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of Debates
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Monday 26 October 2015

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(Hansard)**

Lundi 26 octobre 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 26 October 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 26 octobre 2015

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to welcome Mayor Trevor Birtch from the city of Woodstock, and Brian Donlevy, a great reporter from CKOT in Tillsonburg, who are both here in the gallery today. I want to thank them for coming to Queen's Park.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome Kathy Moreside, who is the mother of page Abby Moreside from the great riding of Oxford. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Vanthof: It gives me great pleasure to welcome the folks from the Dairy Farmers of Ontario here today, some of whom I have had the honour to work with. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Jeff Leal: With great pleasure, I want to welcome the Dairy Farmers of Ontario to Queen's Park today, in the members' east gallery, including Peter Gould, the general manager and CEO; and Ralph Dietrich, who is the board chair. We also have a director from the wonderful riding of Peterborough, Will Vanderhorst.

DFO is hosting a reception this afternoon from 5 to 7 p.m. in committee rooms 228 and 230. I say to all members, this would be a great opportunity to see one of the great sectors of Ontario's agricultural economy.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Adding to everyone, I would also like to extend my personal welcome to my friend and fellow community member from South Bruce, DFO chair Ralph Dietrich. I know he's proud to call Mildmay home, and he does a great job representing dairy farmers.

M^{me} France Gélinas: This little page, Vanessa, is page captain today, and she has some nice visitors with her: her mother, Josée Morris; her father, Michael Morris; her brother David; her grandmother Pauline Chartrand; and her grandfather Laurier Chartrand. Welcome to Queen's Park, and congratulations, Vanessa.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'd like to introduce two special people to the House today. With us are Brooke Crewson, my executive assistant here at Queen's Park, and Scott Parry, my new legislative assistant here at Queen's Park. Welcome to both.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to welcome an outstanding farm leader, here with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario: my friend Ian Harrop.

As well, the family of page captain John Millar—Kathleen Millar, his mother; Daniel Millar, his father; Murry Trask, his grandfather; and his aunt Dianne Trask—are all here today to see John Millar in action.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It gives me great pleasure to welcome the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, especially Sid Atkinson from the Campbellford-Warkworth area.

Mr. Steve Clark: I have two introductions. In the east members' gallery, I have a local dairy farmer from Leeds county, Henry Oosterhof, who is here today with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. Welcome, Henry.

In the west members' gallery, I'd like to introduce a Scarborough resident, Mukund Purohit, who is here with us today and has the distinction of having worked on Indian Prime Minister Modi's campaign. Welcome both to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Today I'd like to welcome, from Dairy Farmers of Ontario, Peter Gould, general manager; and Peter Van Sleeuwen and Nick Thurler, both board members from my riding. Of course, we look forward to seeing them again this afternoon. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Henry Wydeven, a board member with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario from the St. Marys area; and Will Patterson, a student who is here to learn more about our work at Queen's Park. Welcome.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome Murray Sherk from New Dundee in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga, part of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to introduce dairy farmers—I don't know if there are any here from Oxford, but being the dairy capital, I'm sure that they all represent Oxford in one way or the other.

I also have to note that the mother to Abby Moreside, one of our pages, is here: Kathy Moreside. I introduced her earlier, but I thought maybe I'd do it a second time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My friends, we have some very special guests here in the Speaker's gallery. With us today are the children who attend Ronald McDonald House, and their teacher, Danielle Myers. We are glad that they are here with us today. Welcome. This is one of their wishes, to be here.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Due to the mounting public outrage, this government has admitted to doling out an additional \$2.5 million in taxpayer money because of their failed two-tier bargaining system. But that admission is not going to satisfy the thousands of Ontarians who have contacted us, and I'm sure they've contacted the Premier's office as well.

Mr. Speaker, my question is simple: Where did that money come from?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said repeatedly, there is a cost associated with negotiations. There is always a cost associated with negotiations, and I have said quite clearly that any of the money that has been on the table has been part of the overall compensation package. I've answered that question a number of times. I answered it in the media.

1040

The reality is that our top priority is to ensure that our students enjoy one of the best education systems in the world. They do enjoy that. We want to keep it that way, and we are in a process right now—it's an unprecedented process. There hasn't been a provincial bargaining system in place before. This is the first round of bargaining within that provincial process. We will reach a conclusion with all of our education partners, and at the conclusion of that, if the Leader of the Opposition would like to engage in a conversation about how to modify Bill 122 or how to modify that process, we are open and welcoming that process.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I hope I don't have to start.

Supplementary question.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier, and I'll be more specific: Every dollar budgeted in the education ministry is assigned to a specific program. In June 2014, we learned that the Minister of Education took \$1.6 million in funding for an anti-bullying and autism awareness program to pay the legal fees in their lawsuit with Ontario school bus drivers.

So again, Mr. Speaker, a very simple accounting question for the Premier: From which program line item in the 2015 education budget did the Premier take the \$2.5 million for her mismanaged negotiations?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I've said, the proposals that are on the table and the money that is on the table are all part of the compensation envelope. That's what we've said all along, because these negotiations are operating within a net-zero environment.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It sounds to me that my message wasn't strong enough. If I have to ramp it up, I will. Stop it.

Please carry on.

Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition will be aware that on Friday, the education minister and I said to our education partners that what is critical right now is that we come to an agreement. The situation that pertains in our schools right now in terms of the cleanliness of the schools and the opportunity for kids to take part in a full program, including extra-curriculars, has to be dealt with.

So we've said that by November 1, if there is not a deal in place, if there's not an agreement in place or the labour action has not stopped, then there will be the potential for the terms of employment to be changed, and that could include docking of pay. But we have not issued that permission yet. We have said quite clearly we need until November 1, and everyone is at the table, but bargaining is continuing now.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: This explanation doesn't wash. Even though the Premier has said this is business as usual, last week the Globe and Mail's article reported that ETFO has not accepted and will not accept any government money to pay for bargaining costs. The CBC quotes labour lawyer Howard Levitt, who said covering a union's bargaining costs is unusual and raises all kinds of questions. He said, "It's counterintuitive and antithetical to the interests of the taxpayers and employers."

Mr. Speaker, if the payments were not made in the best interest of taxpayers, will the Premier tell us who, other than the Liberal Party, this is in the best interest of?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think that the Leader of the Opposition is probably aware of the commentary of many people on this subject. It's not unprecedented for a party in the public or the private sector to assist unions with the cost of collective bargaining. A CAW negotiator told the Star, "It is not unheard of for private companies to cover all or part of the cost of a union's expenses associated directly with negotiating a contract."

I say to the Leader of the Opposition: If, at the conclusion of this round of negotiations—which is unprecedented; there has not been a provincial round before. If, at the end of that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The decision has been made by those who decided that shouting people down is the answer. I will move to warnings.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If, at the end of this process, the Leader of the Opposition—I don't know what his experience with negotiating is, but I would be happy to have him and, quite frankly, the leader of the third party. We can talk about input into the negotiating process. I'd be very interested to hear their concerns after we have come to agreements with our education partners.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is to the Premier. The Premier told the Toronto Star last week that paying \$2.5 million for union negotiations is business as usual. No one is buying that. The only reason the Liberals' idea of business as usual is out is because their secret deal was leaked. Every business I know keeps receipts to justify their expenses.

Mr. Speaker, does the Premier find it acceptable that she gave \$2.5 million without a single receipt? A simple yes or no: Is it acceptable to pay that amount of money, of taxpayers' hard-earned dollars, without a single receipt?

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I guess somebody didn't hear what I said.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I believe what I said is that in a \$20-billion—

Interjection.

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

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The publicly funded education system in this province—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —is a more than \$20-billion enterprise. There are costs associated with negotiating agreements in that environment. That is what I said.

What is critical to me right now, as the Premier, and to the Minister of Education, is that we've got students in our public elementary schools who are not able to have the full program. Their schools are not being cleaned in the way that they should be.

My focus is on working with our education partners to get an agreement in an environment where we are operating in a provincial negotiation process. That is new, Mr. Speaker. It is the first time we have gone through this formal process. At the conclusion of this process, if the Leader of the Opposition would like—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings is warned.

Wrap up, please.

Premier Wynne: —to bring his experience and his knowledge of negotiations to the table, we'd be happy to hear from him on how he'd like to make the system better.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again, to the Premier: The public isn't going to buy that excuse.

Business as usual, to the Premier, means paying multi-million-dollar organizations to negotiate, and they're making up a one-page document to justify it?

If this bargaining is really business as usual as you say, as the Globe and Mail has said, "Let's see an accounting, down to the penny. All those zeros in a row suggest that no accounting was done...."

The Globe went on to ask, "What was this money really for?"

Mr. Speaker, if the Premier can't produce a spreadsheet down to the penny that justifies this \$2.5 million, maybe the Premier can explain and tell the House what this was really for.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think it's important to understand that, in fact, this is not business as usual. This is a transformational round of negotiations that's implementing a new collective bargaining scheme for the first time ever.

In fact, we have had significant discussions for the last year. We spent six months with the initial step of settling on central-local split. We have been in the process of, literally, bringing hundreds and hundreds of collective agreements into nine central collective agreements. That takes a lot of work and a long time.

We recognize that both the school boards and the unions have unusual costs in this unique round of collective bargaining.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again, for the Premier: "Business as usual" is your government's talking point. You can run from it now, but it's what you've said.

This government gave away \$2.5 million without asking for a single receipt. The best explanation the Minister of Education could muster was that the money was for hotel rooms and pizza. I'm not sure where the minister buys her pizza, but the pepperoni must be gold-plated.

Is the Premier really going to insult the intelligence of the people of Ontario and expect them to believe that \$2.5 million was for hotels and pizza? Or will the Premier come clean and tell the Legislature, tell the people of Ontario, what this money was really for?

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You are not going to get an opportunity to get shots in when I'm standing.

Please.

Hon. Liz Sandals: The pizza is not gold-plated—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville is warned.

Hon. Liz Sandals: —but the process of renting hotel rooms for, literally, a year—not residential rooms, but meeting rooms. We have been renting meeting rooms for over a year—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If I were some people who are already warned, I wouldn't be saying anything.

1050

Hon. Liz Sandals: This is not an unusual practice. I can remember an occasion during the Mike Harris government where his people called in school boards and unions, and do you know who paid for the hotel?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To the chair, please.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Mike Harris's government.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. A reminder for everyone: to the chair, please.

New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question is for the Premier. The Premier has been rushing to sell off Hydro One. She has refused to allow a referendum, public hearings or any form of public feedback. But every time that the people of Ontario have had a chance to express an opinion, they have overwhelmingly told this Premier to stop the sell-off of Hydro One and to find another way to fund infrastructure.

Ontario families, municipalities and businesses all want the Premier to slow down and find another way to fund infrastructure. Does the Premier believe that the people of Ontario are wrong and that there is no other way to finance infrastructure?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I think that it is extremely important that we look at all avenues to invest in infrastructure, because the fact is, there is a long backlog of need in this province. I remember there were 10 years before we came into office where a government didn't invest in infrastructure. We came in in 2003 and we started making those investments.

I've said all along that the money that we are putting into infrastructure, the \$130 billion over the next 10 years—that is what we can do, but we've always said that we need a federal partner to work with us. So we are implementing our plan as we committed to do when we went to the people last year. We will implement that plan and we will make those investments, but we also need a federal partner so that we can do all of the things that are necessary across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier has said many times that they have to rush the sell-off of Hydro One. She said that she will push her half-baked scheme out the door because of the sudden urgency of building infrastructure. She more or less repeated that just now.

But here are the facts: In 2014-15, the government spent \$300 million less on transportation capital than it had budgeted for. In 2013-14, the government spent a whopping \$1.2 billion less than budgeted for. Will the Premier admit finally that the sell-off of Hydro One has never been about money for infrastructure?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, broadening the ownership in Hydro One is all about investment in infrastructure. There is a 10-year plan that we have in place, and if there are projects that come in under budget, that's something that the leader of the third party should be celebrating. There is planning, there is building going on.

She knows full well that in every municipality around this province—in every community—there is a need for investment within the community and there is a need for investment to link communities to one another. That is in the best interests of our economic prosperity as a province, but also, community by community, it's what businesses need in order to be able to expand and bring more business here to Ontario. That's why we're making these investments.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, in fact, the Liberals have had 12 years to build infrastructure, but really they haven't. For 12 years, New Democrats have been pushing them—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. For the sake of those that may not have been here to hear what I had said, we're at the warning stage.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —to make those badly needed investments, but, frankly, they didn't. And now, suddenly, the Premier says it is urgent, but public accounts—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Transportation is warned.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —show us very clearly that in just the last two years, this Premier spent \$1.5 billion less than she budgeted for. The Premier is not even utilizing the money that she has, and yet she continues to insist that she has to sell off Hydro One in an urgent way.

Will this Premier admit that she does not need to sell off Hydro One and just stop this wrong-headed move?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No, Mr. Speaker, I won't.

I'm not sure how the leader of the third party gets around this province, but if she's been in the Windsor region at all over the last three years, she will know that there's been building going on. She just has to go up to Eglinton Avenue in Toronto and she will see that there is building going on. There is infrastructure being built all over this province—historic investment.

The fact is, the way that budgets work is there is money that is invested in planning, there's money invested in accumulating property, there are environmental assessments that go on. There is work going on across the province. That work can't go on unless we make the investments that we are making, so we are going to continue to do that because the Hamilton LRT will not happen if we don't do the upfront work to make sure that those shovels get in the ground.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. People have been telling this Premier to find

another way to fund infrastructure instead of selling off Hydro One. We know that the Premier has other options. According to the government's own reports, a 1% increase in corporate taxes would raise up to \$700 million a year. That's much more than the \$400 million a year that her sell-off scheme will apparently earn.

Will this Premier admit that she has other options but instead stubbornly refuses to take those options, and instead sell off Hydro One, a plan, a scheme, an effort, that Ontarians soundly reject?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Whether we are talking about investment in infrastructure or whether we're talking about enhancement to social programs or whether we're talking about supporting businesses and communities, the leader of the third party only has one answer, and that is to raise corporate taxes. She spends that \$700 million over and over and over again.

