking and have the opportunity, quite frankly, to go to any province in Canada, let alone other countries—why would they look to Ontario? We have jobs exiting this province.

All we have to do is look at what's happening in London, what's happening with some of the many manufacturing firms that have chosen to move their operations outside of Ontario. Bill 49 is a good first step, but we cannot look at these issues in a vacuum, because the reality is that if we're not building a strong economy, then there is no interest for people to move here, to set up here and to find jobs here.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I got kind of comfortable sitting beside the member from Oshawa when she was debating this bill, and she did a great job on it.

She touched on migrant workers, and that reminded me of an event that happened when I was first elected. Around 2012, there was a very serious accident. There was a van carrying migrant workers to their job location fairly early in the morning, and there was a collision. The interim chief coroner at the time, Dan Cass, reported it as one of the deadliest collisions that he investigated. I believe it was 10 migrant workers who passed away in that horrible accident.

Migrant workers and newcomers and immigrants who come to Canada come here to make a better life, to contribute to society and do better for themselves. There are different reasons why they come. But this act is going to encourage the occupational class of immigrants coming to Canada, to provide them with jobs so they can contribute to the economy.

That's a good thing in this bill, but we have to remember that we have to be creating those jobs for the people who are here, as well as for the new immigrants who come to Ontario, because there's nothing worse than having that expectation of coming to Ontario and having a living, and you're not able to survive, pay your bills and find affordable housing.

The member from Oshawa talked about how we need to have supports, as well, if we're encouraging immigration. We don't want to set them up for failure. We don't want to have an open-door policy for immigrants and then have them not succeed.

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

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Mr. Yvan Baker: It's a pleasure to speak to this bill. I have to say that as I debate this bill, I think back to stories my grandfather used to tell me about how he immigrated to Canada and what it was like back then. He talked about how, when he immigrated, which was just after World War II, there were a number of immigration interviews that he had to go through. In those days, Canada was concerned about attracting the kinds of workers who could fill the labour market of the day. In those days, one of the types of jobs that needed to be

filled was for the type of folks who were strong, who were handy, who could build some of the power lines, the hydro lines, that we benefit from today. That's what my grandfather did when he came to Canada; he did a lot of manual labour. He was a fit for the labour market of the day.

Nowadays, of course, the labour market has evolved, it has changed, the economy has evolved, and we need to make sure that our immigration policies are keeping up with that. We need to do that for a few reasons. First of all, it's important to our economy. It's critical that we do what we can to make sure that everybody who lives in Ontario has a chance at a job, has a chance at supporting their family, reaching their potential and contributing to the economy, which benefits us all. But it's also important to the people and the quality of life of the people involved. When I think about my grandfather, he was able to come to Canada, immigrate, settle, find a job and was able to support his family. I'm one of the beneficiaries of that. We need to make sure we're doing that.

There are many people in our country who come and, unfortunately, struggle to find a job. I can think of many people in my community of Etobicoke Centre who are in that position.

What I think is excellent about this piece of legislation is that it strengthens Ontario's ability to make sure that it's attracting the kinds of people who can settle in Canada, settle in Ontario successfully, achieve those jobs and achieve that potential that every Ontarian hopes for and deserves.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Oshawa has two minutes.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you very much to my colleagues for weighing in on my comments.

To the Attorney General, thank you for reminding us and highlighting the need to prioritize francophone immigration. I appreciated that she also mentioned that in order for this to go anywhere, the government has to work closely with the federal government. So I would encourage that to be a priority.

We know that the Premier and the Prime Minister haven't exactly been jumping at the opportunity to work together, but, hopefully, they can see a way forward when it comes to these issues.

To the member from Dufferin-Caledon, thank you very much for also echoing that we need to look at the bigger picture, focusing on some of the root causes.

Thank you also to the member from London-Fanshawe for her work as critic but also for weighing in.

To the member from Etobicoke Centre, thank you also for reminding us of our immigration history, where we started—well, not necessarily where we started, but a historical perspective and how that connects to today. You mentioned attracting immigrants who could do the work that we prioritize today. As I had mentioned in my remarks, as we see in the case pending in Ottawa, it's one thing to attract the immigrants to Canada to do the work that we prioritize, but it's just as important, or more so, to ensure that they have the supports in place to be successful while they are here. Anyway, that's a case to watch.

If I may, just in closing, I'd like to finish by reading an excerpt from the letter written by Julia Deans, the chair of the government's Expert Roundtable on Immigration: "Attracting and settling immigrants is not just the job of government; this is about nation building and we each have a role to play. From better defining our labour market needs to preparing newcomers, our recommendations emphasize the need for the provincial and federal governments to work together and with other sectors."

We know that there is a lot of work to be done. It's a step in the right direction. It addresses some important issues, but not all that it should to change the big-picture issues.

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

Hon. Mario Sergio: Speaker, thanks for the time. I don't get too much time to get up on my feet and make some comments on some of the business we do in the House here. Before I run out of my five minutes, let me say that I'm going to share my time.

I thank the member across for the comments—

Miss Monique Taylor: Who are you sharing with?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I'm going to share my time with my seatmate, the Associate Minister of Finance.

Miss Monique Taylor: You can't do 10 minutes each?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Yes—

Interjection.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I only have five minutes, or less than that, and I want to address the positive comments that have already been made on the other side of the House, which is very nice. I think they understand the benefits of Bill 49. We are making comments on the second reading of this particular bill introduced by Minister Chan, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade. I think we all can relate to the importance of creating this particular bill, which is the Ontario Immigration Act, here in the province of Ontario.

I don't want to spend my five minutes, because I would need more than five hours, telling the story of who I am as an immigrant. I won't go there. I think we have to address the positive aspects of the bill. I hope that as the bill moves along we can indeed bring it back and make it even better. I hope that some of the comments that we hear from the other side will be incorporated and indeed make it a better bill. But it is important that we are going to have a bill made in Ontario, something that has integrity and the way we see it with respect to our workers. We're going to have all kinds of workers and employees. We will have the summertime employees, if you will, Speaker. We will have the professional people. They all will be subject, one way or another, to one form or another of either abuses or scams.

I think the legislation that is being proposed is proposed in such a way that indeed is going to offer the best of protection, not only for ourselves as a government, not only for our people, but for the immigrants who come here and want to have a fair system, want to

build their lives and want to contribute to our own Canadian and Ontario society.

Indeed, it calls for penalties as well because, in everything else, as we know, there are consequences “if.” First time, it’s \$150,000; repeated, it’s \$250,000 plus imprisonment and you have to face the law.

Bill 49 provides Ontario with the compliance and enforcement tools to ensure fairness and integrity in this so-called immigration system. We are addressing immigrants here, and as you know, we do need new immigrants. We are a young country and we need immigrants in the various aspects of our society.

How many immigrants do we receive on a regular, annual basis? In 2013 we received some 103,402 permanent resident immigrants, accounting for 40% of the total admissions to Canada. But Ontario’s share of permanent residents landing in Canada and coming to Ontario is diminishing. In 2006, we received some 50%, compared to 59% in 2001.

Among Ontario’s 2013 permanent residents, almost 47% were in the economic class—principal applicants, spouses and dependents as well. Some 37.8% were in the family class, and 12.2% were refugees, for a total of 12,600; and 3,800 were from other different classes.

Among the 18,700 principal applicants arriving from the economic class, 11,500 were skilled workers; 2,500 or 13.5% had some Canadian working experience; 2,600 or 14.4% were live-in caregivers; and some 7.4% or 1,400 were provincial nominees. I think there were another 3.6% which were from the business field—investors and so forth.

My time is already up but I would hope that my colleagues will continue to make a contribution by addressing the benefits of the bill, the merits of the bill and the positive side. I hope that we can move it along, bring it back and have a bill that indeed is going to be good for us and good for our new immigrants. I thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Associate Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. I’m very pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 49. Like my seat-mate and colleague the minister responsible for seniors, I too am an immigrant. I came to this country in 1975 with my family. Through hard work and the excellent education system that we have in this province, I have really seen the value of how immigrants can achieve, because I’ve been able to do that myself.