The fact is, we know that businesses in Ontario need to be competitive. They are operating now in a competitive tax environment, but they need something else. They need infrastructure investment so that they can move their goods, and their people can move around and be connected to the communities they want to be connected to. That's why we're making these investments.

The oversimplification by the third party will not get business investing in this province. We are taking the steps to bring business to Ontario, to increase connectivity and improve people's quality of life.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier, in the past, has often said, "It would be great if we had a federal partner working with us" on infrastructure. In fact, she said that today, Speaker. And now, the federal government has promised billions upon billions of dollars for infrastructure and transit. The Premier insists she can't wait for the federal money, though, because she has to rush to sell off Hydro One. The Premier also has \$1.5 billion in unspent infrastructure money from the last two years.

It is clear that the Premier doesn't need the money all that quickly. So my question is a simple one: Why is the Premier plowing ahead with the sell-off of Hydro One when it is so obviously unnecessary?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just because the money hasn't been put out—spent—doesn't mean that it's not needed for current projects. I would just explain to the leader of the third party that the money that's allocated actually has to be kept for that purpose so that when that bill comes in for the work that's been done, we actually have the money to pay for it. That is the way the funding works. The projects are under way.

1100

The fact is that we've said all along we need a federal partner. The money we have to invest in infrastructure will do a lot of good, but it's not all that needs to be done. I've worked with Premiers across the country, and we know that we are just barely keeping up—in some cases, not keeping up—with the needs of infrastructure in the country. We need that federal partner to make sure

that we can build new and we can enhance the economy of the whole country.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: According to media reports, it is this Premier herself who refuses to even consider asking Ontario's wealthiest corporations to pay just a little bit more to fund infrastructure. It is this Premier who has allowed \$1.5 billion in infrastructure money to go unspent. And it is this Premier who cannot wait for the billions of dollars promised from the federal government.

The Premier's justifications for this unnecessary sell-off are insulting to the public's intelligence. Will this Premier do the right thing: stop the sell-off of Hydro One and find another way to fund her infrastructure promises?

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: What's insulting to the intelligence of the people of this province is the leader of the third party's contention that to raise corporate taxes by a little bit is going to solve all of our problems in this province, that that's going to cover all of the expenses we need when it comes to investing in infrastructure.

The biggest concern of our business community in a fiercely competitive global economy is that we would take the advice of the party opposite, jack up corporate taxes, kill jobs in this province, stop building infrastructure and make our economy uncompetitive.

Mr. Speaker, this party and this Premier are committed to making our business community competitive in a fiercely competitive global economy. We're going to do what it takes to do that, and we're going to act contrary to the views of the member opposite.

TEACHER'S COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Treasury Board president. Her job is to eliminate the deficit and to ensure government accountability, but the slush fund payments to education unions fly in the face of her personal commitments to this assembly.

We learned of a secret \$1-million payment to OSSTF in the media. The education minister says that it was a one-time thing, until she got caught, and now it's \$2.5 million. Who knows what secret payments will add up to by the time she finishes speaking here in question period today—and all without any receipts. Now we know that other unions who may not have gotten this golden handshake, or golden milkshake, at the meeting space may want more.

My question is—and it's a very serious one—to the Treasury Board president: How could you let the education minister undermine your deficit reduction targets and, as importantly, Bill 8, a law you put before this House to increase accountability after eHealth, Ornge and the cancelled gas plants scandal?

Interjections.

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

President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: As a result of the year we spent at the hotel, I would like to remind people that in fact we actually did end up with the first-ever precedential collective agreements. We have collective agreements with the English Catholic teachers, we have collective agreements with the public secondary teachers and we have collective agreements with the French teachers who work in both the French public and French Catholic school boards.

We have three precedential collective agreements. Those represent hundreds of collective agreements being folded into three central provincial collective agreements. That took time, and when you take time, there are costs involved in taking that time. We recognize that and we have supported both our school board colleagues and our union colleagues in coming to a three-way, tripartite agreement in this transformational round of bargaining.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: She may have been spending some time at the hotel Grand-Mère with Chuck Guité and unresolved receipts, but the rest of us were standing here defending Ontario taxpayers and, particularly, Ontario students.

Back to the Treasury Board president: The Liberals handed out at least \$2.5 million in slush fund money that was intended for kids in classrooms. They cut cheques to the same unions who helped them, 18 months ago, run attack ads against the Progressive Conservative Party. Even Sam Hammond, from one of the unions they do not have a deal with, called this deal “unethical.”

I ask the Premier—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I’ve heard of stealing candy from a baby, but I’ve never heard of stealing money from kids in the classroom to get re-elected.

Will the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, no. I’ll ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Will the Treasury Board minister explain to this House why it’s okay to get rid of her deficit reduction targets; why it’s okay to eliminate her own Bill 8, her own accountability law, and will the—

Interjections.

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

Stop the clock. Be seated, please. When I stand, members sit.

Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think, Speaker, we’ve now discovered what the fundamental issue here is: We have a difference in the way that we work with our colleagues in

both the school boards and in the unions. The way they want to work with the unions, as we found from their campaign platform, was to fire 100,000 people; probably, as near as we could figure out with their calculations, fire 20,000 people in the school board sector. We actually don’t think that’s the way to work with people. We think that we need to bring together our school board colleagues and our union colleagues, and we all need to sit at the same table and come to agreement.

That’s why we brought new school board collective bargaining legislation, which, if memory serves me, they voted against because they don’t believe in the principle of negotiation.

TEACHERS’ COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Premier. The Premier’s recent threat aimed at education workers continues to create chaos in our schools. Students, parents and education workers want quality education in Ontario, but this government is only providing cuts and uncertainty.

For more than a year, the Liberal government has failed to treat the negotiating process with respect and attention, just like this government has failed to treat education with respect and attention, given more than a decade of chronic underfunding of our public education system. They are proud of a planned \$500-million cut to education, proud of firing 21 early childhood educators in Windsor-Essex, proud of laying off 118 teachers in Peterborough.

This government’s record on education is nothing to be proud of. The Minister of Education has lost all credibility and needs to go.

Will the Premier admit that her recent threat to education workers is only going to cause more chaos in our schools and force students and families to pay the price for her minister’s failure?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, on the one hand, we have the official opposition saying that we have spent too much time because there are costs associated with collective bargaining, and we have spent too much time in negotiating and we shouldn’t be putting out that money to pay for those negotiation processes.

On the other hand, we’ve got the NDP saying that we really should let this go on forever, that the collective bargaining process should go on forever; that we shouldn’t use any of the tools that are actually part of the labour law to bring to a conclusion a situation that is putting kids at risk, that is not giving families the information they need about their kids’ progress, that is keeping schools dirty. Well, I’m not willing to do that. I’m not willing to let that go on and on and on.

Our education partners know that I believe in collective bargaining. They know that I believe that we are allies with them, but they also know that we have to act in the best interests of children.

Interjections.

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

Supplementary?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It was, in fact, the government that walked away from bargaining, not ETFO. Let's get back to the facts, Speaker.

The Premier uttering threats and stomping her feet because the Minister of Education couldn't do her job is no way to negotiate. Since the beginning of the process, the Minister of Education has failed to do her job when it comes to bargaining. Now our kids are paying the price of increased chaos in our schools, as if cuts to special education funding in eight boards totalling \$22.5 million wasn't bad enough.

Students and families shouldn't be paying the price for the minister's incompetence and neglect of the education file.

My question is simple: Will the Premier fire the Minister of Education immediately—yes or no?

1110

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want this House and the people of Ontario to know that our Minister of Education has, as her top priority, the best interests of the students of this province. There are probably few people in the province who know as much about the education system as the Minister of Education.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is that we have one of the best education systems in the world. People come from all over the world to look at how we have developed the education system. Eighty-four per cent of kids in this province graduate from high school. It is a model.

The fact is that our government needs to be working with school boards and with our education partners, both teachers and support staff. That's what we're doing as part of the collective bargaining process. It's not easy, Mr. Speaker. It takes time, but it is necessary.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Mrs. Cristina Martins: This question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, over the summer, as mandated by the Premier, your ministry conducted a review of the rules governing our municipal elections. We are keenly aware that our local democracies are critical hubs of civic activity and an important entry point to Ontario's governance system. That's why our municipalities and the local leaders we choose need to be supported by strong, clear and fair rules. These rules need to be simple and reflect how modern campaigns should be run. They should address the changing spectrum of needs that communities encounter throughout the municipal election process.

Mr. Speaker, these are important goals. Through you, can the minister tell this House a bit about the review and its consultation process?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd be delighted to respond to the question from the member from Davenport. I want to begin by saying that Ontarians really care about municipal

elections. They care about voting, and they want to make sure that their voices are heard.

Over the last several months, I've been travelling the province, talking to over 200 municipal councils and a number of citizens about how they view their elections system. We've been hearing a lot about what works and what doesn't work so well. We've looked specifically and closely at campaign finance rules, whether third-party advertising should be regulated, challenges and barriers to making elections more accessible, and whether municipal election rules are effectively enforced.

Speaker, I believe that hearing from as many municipalities and Ontarians as possible—and we've had wonderful feedback—is the way to move forward. We'll be presenting more specifics very soon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: In addition to the goals the minister has laid out, this time around, the Municipal Elections Act review has an added objective, and that's our government's commitment to provide municipalities with the option to implement ranked ballot voting for our next municipal election cycle in 2018. As a new frontier, this interesting election tool has garnered significant attention in conversations throughout our communities, including my own riding of Davenport, and in various news coverage throughout the media.

Our municipal partners have been considering whether moving forward with efforts to establish ranked ballot voting in 2018 will meet their communities' needs. Across some municipal councils, there has been some confusion as of late on this matter.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister share what he and his team have been hearing and working on in regard to ranked ballots?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd be delighted to respond as simply as I can. We've had over 1,900 responses on the issue of ranked ballots. About 97% of them view it very positively. There are some who don't; some of those people might be predictable, but that's okay. So we're working very hard on it.

We think that anything that will enhance voter turnout and get people to give a little bit more attention to the importance of municipal campaigns is worth doing.

We have reason to believe, based on the experience of other countries, that a move to ranked ballots would make election campaigns more civil, ensure candidates will have a vested interest in working better together right from the get-go and reduce negative campaigning while increasing focus on issues that matter.

It will be an option. It will be coming forward when we deliver the whole package. I look forward to—

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

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Minister of Education. Last week, this minister was quick to defend her government's payouts—\$1 million to OSSTF, \$1

million to OECTA and \$500,000 to AEFO—on the grounds that, “We haven’t fired anybody. We haven’t cut anybody.”

I want to remind the minister of the reality that her government is firing and they are cutting and they are compromising our children’s education by taking away \$2.5 million from students and giving it to teachers’ unions.

In my riding alone, 50 educational assistants have been eliminated and, consequently, special education students have been told to stay at home or not to come to school as a result of scant resources.

My question to the minister is: Does she not respect our students and educational assistants enough to acknowledge that there is a cut to the classroom?

Hon. Liz Sandals: No, there are not any cuts to the classroom as a result of the collective agreements that we have negotiated. In fact, the generators in terms of class size generators are the same. In fact, many of them are actually the same as the ones you legislated. The class size generators are the ones that were in place prior to the agreements being cut. We agreed in a previous round of bargaining that we would hire additional teachers beyond those class size ratios and, in fact, as a result of those previous agreements, we hired 2,300 additional teachers over and beyond the class size generators. As a result of these collective agreements, we continue to fund those 2,300 teachers in addition to the classroom teachers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Again to the Minister of Education: When is a cut not a cut? The reality is, you have taken \$2.5 million away from our vulnerable students: Aaron Vessie’s sons, Owen and Noah, who are autistic; Kathy Cotter’s seven-year-old daughter, who has retinal dystrophy and is legally blind; Candice Huber’s eight-year-old son, who has type 1 diabetes and suffers from hypoglycemic episodes. With their EAs gone, there is no one to watch and keep them safe.

I sent the minister personal letters from more than 30 parents of special needs students whose EAs have been fired. These students, their parents and every special education teacher and support staff who received their pink slips are deeply offended that this minister is flippant in regard to their loss of jobs and classroom resources. They can’t understand how she can continue to stand there and say, with a straight face, “We haven’t fired; we haven’t cut.”

The minister is responsible for this mess. On behalf of these students and families who want their children to receive the education they’re entitled to, I ask: Will you bring back the EAs? Will you put the children first?

Hon. Liz Sandals: If we can just reflect a little bit on special needs funding, special education funding, this year, the 2015-16 school year, students with spec ed requirements are receiving \$2.72 billion in addition to the regular funding that goes to every student. If you look at that, that’s an increase of \$225.7 million, or 9%, since 2012-13, so over the last few years. If you go back to the start year, the 2002-03 year, it’s an increase of 68%, or

\$1.1 billion since we took office. We are not cutting special education funding.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Just two weeks ago, in reference to US Steel, Justin Trudeau stated that the Canadian government needs to work with its provincial partners to ensure that people’s pensions are protected. I couldn’t agree more. US Steel has a towering moral debt to its workers and its pensioners.

Will the Premier use her influence with Mr. Trudeau to protect US Steel pensioners, to push for the release of those secret documents and agreements with US Steel, and to ensure that these moral debts will in the future be legal debts so that this kind of theft can never happen to Canadians again?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite makes an important point. Mind you, court proceedings are still ongoing, but our government remains committed to working with all the stakeholders. Our goal, of course, is to achieve the long-term viability of the ongoing operations of US Steel Canada, and more importantly, to protect the employees and the retirees and suppliers and customers who are affected.

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While it is still ongoing, we do want to assure the member opposite that our government will work with the retirees by providing the support necessary over the next six months so that they can have their health benefits, and more importantly, we’ll establish a transition fund to enable that to take place. As the restructuring is ongoing, it’s important to note that the pensioners and the workers will be receiving their benefit plan.

To the point made around unsealing those secret documents by the Harris government that was achieved previously, indeed we will stand by the retirees and US Steel Canada to ensure that that’s unlocked.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, it’s bad enough that the US Steel pension funds themselves are underfunded, but there is no trust account at all to pay for the benefits of the pensioners. Indeed, there seldom is.

The benefits that form part of an employer’s promise to its retirees are funded from a company’s current cash flows, not from trust accounts. Pensions were once funded this way, and after many bitter lessons, we decided on a better way. Perhaps it’s time for other post-retirement benefits to receive the same protection.

What will the Premier do to ensure that the medical, dental and health benefits of retirees are given the same financial stability and security as their pensions?

Hon. Charles Sousa: As the member knows, as restructuring continues it’s important to remember that the company is still operating and the retirees are still receiving their pensions.

As the member knows, and he makes reference to this, Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada with a fund like

the PBGF, the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund. This was made in 2012 to put in more sustainable footing, including increasing assessments and eligibility conditions to cover those benefits. I can confirm that the current estimates indicate that the PBGF is financially sound. The bottom line is that although the courts are processing and going through the approval process, this will not affect the PBGF coverage, if needed, in the future.

Again, I add that we will, as a government, continue to support the retirees and the workers over the next six months. That will not implicate the PBGF, but it is there—the only province in Canada that offers that, and we recognize that more has to be done.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. We all know that Ontario's police officers work hard in our communities every day to keep us all safe. They have helped make Sudbury and Ontario one of the safest places to live, work and raise a family.

There is a growing recognition that everyone has a role to play in building partnerships, providing opportunities to prevent crime and to promote safe, healthy communities. This means our police services must form partnerships with social service, education, health and community groups to address social ills and proactively prevent crime. We all know that this is the most effective way to create positive, lasting change. For example, in my community of Sudbury, we have seen the positive impact of the strong partnerships between the Greater Sudbury Police Service and local service providers to proactively address these kinds of issues.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister please explain what he is doing to support the development of community safety planning across Ontario?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member from Sudbury for the important question.

Speaker, as we work to build stronger, safer and healthier communities right across Ontario, one of the key challenges is addressing social issues that lead to crime. Our proceeds of crime front-line policing grant helps form partnerships between local police services and social service providers to do just that.

This year, Ontario is investing \$2 million in 25 community safety and well-being programs to support local police and community groups in their efforts to build safer and stronger communities. For example, the St. Thomas and Aylmer police services are working to help police connect with seniors to combat elder abuse. Peterborough Police Service is increasing access to safe housing. Through the OPP Prince Edward county detachment, we are making sure that our kids stay safe online. Through the Cornwall police service, we're providing counselling and other services to combat domestic violence and help those affected by it.

In fact, this year Ontario is investing \$100,000 in the second phase of the crime prevention through social

development program in Sudbury to support local police and community groups.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you to the minister for his response.

I am pleased to hear about the important contribution the proceeds of crime front-line policing grant is making to community safety and well-being initiatives in Sudbury and across our great province. As the minister mentioned, the grant will go to funding phase 2 of the crime prevention through social development program. This initiative is being led by the community safety and well-being planning steering committee, which is made up of important local service groups. Their goal is to come together to build a collective crime reduction strategy and improve overall community safety and well-being, to prevent crime and address social issues in the community.

But Ontarians need to know that good work like this is also happening in communities across this province. So, through you, Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain what he is doing to encourage other communities to develop the same sort of community safety and well-being initiatives that we have in Sudbury?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, we are working to ensure that the good work that is happening in Sudbury will also happen in other neighbourhoods and communities across the province. That is why the cornerstone of our new Strategy for a Safer Ontario will be community safety and well-being plans, which will be in every part of the province. These plans will help to lower the demand for reactive, resource-intensive emergency responses by developing a collaborative and evidence-based approach to community safety.

I would like to recognize those communities from across the province which are already taking steps to make the province an even safer place to live by putting these kinds of plans in place, because the only way to truly fight crime is to prevent it from happening in the first place. These are the kinds of proactive and collaborative efforts we will continue to encourage through our community safety and well-being plans as we work to build stronger and safer communities across Ontario.

We thank communities like Sudbury, which has taken a leadership role in setting up an example of how this proactive model could work.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs—clearly a minister who should be fighting for farmers at the cabinet table. We have dairy farmers here today. However, the minister has sat idly by while now 174 municipalities, the vast majority of them rural, have passed resolutions opposing the sale of Hydro One. The minister himself has said that we will keep Hydro One “in public hands.”

Speaker, when will the minister speak up at the cabinet table to keep Hydro One in public hands?

Hon. Jeff Leal: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: It's a strange question, coming from a member of that party. As we all know in this House, in the 2014 election, that party campaigned in favour of broadening the ownership of Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One. Not only that, they indicated that rates would be protected through the Ontario Energy Board. Not only that, the present leader of that party has essentially said the same thing.

So when will that party disavow themselves of the commitment they made in the 2014 election campaign?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture is sitting over here, silent—sitting idly and silent, I might say—with respect to the Hydro One fire sale while rural municipalities pass resolution after resolution opposing it. Among the now 174 municipalities that oppose this sale are the ag minister's own Peterborough county and Peterborough itself.

In the past, Minister Leal opposed privatization: "We'll never look at" it. His constituents oppose the sale; the farmers his ministry represents oppose the sale.

My question: When will the minister finally represent farmers at the cabinet table—I'm not referring to other cabinet ministers—and oppose the sale of Hydro One?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Rural municipalities want infrastructure. They've said it over and over again. If they look at the results of the recent federal election campaign, the country, in every province, said it wants infrastructure. That's why they got the result that they did for a party that was promising infrastructure.

We did a lot of consultation, and the mayors, one after the other, said that they need infrastructure. We have a \$130-billion infrastructure program, over 10 years, led by the Premier. That is real change in terms of meeting the infrastructure deficit.

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The \$4 billion that will go to infrastructure from broadening the ownership of Hydro One is \$4 billion that will not come from taxpayers' money, will not come from cuts and will not come from borrowing. It's sound fiscal management.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENT

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. Manufacturing is part of the foundation of our community in Oshawa. Consecutive Liberal governments, however, have stayed seated on the sidelines while auto jobs have disappeared, and our community has lost hundreds of millions of dollars in auto investment.

Now, the Premier has endorsed the TPP sight unseen—a secret deal that is expected to put approximately 20,000 jobs in the auto industry at risk. In fact, this past weekend, the CEO of Ford Canada said, "We see [the Trans-Pacific Partnership] as a setback...."

Premier, what do you have to say to the thousands of people in Oshawa and across the province whose jobs are

at risk because you have decided to support a deal that you haven't even seen yet?

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: One of the things that's correct in the member's comments is that we haven't seen the deal yet. I think it is important for us to see the deal, but we've seen a lot of speculation about it, and the previous federal government did provide some details which, the member is right, are concerning to us in terms of the impact on our auto sector.

Now, we're not suggesting that the federal government be totally irresponsible and walk away from this incredibly huge trading block. That wouldn't be good for any Canadians or any Ontarians or any sector. But we do believe that the previous government did not do a good job when it came to negotiating on behalf of our auto sector. We were very clear about that. In fact, we've written to the federal minister. We were very clear in our comments between the Premier and the Prime Minister that they had to stand up for that sector and our agri-food sector as well.

We don't think they did a good job in negotiating the aspects with regard to auto, but at the same time, we've got to be responsible in our overall comments on the TPP because we have to think of the overall good of our economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: The actions of the Liberal government, or lack thereof, come with a real cost to families in my riding, making it that much harder for them to keep up or get ahead without good, stable jobs.

The TPP has significant consequences for the province. From what we do know, Canada got the wrong end of this lopsided deal. Even Stephen Harper admitted that the auto sector may not benefit from the TPP trade agreement. Now we're hearing from industry giants like Dianne Craig that not only will this deal jeopardize auto sector jobs in Ontario, but it will also negatively impact manufacturing sales. This is yet another example of the Premier's short-sighted vision for Ontario and for Ontarians.

Premier, will you reconsider your position on the TPP and ensure that good automotive jobs are protected in the province?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Seriously, Mr. Speaker, the member has to pay better attention to these issues as they're developing. We are on record—publicly. We've written to the minister to ensure that it's on the record—the federal minister, the previous one—that we're standing up for the auto industry in this province. We've stood up repeatedly on this particular issue, and we will continue to.

What that sector is really concerned about as well is having a third party in this province that wants to jack up their corporate tax rates. Mr. Speaker, that's not going to help investment in auto in this province. That's going to kill jobs in Oshawa; that's going to kill jobs across this province. What they also want is to ensure they can get their auto parts to and from their plants. They can't do

that if we don't have the courage to make the investments that we need to make in infrastructure.

You can't have it both ways. If you're standing up for the auto sector, you've got to stand up for keeping them competitive from a tax perspective and competitive in terms of infrastructure as well.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, under Premier Wynne's leadership, our government has placed strong emphasis on supporting small, rural and northern communities across the province.

Our government's economic plan is targeted to create jobs and spur economic growth. We're focused on investing in people, investing in infrastructure and supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate. I know our investment through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund is doing just that. Committing \$100 million annually through the NOHFC is a very clear indication that, in fact, the north is being heard.

Speaker, can the minister tell this House how our government is investing in northern Ontario communities to ensure that they have the tools they need to compete in the global market?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much to the member for Northumberland—Quinte West for that great question. You did indeed reference the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. I'm very proud to chair that great program, a \$100-million fund annually, which has brought forward extraordinary investments in the north. In fact, over the last 10 years, we've invested over \$1 billion, which has leveraged about \$3.6 billion in thousands of projects, creating or sustaining 26,000 jobs across northern Ontario. We know how important each and every job is.

While we are incredibly proud of our continued support for public sector projects all across the north—I've often said, Speaker, that I honestly think there is not one community in northern Ontario that has not seen a successful application to the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp.—we are equally proud of our government's decision 10 years ago to support private sector business expansion in our northern communities. I'll look forward to speaking about that in my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you to the minister for his response.

No one can argue that it is small business that creates a vast majority of jobs in this province. In 2013, our government implemented strategic programs to better align with key sectors identified in the growth plan, like the business opportunity program, the Strategic Economic Infrastructure Program and the Northern Innovation Program, as well as community capacity building and internship programs.

The minister has made it clear that we're continuing to work with all of our northern organizations to keep build-

ing and creating jobs in northern Ontario. We need to support an innovative business climate across the north. Can the minister please share the status of some of the NOHFC's most recent investments when it comes to innovation and job creation in the north?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you again to the member for the question.

There are so many examples. Just this past month, my colleague from Thunder Bay—Atikokan and I announced the expansion of broadband in northwestern Ontario with a \$750,000 expansion partnership with Tbaytel. In the film industry, in the culture industry, \$3.4 million went into North Bay's film and television industry. One of our greatest investments—we're very proud of our investments in Sudbury's SNOLAB, where Nobel prize winner and physicist Arthur McDonald did much of his research. We're very proud of that as well.

The bottom line is that we are going to continue to invest in northern Ontario. We're doing this for larger established businesses, small and start-up businesses. We're fostering valuable work experience through our extremely successful internship program. Mr. Speaker, we're encouraging major business productivity and expansion as well as global investment in northern communities, and we're going to keep on doing that as we expand the economy in northern Ontario.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, my question is to the Attorney General. It's expected that all government departments track relevant data to identify areas that need improvement. Last week, I questioned the competency regarding lost or misplaced transcripts at the Licence Appeal Tribunal—the LAT, for short—which adjudicates home warranty disputes. In addition, in response to order table question 378, the minister stated that “for matters that proceed to a hearing, statistics are not kept regarding dispositions” at the LAT. Furthermore, Frank Denton, the ADM, stated that “homeowners ... are dissuaded from pursuing LAT appeals because the process is not transparent, is complicated, time-consuming, and unbalanced.”

Speaker, why does the minister frustrate new homeowners and allow the LAT to hide data regarding case success and failure rates? Surely that is part of the problem?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I appreciate the comment coming from my friend in the opposite party, but I want to remind him that the administrative tribunals are like courts, like judges: They are independent. The member from the opposition wants me to get involved and tell them how to do their work, but I'll say this: When my friend was appointed my critic, we called him and asked him—we wanted to provide him with a briefing. To date, he has not responded to our invitation, so I would like to again invite you to a briefing. Moreover, the president of that tribunal would also like to meet with the member and answer all his questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: To correct the record, my office has never received a request from the Attorney General, but I'd be happy to go any time.

The Ministry of the Attorney General doesn't document these cases; however, the not-for-profit group Canadians for Properly Built Homes does. Over the last nine years, they found that homeowners lost 90% of the time at the LAT for their new home warranty claims.

The minister's tribunals have created a David-versus-Goliath situation for homeowners seeking remedies regarding new home warranties, and homeowners are being ripped off at this tribunal. Now, with Bill 15 passed, she will be adding auto accident disputes to this very-much-maligned and broken LAT system.

Speaker, will the minister commit to fixing the outstanding and significant problems at the LAT before she grants them authority to adjudicate and rip off auto disputes as well?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, Mr. Speaker, those tribunals are independent. We have a very good chair of that tribunal. If there is concern, again, the chair of the tribunal would very much like to meet with the member opposite and hear his concerns.

Again, I reiterate the invitation. I'll ask the member to check with his staff, because it's the second time we've invited him to a briefing. So would you please check with your staff and accept our invitation to a briefing?

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

The House recessed from 1142 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ECHOLOGICS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to stand today to speak about Echologics, a company that opened its innovation site in the town of Walkerton recently. The Echologics innovation site is a detailed replica of a municipal water system and features over 2,000 feet of underground water pipe. The site will be used for the research and development of technology focused on water main leak detection and assessment of pipe conditions.

In addition to its research and development purposes, the site will also serve as a training and certification facility for engineers, field staff, business partners and utilities. This will enable field teams and operators to gain considerable experience while remaining under controlled situations.