It’s something that is part of my DNA, Speaker. I come from a family who chose this province and this country as the place they wanted to live and raise a family. This bill is very important to me, and I’m pleased to join in the debate for Bill 49, establishing the Ontario Immigration Act.

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As the minister has said, this bill is very important for newcomers and for employers. That is very important to Ontario’s economy because we know we need to attract the best immigrants to Ontario who help to support our

growing labour market needs. More importantly, passing Bill 49 would make Ontario more competitive by attracting skilled workers. We need to fill our labour force needs and grow our economy.

What we need to do, in fact, is to continue to lay out the welcome mat and ensure that when newcomers come here, they are able to settle quickly and succeed, just like my family and I had the opportunity to do all those many, many years ago.

One example of that is our internationally educated professionals. When they come to Ontario, they are hoping to find work in the field that they have studied in their homeland. They are bringing those skills and those opportunities here to us, but too often we know the story, that our highly skilled newcomers are not getting into their field quickly. They face barriers and hurdles that prevent them from getting into their field. Our government is committed to removing those barriers for internationally educated professionals to practise in their field. When we speak of Ontario putting out the welcome mat, this is exactly what we’re talking about.

In my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, I am so pleased to work with a non-profit agency called Progress Career Planning Institute—and that is exactly what they do. They work with newcomers on some of our excellent programs like our bridging programs so that they are accelerating the pace at which newcomers can find work in their field and begin to establish themselves and their families.

Just two weeks ago, they had a conference called the foreign-educated professionals conference. Over 1,000 foreign-educated professionals came together at that conference to network with each other and learn about Canada’s labour market and Ontario’s labour market. These types of events and initiatives are very critical to ensuring that newcomers get into their field and begin working as quickly as possible.

We have many accomplishments and initiatives in this space. We have Global Experience Ontario. It’s a one-window information and resource centre that has served over 12,000 internationally trained individuals to date. We have HealthForceOntario, which has provided information, advice and programs to over 22,000 internationally trained health professionals. Our government was the first in Canada to bring forward fair-access legislation to ensure that registration practices are transparent, objective and fair.

We know there is still work that we need to do. One of the things that I notice when I go anywhere in the world is Canada’s reputation and Ontario’s reputation as an inclusive place, a place where we welcome people from all over the world. We’re known for that, Speaker. This legislation, Bill 49, will help to connect those realities in terms of the economic realities that are so critical to ensure that our internationally educated professionals are having the opportunities they deserve.

I really encourage all members of this House to support this vital bill, Bill 49, and keep Ontario’s economy and communities growing and prosperous.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a pleasure again to rise and at least have an opportunity in my short two minutes to address Bill 49, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991.

As we listen and as we observe what's going on in Ontario today, Ontario used to be—used to be—a place where immigrants would come, and they would bring their skill sets with them. We had jobs. It was affordable for them to come to Ontario and to participate and to become proud Canadians.

Well, unfortunately, Speaker, we're finding that the immigration rates into Ontario are in fact becoming less and less. Now, they may be going to other provinces within Canada to still become great and proud Canadians, but Ontario used to be the land of milk and honey. Well, unfortunately, since 2011 under this Liberal government, the Liberals have soured the milk and the honey has gotten hard. It's very, very unfortunate that that type of situation is in fact occurring—it is continuing to occur. That's a sad thing, because we want to be able to have opportunities for people.

My colleague from Dufferin—Caledon talked earlier about the fact that the more serious instances here—in order to welcome immigrants into Ontario, is the fact that we need to have good jobs. We need to have a stronger economy. The debt has, in fact, doubled since this government came into place. It once went from \$125 billion—which is when they came in, but it's now upwards of \$286 billion and getting higher. Well, unfortunately, that is forcing businesses out, and when the businesses go, the jobs go. When the jobs go, there's nothing for talented, skilled-set immigrants.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to comment on Bill 49 as it relates to some of the comments made by the minister of senior affairs and the Associate Minister of Finance. I'm very happy, actually, that the associate minister referenced the issue of education, because you'll remember, Mr. Speaker, this week that the Canadian Federation of Students, who are international students who are coming into this country, currently don't have access to health care. They have UHIP, and they have been lobbying this government for years now to have—if we're going to allow them to come into this country, if they're going to pay exorbitant, very high tuition rates, then they should actually have access to health care.

There's a young woman who sat in my office this week, and she's got two young children. And it was not clear to her, when she came into Ontario, that when she became a student in one of our post-secondary institutions, that when she went to the emergency room with a child with a huge fever, UHIP would not cover that. In fact, she had to pay \$870, which you'll know—as a student, they just don't have the money.

This piece of legislation, obviously, is long overdue. That's already been said about it. But a lot of the condi-

tions placed within it, of course, are contingent on federal co-operation or collaboration. The issue of the federal government allowing refugees, for instance, into this province, into this country, and not offering them health care services—I mean, they choose refugees and immigrants to come into this country based on their need of health care, and then they get to this country—it's a point of shame for us, as Canadians, to actually deny health care. It's a universal right, and it's something that every piece of legislation that comes through this House should be embedded in.

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

Hon. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, it's a great pleasure to stand in this House and speak about Bill 49, which is the Ontario Immigration Act. As we all know, this country and this province has been built—apart from the First Nations—by immigrants. We're all immigrants to Canada, including myself.

Wherever I go in this province—as Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities and Minister of Research and Innovation, I visit our various academic institutions, training centres, also our research institutions—I see many Canadians who have not been born in Canada. They have been born out of Canada and they're making great contributions to our province and our country. We are very proud of those Canadians who make extremely important contributions to our province and our country, Canada.

We need to bring legislation for immigration whereby we can attract the best talents from every part of the world, every corner of the world to our province of Ontario. As we all know, immigration is a shared jurisdiction between provinces and the federal government. Unfortunately, the federal government hasn't been a great partner with us in Ontario over the past years, so that we couldn't attract as many talented people to Ontario from other countries in the past years. Hopefully, in the future, particularly by passing this bill, we will make a good collaboration and the federal government will make a good collaboration and the federal government will make a good collaboration with Ontarians in terms of the selection of new immigrants to Ontario. For example, the provincial nominees for Ontario are far, far less than other provinces—far less than Quebec, far less than smaller provinces such as Alberta—and there's no need for it.

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Ontario is the largest province in this country, the largest jurisdiction in this country, and we need a good partner when it comes to immigration. We know that immigration is the key for the progress of this province, of this country.

I'm pleased to support this bill, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I'd like to speak to the Ontario Immigration Act, Bill 49. It is certainly a worthy piece of legislation in its intent, because the intent is to match the

people with skills who would immigrate here to the jobs that we have in Canada. That only makes good sense.

We are a land of immigrants in this country, as has been explained to us by the minister of innovation and colleges and trades, and he himself is an immigrant. All of our families, at some point in time in our history, if we go back a generation or two or many, even back to 400 years ago when the first French Canadians came here—we are all immigrants, and we all came here for the potential that this new and great land offered to us.

I'll give you a couple of examples why we need to match the needs of the country—what jobs we have vacant—to the skills that people would have to offer. Last year, in Ontario, we had 9,000 people graduate from teachers' college to fill 5,000 jobs. That is truly a mismatch and failure of our education system, I would say, because it makes for 4,000 very unhappy people who don't have a job. But they do have the debt of getting that education and have wasted—well, temporarily have wasted four years of their time. They might better have been educated in a field that matched a job at the end of their school time.

A different story that is a happy story for workers is at Cambrian College in Sudbury: 24 people graduated this year from their electrical technician/pole-climbing program, for 300 jobs. These are \$75,000-a-year jobs. So those are very happy students—unhappy employers.

That's where more people coming out of the education system, perhaps immigrant people, would be well matched to go to those kinds of colleges.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister responsible for seniors affairs has two minutes.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I want to thank the members who made a contribution on the debate: the members from Chatham–Kent–Essex, Kitchener–Waterloo, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, and Research and Innovation, and the member from Mississippi Mills as well. I want to thank them for their positive contribution to the debate, Speaker.

Let me say that people still want to immigrate to Canada and Ontario, Speaker, for a number of reasons in spite of—sometimes we think that there are difficulties. Of course, there are difficulties. You had your share. I don't know about you, Speaker, but I had mine, certainly. I came in 1958, when the infamous Avro Arrow airplane was cancelled, so I don't have to tell you the employment situation at that particular time in our history.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Tories did that too.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Yes, indeed.