Echologics' long-term plan is to have a permanent presence in Walkerton and to provide full-time employment opportunities in the area.

The new generation of trained professionals being educated at this site will be an important resource for municipalities in preventing water main breaks before

they occur. The average leak in a municipal water system can last up to 20 years before the effects are felt. Mitigating this problem, then, will not only decrease its associated risk but save millions of dollars for municipalities.

Echologics aims to shape the future of the water industry. I'm excited to support them as they strive to achieve this goal in Walkerton, and I'm proud to say that this is happening right at home in Huron-Bruce.

DOWNTOWN WINDSOR BUSINESS ACCELERATOR

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The Windsor area has an unemployment rate of 10.5%. However, I rise today to say that it's not all gloom and doom down our way. Let me tell you about the Downtown Windsor Business Accelerator and what they've been up to lately.

The accelerator was formed four and a half years ago. It has become the entrepreneurial hub of the region. Built in an old bingo hall, the accelerator offers turnkey office space, on-site mentoring and even free legal advice. The accelerator is home to 30 companies, and a dozen or more others have graduated to their own locations. The current members have 86 full-time employees and 68 part-time. The alumni companies report 31 full-time and 48 part-time staff. The combined revenues from these small companies already total \$3 million.

The accelerator also provides incredible support to many of our local non-profit groups. Their first high school entrepreneurial summit attracted more than 300 students, with the second planned for later this year. They've also started a youth-at-risk program where young people will be mentored and given micro-financing of up to \$3,000 to start a business.

The business accelerator created a women's entrepreneurial networking series, and more than 300 women have taken advantage of that opportunity.

The economic impact the Downtown Windsor Business Accelerator has had on our local economy is substantial, so from the Ontario Legislature, a salute on a job well done.

OCAD UNIVERSITY

Mr. Han Dong: I rise today to recognize and celebrate the Ontario College of Art and Design University. It is dedicated to education and innovation. OCAD is situated in my riding of Trinity-Spadina, and it is at the heart of Toronto's art, design, and new media industries.

Recently, 99 projects by 74 OCAD students, alumni and faculty were unveiled at the Mississauga office of Mercedes-Benz Financial Services. The October 21 opening of the exhibition, titled Experiencing Perspectives, was well attended by OCAD alumni and Mercedes-Benz staff. This event highlighted their seventh year of partnership with Mercedes-Benz to encourage creativity and art appreciation in the workplace.

OCAD is a state-of-the-art institution with competitive entrance requirements, 17 undergrad programs and six grad programs. Since being founded in 1876, OCAD has evolved into a champion of cross-disciplinary education and continues to integrate emerging technology for the age of imagination.

I'm extremely proud of OCAD and Trinity–Spadina and the contributions that their students, alumni and faculty make to the community. I stand today to invite all Ontarians to acknowledge the achievements of OCAD and their continued success in the arts and design industry.

STRATFORD PERTH COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Today, I would like to recognize an example of outstanding generosity in Perth–Wellington. The Stratford Perth Community Foundation is dedicated to building strong and vibrant local communities. Since 2004, the Stratford Perth Community Foundation has distributed close to \$450,000 to area charities. That money has been donated through 45 different funds that support all types of services in Stratford, St. Marys and Perth county.

In response to a challenge issued by Governor General David Johnston to imagine the country as a smart and caring nation, the foundation has created specific funds for each community. These smart and caring community funds allow community members to donate in their hometown, with the funds remaining in that specific municipality.

On October 8, the Stratford Smart and Caring Community Fund was launched and has already received an incredibly generous kick-start. Two outstanding community leaders, Steve and Carolyn Rae, have donated \$25,000 to the Stratford Smart and Caring Community Fund. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Steve and Carolyn for their outstanding generosity. Thank you to the Stratford Perth Community Foundation's board of directors, and to Tracy, Roxy and Amanda for their dedication to our communities.

Next week, the foundation is spearheading Random Act of Kindness Day, and I look forward to participating.

JOHN AND SARAH PRUYN

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's an honour to stand today and recognize two constituents from Thorold in my riding of Welland: John Pruyne and his daughter, Sarah. John and Sarah led a cross-country bike ride this summer to tell our governments that illegally detaining a peaceful protester and ripping off his prosthetic leg in the name of justice and security is an insult to democracy in Canada.

John Pruyne, an amputee from a farm accident, recalls that while taking a break from the G20 demonstration right here, lounging on the grass of Queen's Park, they were approached by officers, ordered to get up and, when John took longer than the officers would have liked, they

were attacked. He recounts that they were assaulted and were detained in cages for over 72 hours. Worse, his prosthetic leg was ripped off and confiscated. Despite that, no charges were ever laid and no apology was ever given—no explanation, even.

After calls for a federal inquiry fell on deaf ears, both set out on bikes this summer for a four-month tour, stopping at police stations and MP offices from British Columbia right through to Prince Edward Island.

Today, I'd like to thank John and Sarah Pruyne for reminding Canadians that our charter of guaranteed rights and freedoms can never be compromised and must always be respected.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak about a great new program in my riding of York–South Weston that will allow youth from the community access to the jobs and training opportunities that are coming with the major public transit expansion projects like the Eglinton Crosstown. My community and I are glad that Metrolinx has agreed to include community benefit agreements in all their projects. These are vital for good-paying jobs for young people.

The program is called I'm Eglinton and is run by the Labour Education Centre in partnership with LIUNA Local 183 and LIUNA Local 506. It is an eight-week course which explores careers in the construction industry by providing participants with knowledge about the building trades and exposing them to real work in that field. This career development program is provided to eligible Ontario Works recipients who have grade 10 English and math or equivalent. Careers in this industry are not easy, and this program ensures that applicants will be successful for the real world.

The third program intake will start today, October 26, and more information on this program can be found on the Labour Education Centre's website.

Participants of the I'm Eglinton program will learn essential skills that will enable youth who may not have other opportunities the chance to pursue a successful career path.

GRAPE HARVEST FESTIVAL

Mr. Toby Barrett: Saturday evening I attended, yet again, the annual Grape Harvest Festival at the Delhi Hungarian Hall in our tobacco district, a European tradition that's been carried on in that hall since 1949 in the town of Delhi and in what is now a developed Norfolk wine and grape-growing area. It's a great evening. The hall is famous for its chicken and its cabbage rolls.

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The event derives from the hard work of the grape harvest, spanning September through to November. There are many area people there from their native Hungary celebrating Hungarian wine in something like

22 different regions across the country. The Hungarian House in Delhi celebrates the same way as those do in their homeland.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, once the baskets were overflowing with fruit, they would be transported on the backs of men to the winepress and dropped into a large vat. This would have been my favourite part of the ceremony: Barefoot women jumped into the large containers and stomped the fruit. Saturday night, my EA, Bobbi Ann Dwornikiewicz, kicked those grapes to juice. She could not defend her title. Dan Wiest of SNAP almost put the vat out on the dance floor, but in the end, Norfolk Mayor Charlie Luke was crowned the new champion.

Köszönöm to Hungarian House for the hospitality.

RICHMOND GARDENS RATEPAYERS AND RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Mr. Yvan Baker: Speaker, as elected members, we're here to improve the quality of life for the people who live in our ridings. But when I think of the people who shape the quality of life in my community, I often think of the people who volunteer their time day after day to make Etobicoke Centre even better. Today I rise in the House to recognize the important contributions of a group of people and an organization in my riding who are doing just that, the Richmond Gardens Ratepayers and Residents Association.

The association re-formed earlier this year to represent the homeowners and apartment building dwellers who live in Richmond Gardens. I had the pleasure of meeting with the association's board earlier this year and was impressed by the amount of work that they had taken on and their dedication to our community.

We discussed a number of issues that are important to the community, including the potential redevelopment of the Eglinton corridor, potential transit in the corridor, and the future of Silver Creek school and the adjoining green space.

The Silver Creek building hosts two major organizations that support children with physical and developmental challenges and special needs: the Etobicoke Children's Centre and the Silver Creek Pre-School. I visited both this year and I have to say that I was touched, not only by the children I met, but by the dedication of the teachers, the staff and the volunteers who care for them each single day.

These two organizations provide a critical service, and the adjoining green space is very important to our community. That is why I believe it is critical that these two organizations and the green space remain so that they can continue to serve our community.

I'd like to thank the Richmond Gardens Ratepayers and Residents Association, their board and their members for all their hard work and their advocacy. I look forward to working with them in the months and years to come to continue to strengthen the quality of life of the people of Etobicoke Centre.

EVENTS IN PUNJAB

Ms. Harinder Malhi: According to recent news stories, parts of India are engulfed in unrest and demonstrations against desecration of the Sikh holy book, the Sri Guru Granth Sahib. This is a most unfortunate development in an otherwise peaceful, tolerant, multi-religious, multi-ethnic and law-abiding state of Punjab. One would like to strongly disassociate and condemn any such acts against any holy book or religious practices. The current state of endless demonstrations leading to violence has resulted in the loss of innocent lives.

To put an end to this most unfortunate state of unrest, I strongly urge the authorities to bring to justice the perpetrators of these current acts of cowardice, which would certainly be termed as hate crimes. One hopes that our Canadian values of inclusiveness, tolerance, and respect for each other will be reflected amongst the people.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituents, I want to strongly urge the appropriate authorities to help bring peace to the affected areas and, as well, to make sure that the people responsible for these cowardly acts are properly charged and punished. This is important not only to my constituents but to Sikhs living abroad and in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

SAUBLE BEACH LAND CLAIM

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

"Whereas there are serious concerns with the government's policy involving third-parties named in land claim disputes in Ontario, namely the Sauble Beach land claim;

"Whereas the government of Ontario and the government of Canada have equally failed to include protection of the third-parties named in this land claim dispute, specifically they have abandoned any responsibility in honouring crown patent grants and in the case of Ontario, honouring the land registry system;

"Whereas there is no indication that any effort is being made to protect the interest of the public or third-parties named in the Sauble Beach land claim dispute;

"Whereas the current process concerning the dissemination of information to third-parties named in this land claim dispute is deeply flawed;

"Whereas there is no consultation with the third parties as to crown land planning and decision-making nor any engagement in a process that must be open as per the MNR's publicly stated principles on land negotiations;

"Whereas third parties named in the land claim should be consulted and their concerns should be reflected in negotiations;

“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to do the following:

“To review its guiding principles for land claim negotiations and the respective roles of Canada and Ontario in settling claims in an effort to enhance protection of third-parties and all citizens affected by land disputes, to provide open communication and accountability to all pertinent stakeholders, and to provide appropriate financial support to ensure this matter is dealt with in a fair and timely manner.”

I support it and will send it to the Clerks' table with page Marco.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

“Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

“We'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

“We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

“We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

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

“To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come.”

I sign this petition and give it to page Shirley.

LUNG HEALTH

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children and youth living with asthma.

“Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, *Your Lungs, Your Life*, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

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

“To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung

Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

I agree with this petition and sign it and leave it with page Julia.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that came from Mr. Dennis Thompson in Lively, in my riding, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas Health Sciences North is facing major budget shortfalls leading to a decrease of 87,000 hours of nursing care in psychiatry, day surgery, the surgical unit, obstetrics, mental health services, oncology, critical care, and the emergency department...;

“Whereas Ontario's provincial government has cut hospital funding in real dollar terms for” at least “eight years in a row; and

“Whereas these cuts will risk higher medical accident rates as nursing and direct patient care hours are reduced all across the hospital;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“Stop the proposed cuts to Health Sciences North and protect beds and services.

“Increase overall hospital funding in Ontario with a plan to increase funding at least to the average of other provinces.”

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

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition here addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

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

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“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 concentration ; 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 agree with this petition. I will affix my name and send it to the table with page Cameron.

HEALTH CARE

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

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care’s lack of leadership is forcing the closure of the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site; and

“Whereas it is ignoring evidence that the restorative care program has had major successes since its inception three years ago; and

“Whereas it has helped over 300 patients to increase their quality of life by helping them regain strength, balance and independence; and

“Whereas it has improved patient outcomes for over 80% of patients who returned home feeling confident of their recovery; and

“Whereas the loss of this critical care will see patients readmitted to hospitals, to emergency room visits or having to stay in acute care beds longer, representing the costliest options in our health care system; and

“Whereas vulnerable seniors in our communities take the position that there is evidence of funding cuts for home care services; and

“Whereas our senior and all other vulnerable patients deserve access to compassionate care and treatment as close to home as possible;

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

“To provide the necessary base funding to keep the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site in operation so that the health and welfare of our most vulnerable patients remains intact.”

I fully support this. I will sign my name and send it with page Abby.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have hundreds of people who have signed this petition, including Deborah Kennelly from Hanmer in my riding. It reads as follows:

“Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

“Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

“Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

“Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;

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

“Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition.”

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

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas a growing number of Ontarians are concerned about the growth in low-wage, part-time, casual, temporary and insecure employment; and

“Whereas too many workers are not protected by the minimum standards outlined in existing employment and labour laws; and

“Whereas the Ontario government is currently engaging in a public consultation to review and improve employment and labour laws in the province;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement a decent work agenda by making sure that Ontario’s labour and employment laws:

“—require all workers be paid a uniform, provincial minimum wage regardless of a worker’s age, job or sector of employment;

“—promote full-time, permanent work with adequate hours for all those who choose it;

“—ensure part-time, temporary, casual and contract workers receive the same pay and benefits as their full-time, permanent counterparts;

“—provide at least seven (7) days of paid sick leave each year;

“—support job security for workers when companies or contracts change ownership;

“—prevent employers from downloading their responsibilities for minimum standards onto temp agencies, subcontractors or workers themselves;

“—extend minimum protections to all workers by eliminating exemptions to the laws;

“—protect workers who stand up for their rights;

“—offer proactive enforcement of laws, supported by adequate public staffing and meaningful penalties for employers who violate the law;

“—make it easier for workers to join unions; and

“—require a \$15 minimum wage for all workers.”

I sign this petition and leave it with page Gavin from Beaches–East York.

TAXATION

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

“Whereas the 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 support this, will sign my name and send it with page Abby.

BREASTFEEDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by Donna Byron, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas Health Canada, the Canadian Paediatric Society and the World Health Organization recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life with continued breastfeeding along with other food sources for up to two years ... for optimal health;

“Whereas breastfeeding is normal and natural but like childbirth it can be complicated requiring specialized support for a family's success;

“Whereas lactation consultants are trained, internationally certified breastfeeding specialists who can assist women having breastfeeding problems...;

“Whereas Brantford, until 2005 when the service was cut, had a breastfeeding clinic run by lactation consultants ... which was highly utilized;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to facilitate the reinstatement of a lactation consultant-led breastfeeding clinic in Brantford General Hospital.”

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

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

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

“Whereas the Ontario government's proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP) is a mandatory pension plan which would target small businesses and their employees; and

“Whereas there has been little to no discussion on what the costs would be, or who would pay them; and

“Whereas affected businesses would be hit with up to \$1,643 per employee, per year in new payroll taxes starting in 2017; and

“Whereas affected employees would have up to \$1,643 per year extra deducted from their paycheques, and it would take 40 years for them to see the full pension benefits; and

“Whereas the Canadian Federation of Independent Business predicts the unemployment rate in Ontario would rise by 0.5%, and there would be a reduction in wages over the longer term; and

“Whereas all of these costs would be shouldered exclusively by small businesses and their employees; and

“Whereas public sector and big business employees who already have a pension plan will not be asked to pay into the plan;

“We, the undersigned, do not support implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan and petition the government of Ontario to axe the pension tax.”

I fully support it, will sign my name and send it with page Nicole.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from Jeannine Kingsley, who is a resident of Hanmer in my riding. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

“Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

“Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

“Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

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

“That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One.”

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

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WATER FLUORIDATION

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

“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, a concentration providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentration to protect against adverse health effects; 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 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 will affix my signature to this petition and hand it over to Soham.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING CONSUMER PROTECTION AND ELECTRICITY SYSTEM OVERSIGHT ACT, 2015 LOI DE 2015 POUR RENFORCER LA PROTECTION DES CONSOMMATEURS ET LA SURVEILLANCE DU RÉSEAU D'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 5, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 / *Projet de loi 112, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2010 sur la protection des consommateurs d'énergie et la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 22, 2015, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Chiarelli has moved second reading of Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

I have received a deferral note from the deputy government whip asking that this vote be deferred until tomorrow during the time for deferred votes.

I have to inform the House that I have been advised that it requires a written notification from the chief government whip to defer the vote. Therefore, call in the members; again, a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1333 to 1337.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have received a request for a deferral from the chief whip of the third party. As such, this vote will be deferred until tomorrow during the time of deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to first of all thank the chief whips for the government, opposition and third party for their assistance. I'm going to now ask for government notice of motion 42.

TIME ALLOCATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I believe I have to move the motion, Speaker.

I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 113, An Act respecting police record checks, when the bill is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy; and,

That the Standing Committee on Justice Policy be authorized to meet on Thursday, November 5, 2015, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. in Toronto for the purpose of public hearings on the bill; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 113:

—notice of public hearings on the Ontario parliamentary channel, the Legislative Assembly's website and Canada NewsWire; and

—that the deadline for requests to appear be 12 noon on Tuesday, November 3, 2015; and

—that witnesses be scheduled to appear before the committee on a first-come, first-served basis; and

—that each witness will receive up to five minutes for their presentation followed by nine minutes for questions from committee members; and

—that the deadline for written submissions be 6 p.m. on Thursday, November 5, 2015; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 10 a.m. on Tuesday, November 17, 2015; and

That the committee be authorized to meet on Thursday, November 19, 2015, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., on Thursday, November 19, 2015, from 6:45 p.m. to 9 p.m., in Toronto, for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill;

On Thursday, November 19, 2015, at 4 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the Committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. At this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period, pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Monday, November 23, 2015. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; and

That, when the order for third reading of the bill is called, two hours of debate shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

The votes on second and third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Naqvi has moved government notice of motion number 42. I look to the government House leader to lead off the debate.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me to speak on this motion.

I really want to stress that this is a very important piece of legislation that has been championed by both policing and civil liberties partners and all three political parties represented in the House.

While many police forces have already adopted the learned guideline, which is voluntary in nature, it is important that we put this legislation in place quickly to ensure that no more non-conviction records are being released across our province. It is also important, for consistency across the province, that we provide a clear definition to Ontarians of what a police record check entails. This legislation will protect individual civil liberties while keeping our province safe as we work to build stronger communities across Ontario.

There are a number of stakeholders who have championed this legislation and have worked very hard over

the last few years and were consulted in the development of this bill. I want to mention a few: For example, the Police Association of Ontario, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the John Howard Society, the African Canadian Legal Clinic and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Mental Health Association and, of course, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce have been very supportive of this legislation.

I have been listening to the debate in this House on Bill 113, and I'm very heartened to see that all parties have stated in the Legislature during second reading that they will be supporting this bill. In fact, Christine Elliott, the former member for Whitby–Oshawa, recognized the need for these reforms as well, telling the Toronto Star: "The privacy issues are so important here and can have a huge impact on people's lives. People shouldn't be held back by information that may or may not be relevant to a police check that isn't criminal in nature. I think we need discussion around that and I think there's wide support for that within the party.... I think a review is long overdue."

During second reading debate, the member for Huron–Bruce stated: "We, too, on this side of the House, as opposition, support the right of all Ontarians to be treated fairly and equally. We support this legislation because it brings consistency to police record checks, based on recommendations by Ontario police chiefs, the Ontario Human Rights Commission, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and other groups."

Similarly, the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton stated: "I must commend the government on bringing forward this bill. It's rare that opposition does that, but this is an important bill. It addresses a very important issue, and I do acknowledge the government's work in introducing a bill that addresses such a serious issue."

Speaker, it's heartening to see, again, support from all three parties who have recognized the work that not only the government has done in drafting this bill but, of course, the work, most importantly, that all our policing and civil liberties partners have done. It is they who actually did a lot of heavy lifting in making sure that the learned guidelines, which are voluntary in nature, address this particular issue. But they also insisted that the government bring in legislation in keeping with the learned guidelines so that the requirements outlined become mandatory across the province and we have a consistent practice across the province for all police services when it comes to disclosure of information in a police record check.

Speaker, as you may recall, this issue actually came up during the last election, and all three party leaders, at that time, including our Premier, spoke to the need to address this issue and look into it.

After the election, when the government was formed, the Premier asked me, through the mandate letter, to develop this legislation. We worked very hard, and within our first year we were able to, with the support of all our partners, table this bill. That's why it is that much more important that we pass this bill into law as soon as

possible: because it will allow our police services across the province to develop appropriate procedures consistent with the legislation, but also, of course, for our civil liberties partners to inform Ontarians as to what their rights are under this bill.

The voters of Ontario sent a clear message last June when it comes to the mandate of this government and this particular bill. They wanted our government to get on with the business of governing in their best interests.

There has been considerable debate on this bill and the ideas in this bill. We have heard a wide range of viewpoints, opinions and perspectives, most of them in support of this bill, with some suggestions for improvement within the committee, which is absolutely appropriate. That's why it is time, we feel, that we end second reading and refer this bill to committee. In committee, the stakeholders, of course, will be able to present their views. We'll be able to hear directly from the public their thoughts on the bill—not to mention, members will have an opportunity to move amendments to the bill to further strengthen and improve this important piece of legislation.

At the same time, this House can move to other substantive debate on other important matters. There are a number of important pieces of legislation that have already been introduced that the government would like to debate in the House and move through the legislative process; for example, Bill 85, which is the good government act; Bill 109, which is the employment and labour statute act; Bill 115, which is the Electoral Boundaries Act; and Bill 122, which is the Mental Health Statute Law Amendment Act.

Speaker, we'd like to spend our time debating some of those other important pieces of legislation currently before the House but we cannot until Bill 113 is dealt with. That's why I'm speaking in support of this particular motion and urge all members to support this motion: so that we can take Bill 113 to the committee stage, get our partners to come and present their views and, of course, entertain important amendments that other members will present as well, so that we can get down the road of making Bill 113 a reality, hopefully with the approval of this House at third reading debate.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm happy to follow the minister today.

I find myself speaking this afternoon to a time allocation motion. I believe there was a time when these time allocation motions were rare, but this government has made them quite routine in the Legislature. Today, it's for Bill 113, the Police Record Checks Reform Act.

I'll be speaking for about 10 minutes, and I know the members from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound will also be adding their comments to this debate.

Mr. Speaker, before I get into my remarks on the time allocation, the minister said there are other good bills that we should be discussing in the House. It's interesting: He

didn't mention once legislation that talks about an economic plan for Ontario—nothing about creating private sector jobs; nothing about reducing taxes, making life more affordable in the province of Ontario. It's very unfortunate that today in the Legislature and for the last number of days, we continue to hear about certain pet projects that this government has undertaken in secrecy. One example of that—and I think our leader, Patrick Brown, did a great job in question period today talking about the millions of dollars given to teachers' unions secretly. We need to be dealing with legislation that creates jobs in Ontario and really sends a signal that we want Ontario to be competitive again.

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Regarding Bill 113, there has been thoughtful and productive debate on this bill, and it's a shame that the government feels the need to choke off that debate. This bill was brought forward because the system we have in place has failed a lot of people. There is a real need for this legislation and a real interest from everyone in this House in passing into law measures which will address the issues I'm sure we've all heard from our constituents in communities right across the province.

Bill 113 has the potential to expedite the process of enabling volunteers to serve their communities, and prospective employees to get to work. I understand a lot of time has been dedicated to finding solutions to ensure that we address the problems with the current system, but now the government wants to rush it through the legislative process. I think this is an important piece of legislation that we need to get right and that deserves the benefit of the full democratic legislative process.

Mr. Speaker, it seems that this government loves to say how great it is to consult and have conversations with everyone about everything, right up until its public debate in this House. The democratic process is not just about the conversations you have in stakeholder meetings; it's about having unfettered debate in this House, in this assembly, with every elected representative having the opportunity to speak on behalf of their constituents.

For Bill 113 in particular, I think it is completely inappropriate to limit debate. There are a number of ways in which this bill inserts politicians into the administration of justice, and that raises some red flags. We're talking about balancing public safety and civil liberties, and when that is the question of the day, robust debate should be the order of the day.

My colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington did an excellent job last week of highlighting issues of concern. Frankly, I heard no satisfactory answers from the government side to the questions he raised, so clearly there is more discussion needed here: either an acknowledgement from the government side that there are some questionable elements to this bill that will need to be revised or an explanation as to why it is necessary for the government to insert itself into the administration of justice.

I'd like to revisit some of these issues, to underscore why debate needs to continue for Bill 113.

To begin with, section 22(1) allows cabinet to exempt anyone from any provision of this bill, so cabinet essentially has full discretion on who this bill actually applies to. They can pick and choose who is subject to the rule of law. Those are some very broad powers which this government is bestowing on cabinet. What is the oversight here? Will there be a nonpartisan party who will be made aware of who is exempted and why, and then be empowered to take some sort of action if this is ever abused?

Along the same line, section 19(3) says, “A prosecution shall not be commenced under this section without the minister’s consent,” so every charge will need the seal of approval of the minister. Why is this included? It’s a highly unusual clause and it warrants a thorough explanation, which we have yet to hear in this House. I want to see this debate continue so we can hear from the minister himself why he needs to sign off on every prosecution under this particular section.

Then there is section 22(2)(c), which allows the minister to create new offences under this act. Of course we support this legislation, which is long overdue, to bring consistency to police record checks, and I understand that the offences which this bill establishes are based on recommendations by Ontario’s police chiefs, the Ontario Human Rights Commission, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and other groups, but going forward, it will be at the minister’s discretion to determine what might be considered an offence under this particular act, without the involvement of this House. Before legislative oversight is removed entirely from the process of evaluating this act and the issue it seeks to address, I think we should ensure that all concerns, opinions and explanations are thoroughly aired. When the government is putting forward provisions like this, there is a need for a full and serious debate. The minister himself has said that this bill is about ensuring there is fairness, clarity and consistent practice right across the province, but the discretionary powers of cabinet and the minister that this bill allows for seem inconsistent with that particular goal.

The fact of the matter is that we have a majority government here in Ontario that will vote through whatever legislation they please. At committee, they will ignore 99% of the amendments put forward by the opposition, and they will remake the laws to suit their purposes.

The very least they can do is keep up appearances by allowing unfettered debate to run its course before they bequeath themselves a new set of powers. To limit debate in these circumstances, it’s really this government coming clean on how little they value the process of this House and the voices of the people of this province who elected opposition members. There are questions that should be asked and answered before this bill moves forward.

Mr. Speaker, the people of this province are taking notice of this government’s disrespect of the democratic process. In fact, I’d like to quote an article from the Toronto Star from earlier this year: “It’s a government

that uses omnibus bills to ram through controversial new measures—and then limits debate on them.

“Its leader says one thing during an election campaign and then, once in office, surprises voters with something entirely different.

“It is routinely scolded by watchdog officials for its lacklustre approach to public accountability.

“And no, it is not the federal Conservative government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, the man critics like to call mean and reactionary.

“Rather it is the Ontario Liberal government of Premier Kathleen Wynne, the personable grandmother who won office last year as a political progressive.”

Or, Mr. Speaker, there is this quote from CBC News for the government to consider: “It turns out there are actually two Kathleen Wynnes.

“There’s the minority Premier promising to be ‘new and different’ and ‘open and transparent.’

“And there’s the majority Premier who appears to have all but wiped those four words from her political vocabulary.”

This article goes on and says: “Wynne’s approach—often echoed by her cabinet ministers—is now more of: we won, you didn’t.

“And as a result, she wants legislation passed quickly, limiting debate....”