But let me say, Speaker, where are they coming from? We're still getting people. In 2013-14, Speaker, we got some 15,000 people from India, 15,000 from China, 7,000 from Pakistan, 7,000 from the Philippines, 6,000 from Iran and 3,200 from the United States. What languages do they speak? It's 11% English, 7.3% Urdu, 7% Arabic, 7% Mandarin, Chinese and so forth.

Speaker, that is why we need this particular piece of legislation approved by this House: so we can indeed provide all the necessary protections to all the new and

old immigrants, if you will. I think we owe it to them. They want to come here to build their future. They want to make a contribution. I think the best thing that we can do is provide the necessary integrity within the law that offers them the possibility.

I thank you for your time, Speaker. You look good in the chair.

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

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I would like to speak to Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act. We are in agreement that Ontario needs to update its immigration policy. This bill contains provisions that do not respect our common-law rights; specifically, private property rights and the right to due process. This will inevitably lead to abuses of power.

About warrantless entry, Bill 49 gives inspectors, after having completed a course of training approved by the director, the authority to enter premises without a warrant. Warrantless entry, combined with other provisions in the bill that establish absolute liability, sizable penalties and the absence of proper appeals process, is an infringement upon our constitutional right to be secure against unreasonable search and seizure, as articulated in section 8 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is alarming how many bureaucrats have been provided with warrantless entry authority by this provincial government. If the inspector has reasonable grounds to suspect that someone is violating the law, what is the difficulty in obtaining a warrant?

As well, what type of training is contemplated for inspectors and investigators? For instance, will the training include the teaching of Canadians' common-law rights, as defined in our Constitution?

About the appeals process, section 8 of the bill allows the minister to cancel a registration in the employer or recruiter registry and inform the holder of the registration of the cancellation by letter. The only appeal set out in the bill is a request for an internal review, which has very few procedural protections for the requester in the bill.

When it comes to the appeals processes, we need to be very careful to protect people's rights and ensure that the provincial government is not given the opportunity to act arbitrarily and behind closed doors. We need a proper appeals process with effective oversight and accountability.

The process outlined in the bill for an internal review does not require the minister to share with the requester the specific charges or evidence that the minister relied on in the original determination. In fact, the minister is not obliged to reveal what, if any, evidence it possesses or uses during the cancellation process or the internal review process.

The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations regulating these matters, but is not required to do so. To adequately defend themselves, employers and recruiters should be provided with the specific charges and evidence being used by the minister in their determination and be given adequate time to reply.

Subsection 28(8) of the bill establishes a standard of absolute liability with respect to administrative penalties. Absolute liability means that the minister may fine a person or corporation up to \$150,000 per contravention, even if the person took all reasonable steps to prevent a contravention or had an honest and reasonable belief in a mistaken set of facts that, if true, would render the contravention innocent.

Again, a proper appeals process that protects the right of the accused is completely lacking in the bill. People need to be provided with an opportunity to avail themselves of a proper defence during a proper hearing with proper procedures to protect their rights if they are being fined. Where are the rights of due process?

1700

The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations governing the rights of the requester under a request, but is not required to do so. I would prefer to see due process rights in the legislation, as regulations can be more easily changed and do not come to this chamber for full and open debate.

About bureaucratic convenience, when the provincial government writes legislation for the convenience of bureaucrats, we are at risk of losing our common-law rights. I hope it is not the intent or case here, but I have my doubts, as we have seen this played out over and over again over the last 11 years in Ontario. It is not surprising to anyone who has studied history that bureaucracies with little or no legislative constraints placed on them have the potential to abuse their power. It is human nature; not that public servants are bad people, but that bad people are attracted to and desire power over others and will naturally be attracted to positions with minimal constraints on their behaviour.

That is why we need to be mindful and include legislative provisions in bills to protect the rights of Canadians and not continue to give bureaucrats increasing power over every aspect of our lives.

About immigrants, one of the best parts of my job is talking to people who have come to Canada from places all around the world and listening to their personal stories. It is awe-inspiring to hear people's stories of their escape from tyrannical countries run by corrupt officials in order to gain the liberty and freedom that Canada has to offer.

Unfortunately, what I hear from Canadian immigrants more and more these days is that Ontario is beginning to resemble the corrupt and tyrannical country that they were able to escape. Vast and ever-expanding bureaucracies are not compatible with liberty and freedom. Even worse are privatized bureaucracies that do not answer to the people through their elected representatives.

My point is that, as my colleagues have pointed out in previous speeches, Ontario has declining immigration due to high taxes, large deficits and debt, increasing red tape, diminishing economic opportunities, and high and soaring energy costs, but also because we in Ontario are losing our common-law rights in an unprecedented and continuing attack by this provincial government.

These issues are connected. Our common-law rights are the basis for Ontario's prosperity, albeit currently declining prosperity. Losing our rights will inevitably mean losing our prosperity.

Immigrants from despotic Third World and Communist countries know this. They understand that freedom forms the foundation of prosperity, which is why so many are willing to leave behind everything they know to come to Canada for freedom and prosperity, to build a better life for their families and themselves. They don't understand why we in Ontario would so casually fritter away what most of the world's population can only dream of.

In conclusion, if we don't reverse this trend, in the long run there may not be a need for an Ontario immigration policy, and that would be sad. Ontario has so much to offer. It would be a shame if immigrants decided to reject Ontario and settle in more friendly provinces because the Ontario provincial government demolished the very rights and freedoms that attract immigrants to Canada to begin with.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: This afternoon I actually had an opportunity to meet with the Canadian Federation of Students. This kind of feeds right into this bill that is before us because they're interested in equitable health care access for international students. They say that international students pay somewhere between \$700 and \$2,000 a year for what is called UHIP. Unfortunately, it's not really a universal system. Many hospitals aren't enrolled in it; many physicians aren't enrolled in it.

They gave me an example of one international student who became pregnant while she was here, going to university in Toronto. She didn't have any access to obstetrical care in the city of Toronto, so imagine what happens in the rest of the province. We've got these international students who are paying \$20,000 a year in tuition fees, and on top of that, they're paying \$700 to \$2,000 a year for health care that they can't access in the city where they are actually going to school.

I have to mention that it was the Tory government back in 1994 that actually eliminated OHIP for international students. That itself became a problem for students. Now we have the university actually putting in a health care plan, but I don't even know where those premiums are going. Are they going into the university coffers, or are they actually going into the government coffers?

There are other examples in BC and Manitoba where we are treating our international students to more fair and equitable health care access.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I appreciated the comments by my colleague from Carleton-Mississippi Mills on this new bill on immigration. I would just like to say that—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: You didn't hear them.

Mr. Mike Colle: I was watching on television, so be quiet.

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Colle: Deputy Speaker, the thing I wanted to say, in terms of the comments from our colleague here, is that immigration is critically important to Ontario. I think we all forget that almost every year, about 100,000 immigrants make Ontario home. That's 100,000 every year. So 100,000 come this year, and we have to ensure that they're properly integrated in society with jobs, with housing, with education, with health care. Then, on January 1, another 100,000 come. It never stops. So it's critically important to have tools in place in Ontario so we can best accommodate these immigrants, because it is extremely challenging for cities, communities, work-places and schools to make sure that newcomers fit in. That's why we need more say in immigration in Ontario, so that we can do a better job of ensuring that newcomers get an equal opportunity so they can contribute to the economy and to the community they choose as their new home.

That's all I have to say, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. And thanks for helping me out; I appreciate it.

The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm glad to add to this debate, with questions and comments, and I thank my fellow colleague from Carleton–Mississippi Mills for speaking today.

He actually exemplifies why we need to continue debate on so many bills that this government wants to shut down. It's been quite outrageous, the number of bills this government has decided to split the speaking times between their members for five or 10 minutes, and the next time rise and say, "So many speakers have spoken," and shut down debate on the opposition side of the house.