Speaker, I hope the government is aware that these manoeuvres are not going unnoticed. This is a pattern of behaviour of disrespect for the process of this place. It’s arrogance, and the media and the public are picking up on it.

This is legislation that is needed, but to skip due process risks creating problematic and substandard legislation. The minister himself has said Bill 113 is all about protecting individual civil liberties and public safety. I believe that the legislative process is in place to do exactly that. It is in the public interest that we debate this bill and all bills thoroughly and that, as opposition, we continue to seek answers to our concerns about this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, as I said in the beginning, there will be other of my colleagues who will be speaking to the time allocation motion later.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, yet again, here we are debating another time allocation motion. I’ve just got to say, if there is a bad way of dealing with how you process legislation through this Legislature, this is one of them. The Legislature is supposed to be about what? It’s supposed to be about the people of Ontario. One of the ways that you do that—it’s not necessarily giving me the right to debate a bill at length in the Legislature, although that is a right of members and that’s what Parliament is about; it’s about giving any member of the House of whatever side the ability to speak to whatever bill is being called.

But the bigger issue is what doesn’t happen in committee, because in the end, it should really be about

the people of Ontario. It should be about their right and their ability to access committees not just here at Queen's Park, but access committees on the road as committees are travelling around the province, to be able to speak on bills of substance. For example, there are a number of bills before the House now that are somewhat controversial. The big one for us, obviously, is hydro, the privatization of Ontario hydro when the government brought in their budget bill. We think that it would have been fairer for the government to at least have travelled that bill throughout the province for a period of time—not forever—to be able to give the public the opportunity to have their say.

We're here spending their money, Mr. Speaker. It's the people of Ontario who pay the taxes. Our job, once we receive those taxes, is to carefully and with some thought figure out a budget and be able to spend that in some way that reflects the respect that we should give our constituents. Well, how can you do that if you don't give the public the opportunity to come before committees? That's a problem with time allocation.

1400

A government is very, very—how would you say—prone, when they use the tool of time allocation, to limit the amount of time a bill will be in committee. Typically, when a bill is referred to committee, we see this government give it two, three or four days at the most of hearings and clause-by-clause, and then the bill is back into the House for a couple of hours of debate at third reading. Well, it shouldn't be that way.

It used to be that there were no time allocation procedures here. The only thing you were able to do when I was first elected here was call the question, which meant that the parties had to work together, even though they were a majority government, such as the Davis government, the Peterson government and the Rae government. Those governments, in majority, had to work with the opposition to be able to move their agenda through the House. So, yes, there were some trade-offs.

You know, the government of the day would have a bill—I remember when we were government that the big one was our first budget. When we went to the first budget in 1991, as everybody knows, there was a deficit within the budget of about \$8.5 billion at that time. We raised it by \$2 billion in order to stimulate the economy with infrastructure and the wage protection fund, for a total of around an \$11-billion deficit. The Conservatives, at the time, said, "We are opposed to deficits," which was their right.

They wanted to have the bill travel, so that the public could have their say when it came to that budget. So they used every trick in the book that they had to be able to stand in the House to slow the House down, in order to put pressure on the then Bob Rae NDP government, to give that bill some time in committee.

Well, the government had to back down. The government had to accept that the opposition, even though they were the third party, in that case—they weren't even the official opposition; they were the third party—had the

right as a party to be able to say, "We want to travel that bill." You were there, Mr. Speaker, because you were elected the same year I was. By the way, congratulations; we just went through our 25th anniversary—yourself and Mr. Wilson—sometime back last fall.

What happened was that the government had to back down and give—I don't remember how long it was, but I think it was a couple of weeks of hearings on the budget bill—not the pre-budget consultation, but actually on the budget bill—across Ontario. You know what? The government heard some things that it didn't particularly like. Some of them we accepted; some of them we did not. We got some good ideas that we eventually brought into the next budget, which came in 1992, but that's the process of the public having its say.

When governments use the time allocation tool that has been here since 1993—and I take no pride in being the government that brought time allocation to this Legislature; as I look back at it, it was probably the worst thing we could have done—what it does is it takes away the incentive to negotiate agreements about how legislation goes through the House. Parliament, if you look at it, I think is fascinating. I'm probably one of the few in this Legislature who really likes reading procedural stuff and the history of the House and the history of the British Parliament. Over a period of, you know, a couple of hundred years, we developed a role for Parliament that essentially is that we have a responsibility to not just represent our constituents, but to allow due process in that entire parliamentary process.

Yes, this Legislature is about appropriating dollars so that the government—the executive—can run the province. We have a budget of around \$130 billion a year. The province, through its cabinet, makes a decision about how it's going to spend that money, but then they've got to come to House and get the appropriation from the Legislature to be able to spend that money. There are processes in there in order to allow that there is clear transparency that allows free discussion, so that we're able to give the public their say in how we're going to spend their money, and what the policies in the budget will or will not be. This is not a budget bill, but I use that as an example that using time allocation very much diminishes the ability to negotiate agreements when it comes to the legislation going forward.

If you look at this order paper, Mr. Speaker—and I know you have—it's pretty thin gruel; there's not a lot on this order paper. It's not like the government has reams of legislation and a whole bunch of controversial bills. Most of these bills were drafted prior to the federal election. They were pretty mundane, except for a couple of them, in order not to rock the boat too much, going into a federal election, which was a smart strategy on the part of the Liberal government, because they didn't want to give their federal party any hiccups.

As it turns out, that plan worked really well for them, to my chagrin.

The point is, there's not a lot on this order paper that the government shouldn't be able to negotiate a way

forward to decide how long some bills will be in the House for debate and in exchange for how long we're going to have them in committee, when it comes to certain bills, to be negotiated. That's the way this place should work. It should be that the government has—I'll just pick a number out of the air—20 pieces of legislation; there's probably half of them that all parties support, both the official opposition and the third party. Those bills are probably without much need of debate because they're supported. The bigger issue is to get them into committee so the public can have their say.

In exchange for doing that, maybe you would debate a bill that you have a little bit more, let's say, opposition to. I'm sure the Conservatives have bills that they would like to have a little bit more time on in the House to make their points, in order to try to convince the government to make some form of amendment or withdrawal on the bill, and the government then has to or not take that advice from the opposition. But the big thing is, if we did it the way it should be, there would be a real negotiation amongst the House leaders that allows us a way forward to move an agenda forward of the government in a way that allows the public to have their say. That's what this place is all about.

Instead, what we've got is a government that is essentially ruling by time allocation. Pretty well everything in the Legislature now is time-allocated through this House, and I don't believe that that serves any real good purpose when it comes to giving the public their say, but, more importantly, being able to do a good job when it comes to drafting legislation, understanding the legislation and amending it, if necessary.

I want to give you an example of where governments get in trouble when it comes to not giving legislation enough time. Back in the days when Mike Harris was Premier—and this is not meant as a shot to my friends in the Conservative Party; it only illustrates the issue. The government believed there needed to be a change to the assessment system. We in government, as the NDP, had gone to market value. The opposition was opposed to it at the time, so they decided when they became government, they would move it from market value to actual value. Fair enough. They ran an election. They got more seats than everybody else, and they had the right as a government to propose and put forward any bill they wanted.

But when the bill came forward, I was opposed, as were other people in the opposition, because we felt that it was so darned hard to move us to market value in the first place that we'd be reopening a can of worms to get into actual value. To do what—essentially to have market value by the back door, which is now called “actual value,” at the time, so we thought it was a bit of waste of legislative time.

The other thing is, there were problems in the way the legislation was drafted. I don't remember, Speaker, if you were on that committee—because we did travel that bill at that time. The government agreed that the bill be travelled. I think we went mostly to southern Ontario, if I remember correctly. I was on that particular committee

and I remember listening to the public who came before us. We had people from municipalities, who knew a lot about municipal assessment, who came forward and said, “Hey, there's a problem with this bill. This doesn't work. This particular clause is unmanageable.” We took note of that.

When we got to Committee of the Whole and we got into amendments, we put forward amendments in order to fix the problems with the bill, and the government refused all changes. The government just took it the way it was, and the problem was—and we had said it at the time—that once the bill is passed, we guarantee that the government was going to have to amend its own legislation because this ain't going to work when it gets down to municipalities to work with. Well, so be it.

Less than a year later, the government had to come back with another bill—and if I remember correctly, and the Clerks may want to send me a note and let me know what the number was, but I think we amended that original bill three times by legislation afterwards over a period of around six or seven years, all because we did not take the time necessary to give good scrutiny to the bill to make sure that in fact the bill at least was manageable when it came to the way it was drafted.

So when you time-allocate, you get into those problems because, in that particular case, that bill had been time-allocated out of second reading and it was time-allocated into committee and we had a very limited time in committee, although we did travel, to be able to hear what the public had to say.

1410

When the government comes forward on a bill, like today, that, in fact—given some changes, this bill could be supported. There are some changes that we're going to recommend when this bill goes to committee, because we think the bill is a useful bill, it's a step in the right direction, but there are some problems in the way this particular bill is drafted. We're hopeful that we can get amendments when we get the bill into committee. But, again, how are you giving the public an opportunity to be able to do what it's got to do and to give them their role, to be able to come before committee and have something to say, if you don't allow that to happen by way of this motion? How many days of public hearings does it have in the motion? Two days?

Mr. John Vanthof: One.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: One day? There's only one day of public hearings. What's that? This bill, if it's as good as the government says, which is dealing with energy marketers, well, then give the bill some time out in the public so that the public and those people in the industry who are affected are able to come before us and tell us what's good and bad about the bill, and what they think has to be changed. Unfortunately, it's pretty hard to do that when you only have one day of committee time in the Legislature as a result of what the government is putting forward.

I just wanted to get on the record—and I know our whip is going to want to do the same, as well as the member from Oshawa—and yet again say that it's a sad

thing that we've gone down this road of time allocation because now, it is virtually—every majority government moves on time allocation when it comes to pretty well everything, and as a result, it's really the public that is getting frozen out, because the public is not getting their ability to come before a committee and to have their say when it comes to legislation that is before this House.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Here we go again. Nothing changed much from last week, but it has gotten worse. We've lowered the bar—descended it lower than ever before. You see, when we started this session of Parliament, we knew that time allocation was going to be the order of the day, and it has been. But, you know, they were bringing time allocation in—the first time we heard it this fall, it was, like, after 13 hours of debate. After 13 hours of debate, the government moved time allocation—that's one thing. After 6.5 hours of debate, the government has a right to end debate, but they usually choose not to because they're expected to give members of this assembly the opportunity to comment on legislation. That's what we're sent here to do.

On this particular bill, Bill 113, which this time allocation refers to, our caucus has had four members speak to it—four. Four out of 27 have spoken to this bill. Is that representative of all of the areas of Ontario that we happen to be elected to represent? My answer, the short answer, would be no. That is what really concerns me, because the message that we're getting here—and I've tried to appeal to the members on the other side using one form of debate, and I have been clearly unsuccessful. I'm going to try to appeal to the fair-mindedness of the members on the other side and hope that somehow they actually take notice.

The legal minimum in this chamber is 6.5 hours of debate, yet this government has moved for time allocation after six hours and 51 minutes. That's a new low for even this government to move to time allocation. It has changed dramatically.

I remember when I came here in 2003. The Liberals had been elected with a much stronger majority than they have today, but they did not resort to time allocation like this, like the Wynne government has resorted to. This is unprecedented. I remember, when I was a young member here—well, I don't know if I was that young, but I was new—that in 2003, we travelled on almost every bill. I was a member of the general government committee at that time, and almost every bill that came before our committee, we took it to the people of Ontario to give them an opportunity to comment in their own locales.

When we took those bills on committee, we usually had 20 minutes: The deputant appearing before the committee would have 15 minutes to speak and the committee would have five minutes to ask questions. If you look at most of the bills that do get to committee today, all the committee hearings are here in Toronto. Like for this bill here, the time allocation motion provides for all the hearings to be here at the Legislature—

no travel across the province, yet this will affect every citizen in the province of Ontario. For the people who appear before the committee, it looks like they'll have five minutes to speak: five minutes to speak for their presentation, followed by nine minutes for questions from the committee members; a total of 14 minutes, nine of them being from the members of the committee themselves. So somebody is supposed to come here to Toronto, take the time out of their busy lives and make a presentation to this committee in five minutes. That is absolutely ridiculous, but if you look at the last time allocation motion, that's exactly what it provided for. In Bill 112's time allocation motion: five minutes for witnesses and nine minutes for members of the committee to ask questions.

This government has become the most closed in the history of the province of Ontario. They talked about openness. They talked about transparency. They talked about governing for the people. With the plaudits for the throne speech of 2014, you would think this was going to be a new era of co-operation in this Legislature, and it could have been. It could have been, but the government has taken arrogance to a new level. In every way possible, they're trying to shut down everyone else from the debate. That is truly regrettable, that we would have that kind of stifling of debate in this Legislature. Even Dalton McGuinty, when he was Premier, with a large majority—I think it was 72 seats in the first election, or something like that. With 72 seats, he recognized that the opposition played an important role, and he gave that ability to the opposition.

If the government wants to talk about getting legislation through, they need to talk about it at House leaders. And it can't be just a five-minute meeting on a Thursday afternoon to go over the next week's schedule; they need to sit down, have a real conversation between the House leaders about what really is important and set some time aside for each of the respective parties. What is necessary to be debated for a longer period of time and what can be debated over shorter periods of time? We don't have that opportunity. It's not being afforded to us, so all of a sudden, out of the blue, time and time again, as my friend from Timmins—James Bay says—and I congratulate him, as well as Messrs. Wilson and Arnott, on 25 years in Legislature in this Legislature, which I guess took place—when was that, in June?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: September 6.

1420

Mr. John Yakabuski: September 6: 25 years. I won't be here 25 years, so you'll never have that opportunity to congratulate me for that number. I'll be too old.

Anyway, he talked about how it has changed. It seems that every bill today is being put through this time allocation procedure. Some of this could be avoided if there was a real conversation between the House leaders about what is important and what is not important.