The fact is, he has stood up and brought out new issues that haven't been debated on this floor. I think it's quite responsible and important to ensure that we continue this debate. Now that they're on the floor, we can have further discussion about them. But my fear is that this government is going to stand up in the next minute or two and shut down debate like they have with the agriculture bill and the Ontario pension plan etc. We're quite concerned about that.

Congratulations to the member for bringing this forward. The gist of his point is the fact that Ontario is losing too many jobs. Ontario is not a place of opportunity anymore. It makes it tougher for immigrants not only to come to this province but to stay in this province. Unfortunately, too many people are heading west who should be staying in this province. It's not just immigrants who leave; it's people who have been in Ontario for years. I can tell you that a number of my nieces and nephews have headed west due to the fact that there's no opportunity for these young folks here.

1710

What the government needs to focus on—and I wish they would focus on it—is putting together an economic plan that would actually cut the waste, cut the overspending and create an economic environment that is positive

for investment in this province. Unfortunately, they're headed in the wrong direction. You can see it with their deficit, which is climbing, at \$12.5 billion. They are obviously not even on target to balance this budget, and until they actually take seriously the effects of what they are doing to this province, it's going to be tougher for immigrants and Ontarians and Canadians to stay in this province.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I was listening very closely to the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills because I was sitting in the chair, and it felt pretty good, I just want to say.

But if you listened to him, he planted the seed of fear around Bill 49, which is a really interesting technique that politicians are starting to use to motivate legislation in this country and, quite honestly, in this province. I'm referencing, of course, Bill C-51, which the member would know.

Bill C-51 has wide-sweeping powers gift-wrapped in rhetoric which is positioned around fear, and based on stereotypes as well. The laws already exist in this country to deal with terrorist threats. Quite honestly, I have to say, if you think about the Toronto 18 and the VIA Rail terror plots, there are measures in place. So I think it's really interesting that he has referenced the fear of government in this, because I can tell you that there are many European and new immigrants in this country who have a growing fear of Stephen Harper and Bill C-51 because it is heralding a whole new era of fear in this country, which goes against the very nature of what it means to be Canadians. I must tell you that our leader Thomas Mulcair has been very clear about our position on Bill C-51. It's not necessary; it compromises our democratic rights; it shifts the nature of our culture in this province and in this country.

I just want to red-flag that use of fear to manipulate and to introduce a whole new kind of rhetoric around any kind of bill.

This bill, at its heart, is a fairly good bill. It needs work, but we shouldn't be afraid of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills has two minutes.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: There is nothing to be afraid of except ourselves. We make rules in this place that intrude into people's lives sometimes. Warrantless entry is one of these heinous things that comes out of this place far too often, which means government can come into our place of work or home at will, without any evidence or reason. That is wrong and that is unconstitutional, and that is what we need to be afraid of: bad government. That is unfortunate.

People come here because we're the best country in the world. I know people in my community who say their parents came from Yugoslavia or Slovakia and crawled across the fields so the guards couldn't shoot at them and things like that. Another person in my riding association, his father was a boat person from Vietnam. He escaped with his life and has prospered in this country.

They do not prosper because of the regulations and controls of this country. They prosper because of the opportunity and the freedom, and that's what we must fight for and we must be diligent about protecting, as the people who are elected by the people of this province, the 107 persons who are on guard for the freedom of the people of Ontario.

The immigrants are the strength and the backbone of this land, and we want to keep it that way, because without them—well, Ontario and Canada is nothing but its people, and all of its people are or were immigrants at one time. In my riding, there are a lot of new Canadians, and I've just found them a wonderful group of individuals, very inspiring, there for all the right reasons, often very educated, very much achieving, very appreciative of this wonderful land they are in and of the freedom and opportunities they have within which they can prosper themselves, for their families and for their communities. They are great Canadians.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker. Once again, I'm always pleased to stand in this House on behalf of the residents of Hamilton Mountain.

Over the past three and a half years, I have to say that one of the best aspects of my job is the many opportunities that I've had to experience the wide diversity of people in Hamilton Mountain and throughout our city. Before being elected, I fully enjoyed participating where I could, in various ethnic and cultural celebrations. Over the years, I've made many friends as a result. But as an MPP I'm especially privileged to receive many invitations to countless events and discussions from a wide array of groups and individuals, learning more each time about what brought new Canadians to our country and what they bring to our community.

Today we are debating the proposed Ontario Immigration Act put forward by the government. I have to say it's about time. What I think we have here with Bill 49 is a step in the right direction—a small step but nonetheless a step that finally recognizes that Ontario can play a role when it comes to immigration issues.

The Liberals have been in power now since 2003. That's 12 years that it took them to move on this file. In that time, it appears that things have actually gotten worse—worse for immigrants and worse for our province. Those 12 years could have been better spent addressing some of the issues related to immigration and to the situation faced by newcomers to Ontario. So it has taken a while to get moving on this, but like I said, it's better late than never.

Since Europeans first came to this land, immigration has been a key element of our growth as a nation. It's as true now as it was 200 years ago. Today, as was pointed out by the Expert Roundtable on Immigration, it is estimated that Ontario will face a shortage of 364,000 skilled workers by 2025. As our population ages over the coming years and people leave the workforce, we cannot come close to replacing those people without a signifi-

cant influx of people of working age from other countries. In fact, the round table also stated that immigration would need to be increased by 250% to offset that decline.

In my hometown of Hamilton, we have a group called the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council that has said, "Without immigration, Hamilton will witness a declining and aging population, a smaller workforce and diminishing tax base." But over the past number of years, Ontario has experienced a drop of almost a third in its share of immigrants coming to Canada. In 2001, over 59% of immigrants to Canada came to Ontario; but in 2011 that figure dropped to 40%.

As I mentioned, we're facing an ever-increasing shortage of skilled workers. To fill those jobs, we need those people we call economic immigrants: people selected for their skills and their ability to contribute to our economy. But again, the percentage of people in this category has been falling in Ontario. In 2001, 64% of Ontario immigrants were economic immigrants; in 2011, that had fallen to 52%.

If we look at the actual numbers, it's even more startling. In 2001, 89,079 economic immigrants came to Ontario; but in 2011, only 36,939 in the same category settled here. That's a decrease of about 60% in 10 years. In Hamilton, between 2003 and 2008, only 41% of immigrants were in the economic class, significantly lower than the equivalent figures for Ontario and Canada for the same period. This comes at a time when Hamilton is seeing a rapidly changing economy that requires a different skill set from our previous needs.

This Ontario Immigration Act is specifically designed to increase the percentage of economic immigrants. For example, following the round table on immigration's target of increasing the number of immigrants through the provincial nominee program to 5,000, this bill attempts to set those targets. The problem is that the federal government still has the power over immigration matters, and there is no guarantee that Ontario will be able to set those targets. The attempt is in the bill, but there is no guarantee.

1720

I had a constituent contact my office a couple of months back. This was an employer who wanted to bring three people into Canada who had a particular skill—a skill that was not widely held in Canada—through the provincial nominee program. Each of these positions would have resulted in three other jobs for local people. She was having a problem getting her application processed and was looking for some assistance.

When we looked into it, we found out the reason that the application could not be processed was because the target for 2014, which was 2,500, had been reached a couple of months previously, and the federal government had not yet told the province what the target would be for 2015. Although the provincial nominee program was still accepting applications, there was nothing that could be done with them until the federal government set a new target and started accepting applications from the province.

We were told that it would take months before she could get the workers she needed. These were workers she knew—she knew their names and she knew their skills. She knew the immediate demands on her business, and she knew these were the people who would enable her to respond to that demand, people who would enable her to take her company up a level and provide work for nine other people in the Hamilton area.

The Expert Roundtable on Immigration said, “Making the immigration system work better for Ontario requires a renewed partnership between the provincial and federal governments.” As we’ve heard, Speaker, how true that is.

The province of Quebec, for years, has had a significant influence on immigration and immigration policy, but Ontario has been left behind.

I had a look at some of the annual reports of the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council and noted the following paragraph in the message from the chair—a similar paragraph is included each and every year. I’ll read it now: “I must acknowledge the work of our many partners—the government of Canada, the city of Hamilton and the many individuals, organizations and institutions that participated in our work.” Some of the members may have noticed that what is normally a key partner in public policy work is missing, and that is the government of Ontario. I’m pretty sure that that omission is not due to an oversight, a mistake or an intentional slight against the government. No, it’s simply a reflection of what has been happening over the years in communities across this province.

The provincial government has not been a partner with other levels of government when it comes to immigration, and it’s time for that to change.

The importance of bringing new immigrants to our communities is only one part of the equation. We also have an equally—and probably more—important role to play when it comes to matters of immigrant settlement.

We need to make sure that those people we attract are able to contribute fully and allow them to meet their full potential. Sadly, that’s not always the case. If we look at average incomes, immigrants, and especially recent immigrants, earn significantly less than Canadian-born workers. Figures from a few years ago published by the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council give us an average income of about \$55,000 for those born in Canada. For the immigrant population, it drops to around \$40,000, and for recent immigrants it’s only about \$22,000. These numbers are quite consistent with averages for Ontario as a whole.

The council also points out that these differences in income between Canadian-born workers and immigrants increase with the skill level and education.

The number of highly qualified immigrants who are not working in fields they are trained in is disgraceful. I know many people who are scraping together a living in precarious work, such as driving taxis, yet they have excellent professional qualifications. We are doing them, and ourselves, a disservice by not giving them the opportunity to put their skills, education and experience to its best use.

Unfortunately, this bill does not address these issues, nor does it address some of the fundamental challenges new immigrants face when they arrive here. Affordable housing is one example—a problem, for sure, for many Ontarians, but particularly so for immigrants.

So, yes, Speaker, I support this bill. As I said, it’s a start that’s long overdue, but it could do a lot better. I hope we can get it to committee and we can amend it to address some of the more serious issues facing our immigrants.

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It gives me great pleasure to speak for a couple of minutes and make some comments to the member from Hamilton Mountain on this immigration bill. I’ve heard from the other side, both parties, supporting this, which is great, but I also hear that we need to do some tweaking, some changes and so forth. So I hope that they’ll bring those potential changes or those expectations to committee—because, frankly, I haven’t heard them during their debate time—to make any suggestions as to what should be there.

They talk about what’s not there, that we forgot about, but I haven’t heard any specific suggestions. I hope by the time it gets to committee, they bring that to the table, because I think, as an immigrant—and I will speak to that a little bit.

I came to Canada when I was 12, and I think my mother and father took a bit of a leap of faith. Although we had relatives here, you leave a country where you were born and the rest of your immediate family is there. It’s quite an undertaking. But they adapted to this country.

The challenge? Times change. The immigrants of my generation, when we came here, filled those much-needed—in my family’s case, construction, that my father and so forth embarked on. But those things have changed today, Speaker. We need to make sure that, as we move forward, we work in collaboration with the federal government, because after all, that’s their responsibility: to make sure that immigrants who come to Ontario will have the right fit so that they can have those proper jobs, so they can have those good jobs for them and their family.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: It’s a privilege to rise to comment on the comments from the member from Hamilton Mountain. It’s a program that’s needed in this country. We have to, I guess, update ourselves to the recent federal regulations that are all around putting a system in place that attracts the best new Canadians to our province.

It’s unfortunate that we’re having a hard time to attract them to Ontario because of the lack of good jobs. We’re finding, yes, we have a large number come to Ontario every year, but they’re leaving in droves as they’re forced—if they want to find employment and be able to support a family and buy a home and live the life that our

ancestors have very much grown accustomed to, they have to leave the province looking for a good job. It's unfortunate that we've seen this happen over the last decade or so.

I think our member from Kitchener–Conestoga talked about how the numbers are dropping in Ontario, and by a fairly significant factor, where all the other provinces are actually increasing. It's no secret why; it's because of the better opportunities that are elsewhere. It's a sad statement on our history because we were always the province that attracted people, gave them the best opportunities to come, work hard, get a good job and really settle and add to our communities and our economy.

But that's changed, and we see them—we're attracting bright, smart new Canadians, but when they get here, they quickly see that the opportunities are elsewhere, and they're going there. It's not a statement of people not wanting to come here. But they're coming here with the idea of contributing. The best place to contribute is when you have a good job.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The member opposite mentioned that he doesn't hear any suggestions from this side of the House. One of the things we've observed is it has taken 10 years for this bill to come to the House. Over a 10-year time, there should have been some suggestion-building by this government to put in this bill so that it would be more of an effective bill.

The premise of the bill is a good step forward. It's going to accomplish opening up the idea to immigration. But as we know, a lot of this bill requires a federal buy-in. A suggestion is that getting a federal buy-in would have been a great way to make this bill stronger, as opposed to leaving it kind of flying in the wind without that guarantee that the federal government is going to have buy-in on that.

1730

The other thing that I'd like to address is that there's a provision in there—again, it's not a commitment that's being made in this bill. The word says that it “allows,” so it allows the minister to establish a registry for both employers and recruiters so that they can be monitored. It doesn't make it a requirement. That's a suggestion I would bring to the table: to require employers and recruiters to have a registry. Other provinces have this policy in place and it's been working very well. What it does is, it makes the employer and the recruiter liable for their decisions, with maybe fines attached to that as well.

I'm looking forward, when it does go to committee, that we hear from new deputants. That's where the true, on-the-ground work and suggestions come from, to make this bill stronger.

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

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to speak to you about Bill 49 today, the Ontario Immigration Act.

You've heard the argument made that Ontario needs to chart its own course when it comes to attracting more

skilled labour. We know that immigrants have helped to drive our economy. Imagine what our province would look like without the millions of people who have come here to help build our province and to add to the strength of our economy.

My own family are immigrants from southern Italy, just like my colleague beside me. My parents came here in 1957 when they were in their early 20s. My father, two days after arriving, went to work in construction. My mother, a few days after that—and she was three months pregnant at the time—got a job at a dry cleaners at the corner of Yonge and Sheppard. It was called Pete's Cleaners. She worked there for 18 years. After that she cleaned houses and she worked in factories. They essentially did the kind of work that other people did not want to do.

We know that after the war, in the GTA, more than one million Italians settled in the area and they helped to build the city. That's just one ethnic group.

I want to touch specifically, though, on the provincial nominee program. We know that Ontario nominees have been more successful in establishing themselves economically when compared to immigrants residing in Ontario selected either through other PNPs or by the federal government. Here are some very important stats: We know that 98% of survey respondents say that they'll stay in Ontario; 99% of the respondents with a job offer are working in Ontario and most are still with their employer. Almost all say that they're really happy with their life here in the province, so we want to continue that.

Immigrants are so vital to this province. They help to build our economy. Along with a great public education system and skills training, I believe that this proposed legislation is going to be part of our economic plan for creating jobs now and in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Hamilton Mountain has two minutes.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the member from Northumberland–Quinte West and his suggestions that New Democrats can give you ideas and you would think about bringing them into incorporation of the bill to make it better. Well, New Democrats have been doing that for years. The Liberals decide to push things forward. They know best. They don't want to listen to anybody else. Hopefully you will have the ear of your minister there and be able to make sure that New Democrats have a say in the bill that's coming forward, because we, like you, have constituents who face troubles. We know that we can help make that better for everyone if we work together.

Thanks to the members from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, London–Fanshawe, and Kitchener Centre. The member from Kitchener Centre talked about the provincial nominee program and the benefits that could have for people in the province. Yes, it definitely has a benefit. But we need to urge the federal government to make sure that they're talking to the province, to make sure that the situation that I spoke about with my constituent doesn't continue to happen when they're working

so hard to bring jobs into my community and yet they're being stopped in their tracks because the governments aren't speaking together.

There's definitely a lot of work that can be done on this bill. The member from London-Fanshawe talked about the recruiting process between the employers and the employees and how that can make it better.

There are so many people in my riding who would benefit from such a program to be enacted. Many a day I talk to taxi drivers. I talk to people in fast food. I talk to so many new immigrants to our country. They're doctors and they're professional engineers and they're professors, and they have so many great skills that are just being wasted here in Ontario.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm pleased to add my voice to this discussion on the Ontario Immigration Act. My ancestors came over here from Scotland almost 150 years ago. Canada is a country of immigrants who have come here and taken over a very rough territory. They left something that was very rough in Europe, in my ancestors' case, and were able to come over here and turn Canada into what it is today.