I'm asking this government, I'm asking these people on the other side, to truly consider the other side. Do you, members of this party—the Liberal governing party—truly believe that you have had a fair debate when four

members of the official opposition have had an opportunity to talk about a particular piece of legislation? If you really believe that, then we don't need debate at all. If you really believe that four members of the opposition is sufficient, then you must believe that debate is not necessary at all. If you do, say so.

Why don't you stand in your place and tell the people of Ontario that there is no need whatsoever to debate in this chamber, that the government knows best and they'll just make the laws and push them through, because that is essentially what you're telling us. We elected 27 people—and one vacancy—to this House for the very same reasons that you were elected: because the people in your riding felt that you were the ones best suited to speak for them in this chamber. But in the case of our members, we're not getting to speak.

You have to remember: The rules are the rules. The way the speaking lineup is set out, the opening speeches on each particular bill—what we call the leadoff speeches—are given one hour of time. The subsequent ones are 20 minutes, and they eventually go down to 10 minutes. But if you think of three hours of debate, that really only covers three people. Now, it can be divided, but at the same time, in the case of the opposition, this is sometimes the only opportunity for our critics to speak to a bill. Sometimes it might be split in two, but many times the critic will speak for the entire hour.

So out of 6.5 hours, potentially three of them could be used by three speakers, and 3.5 hours are supposed to represent the other 104 in this chamber? Hardly. That's what I ask the members to actually consider: to actually ask themselves if this is a proper way of allowing this chamber to work, that 107 members get 6.5 hours, of which three hours could potentially be used by three persons. Do you really believe that? Then you must believe that debate is completely unnecessary and that we should dispense with it. We might as well dispense with it, because that's exactly what you're doing here when you continue to implement time allocation.

It's funny. I know that the third party have been through this. We were through it. The McGuinty government was through it. But this Wynne government has taken it to new heights. You have to ask yourself—it is a very pertinent question, Speaker: If this procedure continues to escalate like it is escalating under this government, what will be left? What will be left when it comes to real, complete, wholesome debate on any given subject in this House?

Now, this particular bill, Bill 113—my colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex raised a couple of significant concerns. I'd like to know more about that. I haven't had a chance to speak to the bill, and technically, today, I'm not speaking to the bill; I'm speaking to the time allocation motion. This bill that we're time-allocating is a police records check bill. I'll just give you the full name of it here: An Act respecting police record checks, tabled by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. First reading was on June 3.

Under this new bill, Bill 113, if you look at subsection 19(3), "A prosecution shall not be commenced under this

section without the minister's consent," and further, in subsection 22(1), "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations, (a) exempting any person or class of persons from any provision of this act and attaching conditions to the exemption."

Well, you have to ask yourself: If I read this correctly, the way it is written, this whole thing is at the pen of the minister. The minister can exempt anybody he wants from the provisions of this act. So are you required, then, under this act, to obey the law or just be on good terms with the minister? Because even if you're in contravention of this act, it says, "A prosecution shall not be commenced under this section without the minister's consent."

So if the police or whoever want to charge me under this act because I've contravened it, they can't, because the minister—not that the minister would protect me. But it would be up to him to decide whether or not I could be prosecuted. Can you find me some other statutes here, laws in this province, that say the police have to go to the minister for a decision to be made on whether they can be charged? Can you imagine what kind of a mess we would have in this province if the minister had to give his or her consent for a charge to be laid?

That's something that perhaps more discussion or a discussion at committee could help clear the air on, or maybe it's a provision that the government need not proceed with implementing in this bill. But again, it speaks to the change in attitude of this government over previous governments: how they believe they are so righteous in whatever they do that there's no need to get the second side, no need to get the views of those who are elected from another party. Well, I think that's wrong, and I think you people over there know it's wrong too.

Unfortunately, we all know how this British parliamentary system works. There are only two kinds of people in it: those who are in cabinet and those who want to be in cabinet. If you're in cabinet and you don't toe the line, you'll be one of those people who want to be in cabinet. If you're one of those people who want to be in cabinet and don't toe the line, you can rest assured that you're never going to be in cabinet. Here we have a centralized power system where the Premier's office controls the minions in the party. Those who are elected to serve their constituents cannot do so to their heart, because they must follow the law that is passed in the Premier's office. That is a challenge for them, but I know, in their heart of hearts—because I see them. I'm looking over there and I see their eyes and I can see inside their hearts, and they know this is wrong. They know cutting off debate in this fashion is wrong. It is wrong for them, it is wrong for the people of Ontario, and it shouldn't be taking place. It should not be taking place.

Yet when I talk about—and you know me; I'm not one to stray off the subject at all if I can. But when we talk about changes in the government's attitudes, I think what we've heard and read in the *Globe and Mail* over the last couple of days is an amazing illustration of how this

government feels about how answerable it is for its actions to the people of Ontario. It scoffs at the idea that the people of Ontario—and I'll tell you, it's the thing we all heard about more than any other subject since it was revealed by the *Globe and Mail* and then spoken about in this Legislature, and that is how they could somehow feel that it's okay for them to say, "Oh, it's been a tough negotiation. We'll pay some or all of your expenses. Here's a cheque for a million. Here's another one to someone else for a million, and you get half a million," whatever it is.

1430

The idea that a government could just say, "We can do whatever we want. We're the Liberal government here in the province of Ontario. We're not answerable to anybody. Who's going to do anything about it? We have a majority. The Conservatives can't stop us. New Democrats can't stop us. We'll do whatever we want." It's going to be the pizza scandal—that's what they'll call it this time, or whatever—the sliced pepperoni scandal of 2015 is going to be maybe the story at some point. But someday we'll get to the bottom of this as to what happened, because the Premier has continually been asked the question, "Where did the money come from? Where did the money come from? Where did the money come from?" and she has continuously dodged the question.

I'm going to let that go at this point because we are speaking to the time allocation motion—and I only have a few seconds left—but I want to you think about this: To the people on the other side, I want to you go to your caucus meeting tomorrow—I believe your caucus meeting is tomorrow, like ours is—and I want you to talk to your cabinet ministers, I want you to talk to your House leader and I want you to talk to your Premier, and I want you to tell them that you believe that this practice of taking the guillotine to this Legislature and cutting off debate is wrong. We can do better, we should do better, and I ask you to think about that.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House. Today, it's not a joyous time for me as whip of the third party because time allocation of any bill is a very serious issue, and for this bill particularly.

When people participate in an election and they elect a majority or a minority government, they expect that, after the election, the parliamentary process will take place and both sides will come up with the best legislation possible. The fact that this government continually limits debate and allocates the time that people can speak—because all the members of this House have different backgrounds and different points of view, and many of these points of view could add to the debate of this legislation—of any legislation, but this legislation in particular.

In our caucus of 20 members, we've had three members who have had the opportunity to speak in this debate. As whip, I'm sure I have other members who

would like to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of the people they represent, who may have had experiences with things that happened with police record checks, before this legislation is being implemented, who would have added to this debate. And, Speaker, that is probably not the most egregious part.

The most egregious part of time allocation is that it's not only the members who are democratically elected who have their time to speak cut off, but also the committee process is shortened. I have heard—it's a legend in this place that I have never really experienced—that committees actually travelled outside of Toronto and that this province was actually bigger than downtown Toronto.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It is?

Mr. John Vanthof: So I've been told; I've travelled a lot through this province going home.

But in these time allocation processes the hearings are very short. You can sign up if you want to speak to this issue. You can sign up from my riding. You'll have to travel to Toronto, and if you're lucky, you'll get—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Take the train.

Mr. John Vanthof: The train that we no longer have.

If you're lucky, you can get to speak for five minutes. I've watched these processes; I've participated in a few. They're not kidding, Speaker, as you well know. They're not kidding about the five minutes.

If you have a very relevant issue to speak on, on this legislation, and it happens to take seven minutes or 10 minutes, you know what? Not important. You're done. Five minutes, and the gavel drops. In the case of someone from my riding who wants to come and speak to this committee, it will take you two days' travelling—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To get five minutes.

Mr. John Vanthof: —for five minutes, maybe. And this legislation is supposed to represent all the people of Ontario.

First, we have people here, elected from across the province. The first thing this government claims to do—they claim to be open and transparent. The first thing they do is take each piece of legislation and use time allocation so the majority of the members—at least, by far the majority of the opposition members—aren't allowed to speak. That's not good enough. Then they make the committee process so that it doesn't travel. Then they very much restrict the people who have the financial means, the financial ability and, quite frankly, the time to speak.

Really, I've said it here before—we're not making breakfast now; it's after lunch—we're not making lunch here; we're making law. Speaker, if you make a bad lunch, it affects you for one day. But if you make a bad law, it can affect you and impact the people here, the people throughout this province, for years, for decades. Shouldn't we take the time to actually make sure we get the process right? This process has been developed over hundreds of years, and it's been time-tested.

You know what? Time allocation is a mistake. It's a mistake that I think my party had something to do with.

Nevertheless, we'll admit our part of this mistake, but it remains a huge mistake. It would be better to let these bills pass, through normal process, and perhaps another three or four or five of my members would like to speak, and they would add some good points that would make this bill better. They would be allowed to speak on behalf of the people they were elected by.

Isn't that a novel concept? You get elected—we've all done it. You knock on doors; you talk to people; you get their views. You get elected; you get here. The government has every right to propose legislation. The legislation comes before you. It's something you've heard about at the doors; the people have called you about it. You're number 4 on the list to speak and—boom—you can't speak.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Because you're time-allocated.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's right. The other side, they laugh at this, but this is a very serious issue, especially from a government, from a Premier who always claims to be open and transparent.

I'm going to close my comments today, because my colleague from Oshawa would like to speak more directly to the bill.

Sometimes I quote things that my dad taught me. My dad taught me; he said that people who have to say they're honest—watch them, because you don't have to talk about being honest. Those are the ones you have to watch. Governments who claim to be open and transparent—you watch them. You shouldn't have to claim to be open and transparent if you are.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: I too look forward to the time to talk about this time allocation bill. A bill that limits debate, to me, is just fundamentally undemocratic. We're elected by the people in our respective ridings to come here, to debate, to bring their ideas, concerns, thoughts and suggestions to this House. Any government that would actually time-allocate, to me, is stripping them of that ability.

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That brings me back to Bill 8, the transparency and accountability act, Mr. Speaker. I have concerns there. In fact, I believe, if I'm not mistaken, that bill was time-allocated. How can you take transparency and accountability, make it into an act, and time-allocate it so that, again, everyone doesn't have their opportunity to bring their thoughts on behalf of their constituents into accord?

I'm going to just talk about the budget bill a little bit. This year's budget struck down the very heart of transparency and accountability. The Liberals stripped the Auditor General of her right to vet government advertising. They actually buried the change in their massive budget bill in an effort to blindside this House. How transparent is that? Millions of dollars are spent every year on government advertising. Because a lot of taxpayers' money is at stake, it only makes sense that a third party should review those ads and ensure they're not partisan. Premier Wynne and her deputy, Deb Matthews,

didn't like the idea of the Auditor General—currently Bonnie Lysyk—reviewing their ads, so they gutted the AG's oversight of the Government Advertising Act. Again, I ask, how is that transparent and how is that accountable?

Deputy Premier Deb Matthews told reporters in the past, "The government remains committed to its 2004 ban on the type of partisan ads that saw" a former government "appearing on screen—but wants more 'clarity' on the definition of partisan." The Deputy Premier has been around a long time. She knows exactly what "partisan" is.

I brought in a private member's bill last week in regard to third-party advertising. Again, the Liberals voted against that. I ask again: Transparency and accountability? You have to walk the talk. You can't say one thing and do the other.

Also buried in the budget bill was schedule 3. This allowed the government to remove the right of the members of the Legislature to have an unfiltered, uncensored report from our independent Auditor General. The first consequence of this change is to keep us in the dark on the sale of Hydro One. In fact, they will allow any future asset sale to proceed without any independent oversight. I ask again, Mr. Speaker, where is the transparency and accountability?

The Premier, in my mind and in the minds of many people—I hear it all the time, whether I'm back in my riding or I'm here in Toronto—I hear it oftentimes that the Premier of today has disgraced the Office of the Premier and the government.

We all believe and should strive for the ideal that government officials—those elected, most importantly—must uphold the integrity, transparency and lawfulness their positions require. Ontarians deserve nothing less.

Premier Wynne has staked her entire reputation on the promise she would clean up the stench. The abysmal image of things such as criminal investigations into the Premier's office—they are unprecedented in Ontario's history, and yet there are more of those. There are more scandals: gas plants, eHealth, Ornge. In all of those, we're talking about billions and billions of dollars that are now not there for the needy Ontarians who we're here most to serve, those less fortunate, those people who need a hand up in their time of need. The Premier campaigned exclusively on accountability and transparency. Clearly, she's not in it for the people of Ontario when you see that she's, again, still allowing bills to come in on time allocation.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you that most Ontarians believe you cannot say one thing and do the other just because you happen to have power in office. They expect you to be standing up for the things that you believe in and the principles that they believe in. We are here to serve the people and those ideals of principle: accountability and transparency.

Instead, the Premier embroiled herself and her party in a bribery scandal in Sudbury that ends with one of their own being charged.

She also oversaw a \$2.5-million slush payment to teachers' unions. That's \$2.5 million taken away from special-needs students whose EAs have been eliminated in the Bluewater District School Board, in the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Just a few minutes ago, I received an email from a constituent, and I'm going to quote parts of that message:

"I just sent a message to our Premier, Ms. Wynne, expressing disgust at this move"—again, talking about this \$2.5-million secret payment made. "She claims this is normal and not a big number. This is anything but normal, and it is a big number. I should be so lucky in my personal finances to be able to say that.

"No wonder they can't seem to reach an agreement. It's almost like she is providing an incentive not to settle. Negotiation can and usually does involve pain, and that's what keeps the system in place. Ms. Wynne has just taken the pain away.

"I strongly object to what she just did as the latest example of fiscal ineptitude."