Over the years, we've welcomed immigrants, new Canadians coming through, and it has been a very positive experience for the vast majority of people. We've turned around and have been able to be a positive experience back to the world itself. We look forward to an act that actually continues to encourage our growth.

As we proceed through this debate, it is very important to keep in mind that any power our province gets regarding immigration is lent to us by the federal government. Unlike with Quebec, all other provincial nominee programs can be stopped at any time by the federal government.

The provinces can select a minimum number of candidates for immigration and issue them a nomination certificate that allows applicants to submit an application to Citizenship and Immigration Canada. There, all applicants, including all provincial nominees, are screened against criminal- and health-related inadmissibility before being granted permanent residence.

Canada is held in high regard around the world. We are seen as prosperous, tolerant, welcoming and fair. Prior to Minister Jason Kenney's tenure as the federal Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and the Minister for Multiculturalism, the immigration backlog resulted in many prospective immigrants waiting close to a decade to see their application processed. The long-term commitment these workers made to see their Canadian dream come true is a mark of how attractive Canada is for people who want to work, live freely and enjoy the fruits of their labour.

Today the immigration system is nimbler, faster, fairer and more responsive to the needs of employers and skilled workers. Under express entry, prospective immigrants can create an online profile outlining their skills and eligibility for Canadian immigration and register

with the Canada Job Bank. Employers can then find the best potential employees and select them, regardless of the order in which the applications are received. Immigrants are also ranked in the general pool of applicants according to their skills, education and experience, with the top-scoring candidates receiving an invitation to apply.

Only two trump cards exist in today's system: a labour market impact assessment and a provincial nomination. These give candidates sufficient points to rank at the top tier of applicants and all but guarantee an invitation to apply.

Before I remark on the provincial nomination, allow me to outline what kind of bureaucratic competition the provincial nomination program is up against. The impact assessment is granted by Employment and Social Development Canada to employers who want to bring an immigrant to fill a position that no suitable Canadian residents have applied for. It costs \$1,000. Employers can recover this fee from the employee, and the assessment is processed in 10 business days. Once a positive LMIA is granted, the prospective immigrant enters it into their express entry profile and waits for the next round of invitations. The federal side of the express entry program takes 10 business days and the \$1,000 is paid by the employer.

The provincial nominee program for Ontario is divided into two steps. In the first, the employer applies for a pre-screening similar to the LMIA, providing proof of attempted recruitment of Canadians and Canadian permanent residents. Once approval is granted, an individual then pays either \$1,500 or \$2,000 to receive the official provincial nomination. The whole process can take 90 days for each step, or about six months in total. Simply put, the current provincial program costs about twice as much as the federal one and takes about 10 times as long. Quebec's program, by contrast, costs \$765, and the Alberta one is free.

1740

The cost of the program isn't the only factor where Ontario is less competitive than the other provinces. The number of spots available to Ontario provincial nominees is stuck at 2,500 per year because many new immigrants leave Ontario to find work, or better work, in the western provinces.

Good immigration policy hinges on attraction and retention. Toronto and Ontario have the potential to attract the best and the brightest; however, we are not utilizing it. We have a multilingual and highly skilled workforce that makes us capable of doing business with every other country and industry in the world. Our immigration system is much simpler, quicker and fairer than that of our neighbours to the south. We have an excellent reputation for tolerance, inclusion and ease of integration. Canada is the highest-ranking G8 member in the Global Peace Index, a testimony to peace, order and good government.

However, our cost of living is rising. The government may not want to acknowledge the problem; however,

successful businesses are being put on the brink of bankruptcy by increasing power rates, and residential power is increasingly unaffordable.

The government is mulling a carbon tax, which would make all goods, including food, more expensive. The proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan will decrease the take-home pay of Canadians and permanent residents alike.

Immigrants come to Ontario to improve their lot and realize their dreams. With a string of economically damaging policies, this government is slowly sucking the energy and the drive out of the Ontario dream.

Why should a prospective immigrant choose Ontario when they know the Wynne government is strapped for cash and seeking new revenue tools? Many immigrants leave behind realities where graft and lawlessness take away the reward for a hard day's work and their certainty of a better tomorrow. It is up to us as legislators to ensure that Ontario can clearly and enthusiastically offer them the confidence that they can build a better, freer, richer life in Ontario than anywhere else in Canada. We can achieve this by saying clearly, "We stand by your success and we are proud of it, and we commit to doing everything in our power to make sure your hard work can achieve more."

But the Liberals aren't doing this. Bill 49 will create employer and prospective employee registries, and create an enforcement framework. However, a registry is of no use if there aren't jobs to fill it. If the government continues on this course of higher taxes and reckless spending, Bill 49 will not make the difference for future Ontarians. Faced with the prospect of high provincial program costs, long delays and an uncompetitive business environment, skilled workers will look elsewhere for the opportunity to make their dream a reality.

We look at the cost of this program—and we're going to require a bureaucracy. We can just hope that we can deviate from our past practice and encourage the government to make sure that any bureaucracy is effective and efficient, and provides good oversight. But we will not get our fair share of economic immigrants because we just don't have the jobs.

We see companies now that are leaving—not going out of business but moving. Some of them are moving out west; many of them are moving to the south. If you're going to have a program run properly—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Davenport.

Mr. Jim McDonell: —jobs, you have to have jobs to register, and that's a problem we're having.

It's funny. I got a call today from the local newspaper asking what my version of a good job was. A good job is a good-paying job; it's a job with a future, a job where you're allowed to work and progress through the company and actually one day aspire to lead the company. Unfortunately, that's a problem here. We're seeing too many minimum wage jobs. This government seems to be concerned more about providing more around minimum

wage than we are looking at trying to develop jobs that people actually aspire to and can actually pay good taxes and help bring the economy along. As everybody knows, when you're in a minimum wage job, the taxes you're paying are very minimal at best, and likely you don't have the benefits that many of us have and enjoy.

I think the focus of this government should be around, yes, creating a good framework. But it won't work if we don't have the jobs available for the employers to actually take advantage of it by registering and pulling in people so it actually can work. We hope that that will change. We hope that Ontario will have a comeback. I believe there has to be a change of government, but we'll see what happens.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand in this House, today to speak about an issue that's been very important to Ontario throughout its history, and that's immigration—and also to respond to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. I listened intently to his speech, and he made some good points. In many cases, Ontario's reputation is not as bright for immigration as it once was.

But I would disagree: There are jobs—this bill, if done correctly, and if the government is actually serious—particularly in agriculture. We have a shortage of people to work in many agricultural occupations. And we're not talking about what some people think, that agriculture is having your hands on a fork. That's not what we're talking about, because those jobs don't exist, really, anymore. It's very technological, but we have a shortage of a lot of those skilled trades.

If we take this bill seriously—but, once again, it's a small step. What we're hoping is that the government actually takes it seriously and makes it more than a press release. It is going to create bureaucracy. The member previous made a good point: There's a difference between just creating bureaucracy for the sake of it and actually creating regulations that work. We're not anti-regulation, where regulations serve a purpose and aren't just there for the sake of regulation.

As the son of immigrants and as someone who's married to an immigrant—and immigration is one thing that most of us in this room all know about, because we are all either immigrants, children of immigrants, or third or fourth generation. It's an issue that we should all have something to say about.

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

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, I can't tell you how pleased I am to stand up here in the House today and talk about the importance of Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act.

First of all, I want to start out by making clear that our diversity in this province is our strength, because the newcomers of this province are the driving force behind our economy and are the driving force when it comes to ensuring that we have a future globally. What they are

able to do is not only bring the skills that we need right here in Ontario, but they are also able to make those unique connections with other economies around the world so that Ontario can be a leader not just here in Canada but also in the world.

Let me just tell you why I think this piece of legislation is important. It is important because, right off the bat, it establishes a vision. It makes sure that we make clear that our newcomers are important and that we have a vision that allows for them and their skills to be recognized.

Right now, there is a situation where the federal government is making decisions about who comes and what kinds of skills they bring to the table. Ontario has very, very specific needs. We need to be able to be on the ground, see where those needs are and react as quickly as possible in order to make sure that we are getting the workers where we need them. It doesn't do Ontario any good, for example, to have oil workers or other kinds of professions come in where we don't have the need when it comes to jobs. We need skilled workers. We don't want to waste those skilled workers' trades and abilities. We need to put them to work. I can't tell you in any stronger terms how important this is.

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The measures laid out in this bill will be critical for laying the groundwork for this province to operate a more comprehensive and effective immigration program now and in the years ahead. We understand and we all need to agree that immigration is a shared responsibility. Provinces have an important role to play. Selection is extremely important, and Ontario needs that ability.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to add my comments to those from the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry on his excellent presentation on Bill 49. As I was listening to his overview, it strikes me that Bill 49 is the closest that we have this week to any kind of economic, financial legislation, and, to borrow a phrase, it's pretty thin gruel.

If this is the closest that the Liberal government has to an economic policy, to an idea to generate some economic activity in the province of Ontario, we're on pretty shaky ground. While Bill 49 is baby steps and can be useful, ultimately we have to have a larger discussion about how we're actually going to turn the Ontario economy around.

We have an opportunity right now with the lower Canadian dollar compared to our largest trading partner, but, quite frankly, the government is not reacting and responding to it. We see that with the initiatives and the legislation that we've been debating this week, and they're talking about what they want to focus on. It has nothing to do with building Ontario's economy to actually encourage job creators to stay here, because we've seen the departures where they're moving to other jurisdictions because they actually have government and

economic policies that make sense for them to move to a different jurisdiction—hydro costs; you name it.

We can do better. If Bill 49 is their idea of a financial initiative that's going to build Ontario's economy, we really need to do a better job.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm glad to comment on the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry's debate that he talked about.

We need help on populating Ontario. There's a decline in population. We know that in the year 2030, the proportion of seniors is going to be far higher than our youth, so we need to fill that gap.

Part of that plan or part of that strategy should be encouraging immigrants to Ontario. Yes, the occupation class is a great way to fill in that skills gap that we keep talking about, so that's something to look forward to. But, Speaker, there are things in this bill—it's a vision that the member opposite mentioned. It's a 10-year vision in the making.

One of the things that we could look at putting in this bill to make things better when immigrants arrive here, if we're encouraging them to come, is—I had a constituent who had some trouble with ID. I don't know if other MPPs hear about this, but oftentimes it's a struggle to get ID as a new Canadian, a newcomer to Canada. What we have found in this particular situation is that the federal government wasn't speaking to the provincial government about the ID that the federal government had. The provincial government expected a specific form in its place. The person couldn't obtain the form that they wanted, so it was really tying their hands.

The other piece that's not in this legislation—it doesn't address it, if we're encouraging immigrants to come to Canada—is credentials. We need to match their credentials to the jobs that people are coming to fill. We hear those stories that there are doctors and engineers coming to Canada, and those credentials don't match our standards of education when they get here and they are underemployed in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry has two minutes.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I want to thank the speakers from Timiskaming–Cochrane, Halton, Dufferin–Caledon and London–Fanshawe. They raised some good points.

I think the member from Timiskaming talked about jobs being available, and he's right. There are jobs available. New Canadians are coming to Ontario, settling in something that maybe is not the job that most people will want, but then they're looking around and seeing that they can move out west, go to a better job, and they're moving.

We saw from the member from Kitchener–Conestoga where he gave the stats for how our numbers are dropping where every other province's are increasing.

The member for Halton talked about diversity being our strength, and it is our strength. It has been our

strength for 150-some years or 200 years, and we need to continue to build on that.

We also talked about vision, and unfortunately visions don't feed families. When people come here, they need more than a vision. They need a good job. We have a program that will match skills with skilled jobs, but we don't have the skilled jobs. That's the problem. We have an abundance of skilled labour that would like to come here but no skilled jobs.

Dufferin-Caledon talked about the thin legislation. You're right; it's not doing anything for the economy. We've got to do something that creates the jobs so that it would allow us to welcome people in to take them.

London-Fanshawe talked again about the same thing: matching credentials with jobs. But it's the jobs that we're lacking. It's a common theme.

I go back to my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, where we lost many jobs in manufacturing during this government's tenure. I know a number of people who are commuting out west. They fly out, work for three weeks and fly back. It's unfortunate. I only know one person who's doing something similar and flying to northern Ontario. There would be more of them doing that, but there are no jobs there. People are flying out to our neighbours because they have jobs. They've managed the economy properly.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Correctional Services and Community Safety. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant has five minutes to reply.

The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I don't see the minister. I'm not sure who I'm putting this question to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The parliamentary assistant, I'd imagine.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Where is the parliamentary assistant?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That's your problem. You can go ahead.

Mr. Randy Hillier: All right. My question this morning was clear regarding the need for immediate and decisive action by the Premier to deal with the OPP investigation. I referenced the damage that the Premier's action is causing Ontario and the reputation and integrity

of Ontario. I referenced a couple of cases, and I'll provide a little bit more detail for everyone's benefit.

Last June, a Ministry of Labour health and safety inspector was charged for extortion and breach of trust. He was put on administrative leave. He now also faces additional charges of breach of trust, extortion and accepting a benefit from a person dealing with government. Those are serious matters, but the public service dealt with them immediately and placed that individual, Joseph Ah-Hone, on leave.

The same thing happened just a little while ago with the Ontario Realty Corp. Three members of the Ontario Realty Corp.—Michael DePace, Kathy Pagliaroli and Gino Conicella—were charged with breach of trust and accepting a secret commission. They were put on administrative leave immediately when those charges came forward. It's interesting to note that the minister responsible for the ORC at that time was Kathleen Wynne, our present Premier.

It's also interesting that, in 2009, the Ontario government spent more than \$23.4 million on outside lawyers and consultants, trying to recoup money from alleged corruption at the Ontario Realty Corp., but they collected \$3.5 million. It cost them \$23 million to do that.

Then, of course, I referenced this morning the latest one with the Ontario Provincial Police Association. We know, once again, that three members of the Ontario Provincial Police Association are facing investigation. Immediately, two of those members stepped aside; a third was placed on administrative leave while those allegations are being investigated.

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The parallels are quite, quite similar. They are a mirror of what's happening with the allegations of Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed. We can see, Speaker, each and every time the public service or others, when faced with allegations from an authoritative body, immediate action was taken to limit the damage, harm and injury to Ontario's democratic institutions, our rule of law and the administration of government.

We have allegations from another authoritative body, this time the Chief Electoral Officer. But what we have seen is obstruction or evasion by the Premier from dealing with this matter, from even actually scheduling a meeting with the OPP, who have requested—we know at least by February 9 of this year there was that request. Still, over five weeks later, nothing is happening. These actions by our Premier are maligning and tarnishing the reputation of our democratic institution of this chamber. It's also maligning her office, and causing all members of the public to lose any faith or trust that they once had.

It's time for the Premier to take immediate action, just as we've seen in other every case.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The parliamentary assistant has five minutes

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I've got five minutes, Speaker? Oh, jeez. Well, I'd love to say that I could speak for five minutes, but it's been repeated time and time again in this House, and I'll repeat it again: The investigation that is

going on with regard to the Sudbury by-election is not an issue that is going to be dealt with in this chamber. We, as a government, stand by that.

The member mentioned taking things seriously, and we do take the matter seriously. The Premier, the House leader and every member on this side who has answered the question has given the same answers over and over again. So I'm going to repeat it. Elections Ontario has determined that the allegations against the Premier and the member for Sudbury are baseless. The Chief Electoral Officer has clearly stated: "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges." Mr. Speaker, it's in the hands of authorities to deal with it, and I would say that it rests there.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Leeds–Grenville has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Premier. The member from Leeds–Grenville has five minutes.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thanks very much, Speaker. I can't say that it's a pleasure to be here because I have to express to you, and through you to the parliamentary assistant, my frustration in getting even the most simple of questions answered. I really tried today to provide a very simple question to the Premier. I hope that her parliamentary assistant, who I ask very sincerely this question—today I simply asked, on what date the Premier, her office or her lawyers, was contacted by the Ontario Provincial Police to schedule a meeting regarding this ongoing investigation. I think it's a very simple question, given the fact that in the media—back in February, there were media reports that the Premier and her deputy chief of staff were going to have a meeting with the Ontario Provincial Police. I'm not going to go back to the fact that that week I asked her repeatedly, on a number of occasions—I think four to six times—if she had a meeting scheduled, and she didn't answer the question.

So I was as surprised as anyone to read in the media back in February—this is now five weeks ago—that they were going to have a meeting. I'm even more shocked that the Premier could not meet with the Ontario Provincial Police regarding that ongoing investigation.

It has been stated in this House that the Premier did find a very open schedule when it came to meeting with the Chief Electoral Officer. She opened up her schedule and met with Mr. Essensa, and she's quite open when she talks about that. As we all know, the Chief Electoral Officer doesn't have powers to prosecute but must, as part of the process, refer the matter to the Attorney General's office. I want it again placed on the record that the Premier found lots of time in very short order to meet with the Chief Electoral Officer—but now it has been five weeks and still no direct answer.

Tonight I hope that before the parliamentary assistant runs off to the heritage dinner he'll have a very simple

answer for my question: Can you give me the date the Premier, her office or her lawyers, was contacted for a meeting? Was it five weeks ago? Was it longer than that? Was it five hours ago? We've tried to give the Premier lots of opportunities to clear the record.

I wrote to Vince Hawkes, the commissioner of the OPP, in mid-December when I first saw the Facebook postings from Andrew Olivier in Sudbury. I wrote, as did the third party House leader, Mr. Bisson, the Chief Electoral Officer back in mid-December to ask them to investigate. We all know that the Chief Electoral Officer's report has already been tabled in this Legislature, has already been referred to the Attorney General. The wheels are in motion, yet there is this reluctance to answer the basic questions about when you were contacted.

I, quite frankly, have criticized the Premier in the past for standing up in a press conference and saying things that I felt were interfering in the investigation. To me, not meeting with the OPP is, I think, borderline interfering in this investigation again. She has to be able to take this matter seriously, meet with the Ontario Provincial Police, have her deputy chief of staff do the same and have some sort of participation in a very serious matter. This is a government that is involved in not just one or two but four OPP investigations. These are active investigations, with very serious allegations.

I would think that a Premier who came to this place and who put in her throne speech the fact that she would be different from her predecessor, the fact that she would open with honesty, openness and transparency, to be able to sit here, day after day after day, and not answer questions about participating in an open OPP investigation—it's shameful, Speaker. I'm ashamed that the Premier takes this matter without seriousness. She needs to open up her schedule and have that meeting.

I'm asking, through you, that the parliamentary assistant answer that question: What was the date that she was contacted by the Ontario Provincial Police for a meeting? I want to know that. Ontarians want to know that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Etobicoke North and the parliamentary assistant has five minutes.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Thank you, Speaker. It's a privilege and honour to share this after-hours time with you officiating, to the Speaker who also doubles as the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

I will attempt, sir, to address your queries here.

As has been stated, we take this matter very seriously. It has been spoken to repeatedly. The investigation is independent of the government and of this House, as it should be. Elections Ontario, as you've heard, has determined that the allegations against the Premier and the member for Sudbury were baseless, and we will certainly continue to co-operate fully.

I will repeat that the Chief Electoral Officer has clearly stated: "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges."

I might just conclude by saying that while my honourable opponents are able to issue late show complaints for

non-satisfaction with answers, unfortunately, we are not able to issue the similar late shows for non-satisfaction with the questions.

Good evening.

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

1810

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Attorney General. The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton has five minutes.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My primary concern is that the question, again, was quite simple. The Attorney General cancelled an engagement—made an engagement to speak in Sudbury and then, after having committed to that speaking engagement, decided to cancel it. My question was: What did the Attorney General know about the Sudbury scandal and when did she know about it?

The essential question is: When did she find out that there was anything amiss in the Sudbury bribery scandal? Because her knowledge is important. It's important for us to hold the government to account. It's important for us to know who knew what and when. The scandal is something that strikes at the heart of—one of the most important principles of our democratic system is having faith in the administration of justice and having faith in the administration of our province. The fact that a minister would know, could know or might have known something about this incident could be beneficial to the members of this Legislature, but, in addition, to the citizens of the Ontario.

The scandal really strikes at the heart of one of the growing problems in our province: the fact that there is increasing apathy. Year after year we're seeing less and less people coming out to vote. There's a reason for that. People find they don't trust politicians; they don't trust the political system. They feel that their vote doesn't matter. When politicians engage in cynical behaviour, when politicians behave in potentially illegal behaviour, it further fuels that apathy. It's incumbent upon the opposition to hold the government to account and to say, "Listen, that type of behaviour is simply unacceptable."

It's simply unacceptable for a government to believe that they're above the law. The Chief Electoral Officer made a historic finding. It's important to highlight this: It has never been found in the history of Ontario. First of all, an investigation of this type, into the allegations of bribery on the part of the government, has never happened in the history of Ontario. The Chief Electoral Officer wrote that in his report.

In addition, there has never been an apparent contravention of that act that has ever been found by a Chief Electoral Officer. These are historic things that are not good historic things. These are very troubling and very concerning. An apparent contravention—let's make sure

it's very clear—is not a finding of guilt or innocence. The Premier has mentioned that a number of times, and we want to make sure it's clear that we're well aware that it's not a finding of guilt or innocence. But what it is a finding of is an obvious contravention, obvious and glaring. Based on the evidence, it's an obvious and glaring violation of the Election Act—that there's very clear evidence that points to a prima facie case for a violation.

Now, of course, a judge will be the final arbiter of guilt or innocence, but the fact that on the face of the evidence, the Chief Electoral Officer was able to say that there is enough evidence here for me to say that this is more than just a fair probability that the Election Act was contravened or violated—that there is more than a fair probability, based on the evidence, that there was a violation on this.

We talked yesterday about the sentence or the potential punishment. This is a serious contravention. If found guilty, there is both a \$25,000 fine as well as two years less a day imprisonment in terms of the punishment that is potential. So these are very serious allegations that carry a very serious punishment.

That's why I asked the question today. The Attorney General did admit that she was going to attend the event in Sudbury. She admitted that she was going to attend and that she cancelled it because she wanted to maintain the appearance of fairness and not actually attend. But that's important to know. Why, then, did she cancel that appearance? What did she think or what did she know at the time, and when did she know that, that gave her the impression that, "Listen, me attending could cause a problem"? That's exactly the question.

The Attorney General mentioned a part of the answer, that she did indeed cancel going and that she did indeed think that there would be a perception problem, an optics problem, if she did attend. Well, then, what did she know and when did she know it? What were the facts or the circumstance around her decision to say, "Listen, I don't want to go there because it might be seen as a problem. As the Attorney General, there's a certain level that I have to hold myself to," which is appropriate.

But what did she know, and when did she know it, that made her decide that she couldn't go to Sudbury—that it was inappropriate for her to go there? What did she know about the bribery scandal? Was she informed and when was she aware of that? Those are the questions that I did not receive answers to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Scarborough Southwest and parliamentary assistant has five minutes.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's a pleasure to respond today to the question posed by the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, but I just can't help saying that we're the last ones in the House today and it was the last of the three questions, so it's like triple overtime—triple overtime in a late show, but I have a response.

I listened carefully to the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. As the member knows, we're both members of the Law Society of Upper Canada. The gov-

ernment takes this matter very seriously. The Premier and members of the cabinet have spoken repeatedly on this issue.

The investigation is independent of the government and this House. Elections Ontario determined that the allegations against the Premier and the member from Sudbury were baseless. The Chief Electoral Officer clearly stated, "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges."

My fellow colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton would know, as a lawyer, that once it's in the hands of the judges and the prosecutors, legislators stay out of it.

Of course, we will continue to co-operate fully. That's all I have to say tonight.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1817.

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Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
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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	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
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, 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

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX 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**

Chair / Présidente: Soo Wong
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**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Eleanor McMahon, Lisa M. Thompson
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: John Fraser
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**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Toby Barrett
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

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
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**

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Robert Bailey, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
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

**Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment /
Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère
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Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Randy Hillier
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
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