It also references the privatization of Hydro One. "I do hope there's an opportunity for the Conservative opposition, and yourself personally, to strongly challenge the government on this inept move."

Leadership is all about honesty, integrity and accountability. It's about personal principles. June 22, 2015: "Accountability Continues to Erode Under Wynne" Liberal government. What I want to talk about a little is what I started my conversation with: the fact that in December the Liberal government, under the leadership of Premier Wynne, passed Bill 8, the Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, which had intended to expand the Ombudsman's powers to include police services boards. However, the Liberal government exempted police services boards from such oversight by regulation behind closed doors.

"It seems curious that the Premier would choose to exempt police services boards from oversight at a time when Gerry Lougheed Jr, a Liberal fundraiser and the Chair of the Greater Sudbury Police Services Board, is being investigated by the OPP for allegedly offering a bribe to Andrew Olivier just before the Sudbury by-election." Those were comments that were brought to this House by my colleague from Leeds–Grenville, Steve Clark. "The Premier has missed an opportunity to prove that her words—for once—were not merely platitudes. Premier Wynne promised to be different, she promised to be open and transparent. This is just another way that Premier Wynne shows the people of Ontario that she's just not in it for them anymore." It saddens me to say it, but it really is a case of that. It's a case where we have to be paying more attention to the words we speak and then stand behind those words.

This morning in our clippings, I think, a great article—a lot of this morning's question period was talking about the payment that was made. I'm going to just take some excerpts from this; it's by the National Post. This is how the article starts: "Corruption is a strong word, which we don't often use in Canada when it

comes to politics. It infers a blatant disregard for honesty, ethics or principle. But it's the word that springs to mind when you contemplate the insidious relationship between Ontario's Liberal government and the teachers unions they do so much to cultivate and please." The recent "revelations of a \$2.5-million payment to three unions to cover their costs" of bargaining with the provincial government over a new contract—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to remind the member that we're talking about a time allocation motion, and ask him if he's going to bring his comments back to the time allocation motion.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am trying to stay in context. The concern I have with time allocation is that the important things that are happening under the watch of this government certainly need to be under the strictest scrutiny of openness and transparency. I'm just using the example, from recent happenings, of a secret payment being made that really discredits their openness and transparency, and it goes back to time allocation—trying to whistle things through, trying to just use their majority to steamroll things through that are going to have detrimental impacts for many years to come.

I'll continue: "The brazenness of it alone suggests the Liberals have lost any hint of rectitude when it comes to the handling of public money—though they did do their best to hide the transaction, suggesting that, at some level, they still sense it's offensive, wrong and abusive of the public trust." Yet they still did it.

Mr. Speaker, Minister Sandals and Premier Wynne have resolutely issued statements declaring there was no extra money for teachers and they had to live with it. Meanwhile, they were secretly agreeing to take money from a fund for needy students and use it for a pay raise, while writing another cheque so the union wouldn't have to pay its own bargaining costs.

It goes on to say, "Sandals' explanation is hardly credible." We need to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I ask the member again to bring his comments back to the matter that we're debating, which is the time allocation motion.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Speaker. Leadership is all about honesty, integrity and accountability. It's about personal principles. We're asking this government to think about their leadership style, to not time-allocate important bills in this House, to allow all of us to have an equal say to represent the people we've been given the privilege to represent.

Do the Liberals want to be defined by responsibility, integrity and accountability, or by recklessness, incompetence, scandal and what the general public would suggest are secret deals perceived to be a form of corruption?

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to be able to stand in this Legislature and share my thoughts again, actually, on Bill 113, the Police Record Checks Reform

Act of 2015. As you heard from the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, we have had the opportunity, as a caucus, to put forward three speakers to this bill, and I was one of them. So here I am again, and I'm going to make sure that some of my thoughts are able to get on record and remind the government why it's so important to have these conversations about such important issues.

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We live in a society that's built on the presumption of innocence, so that's why this bill is important: because when we see that there are examples that challenge the presumption of innocence, and we find those examples, we have to challenge that framework and re-establish or reaffirm our commitment to justice, privacy and freedom to equitably participate in our communities.

This bill, as you may remember, was born out of public concern for the unfair disclosure of non-conviction records. We know that many people who are seeking to volunteer or are looking for employment, oftentimes in the non-profit sector—those individuals are routinely required to have police record checks done. Those checks are done through the Canadian Police Information Centre, or CPIC, database. Unfortunately, people who have sought housing or employment or these volunteer opportunities or opportunities of self-improvement have been denied them because of negative and unfair surprises on a police record check.

When a record check is done, as it stands now, the release of information disclosed through the record checks isn't limited to records of conviction. So, in fact, it may, and routinely does, include non-conviction records, which is why we're discussing this bill: to ensure that that is something that is addressed.

Again, just for clarification, "non-conviction" includes all contact with police where a record is taken, including criminal matters before the courts that result in acquittal; where a conviction is to be expunged; if someone is a witness to an event; or even when someone may be in mental health distress resulting in police contact. But the records taken for those incidents do not result in a conviction or even charges. Those are examples of non-conviction records, and those are examples of records that this bill is addressing and that shouldn't be able to come up in a volunteer search or a volunteer record check.

When these non-conviction records are disclosed during a routine background check, it can have very damaging consequences. We know that that's not right, and that that's not fair. Many of us remember that the Toronto Star ran a whole series of stories and anecdotes about individuals trying to participate in their community. The series was called "Presumed Guilty," focusing on individuals whose lives had been upset and unfairly affected by non-conviction records coming out on background checks.

According to the Star, back in 2014, they reported that:

"Hundreds of thousands of people are listed in Canada's national criminal records despite never having been convicted of a crime.

"More than 420,000 people were listed in the RCMP's Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) database as having no conviction in 2005....

"Many of them are listed in the database for mental health issues."

When we have had the opportunity—limited opportunity—to debate this bill, we've heard from members around the room who have remembered issues from their past or perhaps police interactions that didn't result in charges or any convictions, but now they wonder, when they're travelling or trying to volunteer, if some of these missteps or interactions can come back to haunt them.

That's an interesting point. People have no idea what their police record might include. Records are very common, and they are disclosed without discretion. There are very real concerns about the information that is kept in these records serving as a deterrent to seeking police help or involvement. Imagine that if community members knew that by interacting—just interacting—with police, there could be a resulting record that could mean that they can't get a job, a volunteer position, or pursue a goal. I'm sure that those individuals would stop and think twice about interacting with police, and that isn't the kind of safe society that we want.

Imagine now a situation of crisis or distress, when an individual is in distress or is in danger. We would hope that they're going to reach out to the appropriate authorities or emergency services, if needed. We don't want the fear of repercussion influencing or impacting someone's decision to dial 911 or not—you know, a family member who is seeking help for someone who is struggling or is perhaps in mental distress. We don't want a family member to stop and think twice about involving the authorities because, uh-oh, well, maybe when they want to apply for a job down the road this will come back to haunt them. So, again, we're back to the crux of this issue and why it's so important to spend the time discussing this issue.

People who find themselves in medical distress, as I mentioned, or facing mental health challenges should not be captured under police record checks. Sometimes people need help or find themselves connecting with police when they're in distress, or while suffering a mental health or emotional crisis. Any record of this interaction should not be accessible by prospective employers, or anyone else, for that matter. In fact, non-conviction records, I would say, are none of anyone's business. There shouldn't be any disclosure of non-conviction records, with the only possible exception, as we've talked about earlier in debate, involving the most extreme cases connected to child welfare access or the vulnerable persons sector.

When we're talking about mental health—and we do oftentimes in this room and come at it from different angles—we know that we need a strategy, we know that we need to focus on this, we know that we need to support Ontarians. That's what we say: We need to support Ontarians, not vilify and persecute. We do not accept a system of persecution without prosecution. We also

want a system where Ontarians connect with the police as needed, and that they don't regret it for the rest of their lives or the rest of their professional careers. Until there's legislation that takes effect, that receives royal assent, then there is no framework, and records releases can vary widely from police jurisdiction to police jurisdiction.

Interestingly, this issue doesn't only affect those seeking employment or volunteer opportunities, and of course we've heard stories of individuals trying to travel internationally and having the American border services stop them and ask them about, maybe, missteps in their youth that are showing up as a non-conviction record in a police check, and then they can't travel with their family; they can't travel for business.

We're seeing that this has had an effect on a number of people, but also it affects students hoping to graduate from post-secondary education. They can find themselves unable to graduate because they are barred from completing a placement because of a non-conviction record. Schools might have privacy policies that prevent the school from investigating or delving into specifics, as we can understand, but if there's no room to manoeuvre then it's the end of story, the end of the line for that student, and those records preclude students from participating in some placement which means, then, that they can't complete the program. That isn't something that they would know until they've applied for this placement and—surprise—here is something on their record that is preventing them from advancing, from reaching those goals.

Our current system really does persecute individuals who were not charged, tried or convicted of anything. That isn't fair. It isn't right. That is why we're here—well, that's why we would like to be here, more fully discussing this bill and making sure that fair way forward is the right way, is the best way.

Oftentimes, especially when we're thinking about our communities and families—and I come out of education—we talk to our kids about online behaviour or the things that they do now, in their everyday lives, and being careful about how they post them, how they share them, that sort of thing, because that online behaviour and that online presence—I mean, we live in such an open world right now. We talk about openness and transparency, but for so many of our youth, it really is a wide community that is open and almost too transparent when it comes to their decisions and potential mistakes. We talk to them about their actions having long-term consequences, but it really does, in a new way.

But this bill is not dealing with things online or things that we decide to post about ourselves; it is about personal things that have happened. It might be interactions with police. It might be that you were a witness to a crime, or an event, and that you now have this record. For this to come back and haunt you isn't a choice you've made; it's just a surprise that is going to limit your opportunity.

Both the John Howard Society of Ontario and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association have written reports

on non-conviction records. According the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, one in three Canadians are thought to have some form of non-conviction record, just hanging out in police computers. So when we talk about those computers, it begs the question: How much data really is being held and why? How relevant is what happened to us as kids when we're pursuing adults goals?

1500

When we think of the nature of data and recordkeeping, these aren't pieces of paper that can end up in the bottom of a box or back on a shelf for time to forget. This is digital data that can be called forward in an instant. It doesn't really take up any physical space, as I said, opposed to the old days. Now, what is the incentive to get rid of it or to purge it? Those digital files aren't going to go away. Everything can come back to haunt us. This isn't about telling society to behave better; although, they should go ahead anyway, and we should all behave better, perhaps. But, really, it comes down to that we have a duty here to protect individuals and their right to participate in their community, their privacy and their right to pursue professional goals and dreams and whatnot.

As I said, this isn't just about things that we did that we hope we can hide; this is about things that we didn't even know about. This is about people just generally participating in their communities.

The police often have a reason to make a record, but as I asked, why do we need to keep those records forever if it doesn't lead to or connect to a charge or a conviction? Also, why should health records be filed as police records? I think that there is a fundamental question there that needs to be answered.

I believe in safe communities where people are able to participate freely, and I hope that all of us here do. Sometimes they make mistakes. Sometimes they are in the wrong place at the wrong time. Sometimes they're the wrong age or description. Sometimes they're just living life like anyone else. We want communities to communicate with police. We want communities to interact. We would hope that when they do, any record of it isn't going to ruin their careers or their hopes. We want people in need and in crisis to turn toward help and never to turn away from it.

As I've had the opportunity now twice to speak to this bill and to really reiterate that we have to challenge the framework and re-establish and reaffirm our commitment to justice, privacy and freedom so that everyone is able to participate fully and fairly in our communities and, of course, in their own futures, I'm going to shift gears. I have been inspired by some of the members on this side of the House who have spoken to this bill today and focused on the time allocation motion in front of us.

As my colleague from Timmins–James Bay had said, this is another opportunity to limit debate, as put forward here by the government. Instead of letting it pass through normal process, we're here cutting it off at the knees.

As the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane had pointed out, three of our caucus members have spoken to

it. As we heard from the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, four of the Progressive Conservative members have spoken to it. I don't have the numbers of how many members of the government have spoken to this bill, but I'm going to guess probably 40, or something like that. What happens in debate, Mr. Speaker, is when our members have 20 minutes to speak on a topic—as does the government—we put forward one speaker to really examine the issue, to delve into it, to bring various voices from our communities. We find, time and time again, on the government side, that in that same 20-minute opportunity, they might put up four or five speakers—not devaluing any of the points that they might make, but to count those, the numbers add up a little more quickly when you divvy up a 20-minute chunk into five or so. We didn't count those who speak during questions and comments in the little two-minute hits.

I think, in fairness, when we're talking about numbers, we really do need to not just focus on the minutes or the members, but the depth and breadth of the debate. I think that, as with this and as with many other bills, there is really important stuff we need to talk about and really, really meaningful issues that members of our communities and across the province would like to weigh in on. As my colleague from Timmins–James Bay said, it should be about the people of Ontario and the people's access to committees.

We've been debating important bills in here. I'm still a new member. I've been part of many interesting and many important debates. Almost all of them have been time-allocated, really, I think, in fairness. Recently, we've had Bill 115, which is focusing on electoral boundaries. It's interesting, because around the House we've all been talking at length about the importance of community engagement, and as we're looking at elections and we're looking at how to make it a better, stronger, fairer process, we've all talked about involving the community, engaging the members of the community. So here we stand with another time allocation motion that gives us exactly four hours: "That the Standing Committee on Justice Policy be authorized to meet on Thursday, November 5, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. in Toronto for the purpose of public hearings on the bill." I would note that it doesn't even say "or more, if needed." It's just the four hours and that's it. That's all you get.

I understand that the government wants to move things through and get on to the next and implement what they feel are good, solid ideas, and in this one we're not arguing that it's an important issue. But why wouldn't you say, "We're going to wait to hear back from the community and see how much time is needed"? No, no: four hours. That's it; that's all.

We also see here that the deadline for requests to appear be 12 noon on Tuesday, November 3. Okay. Well, that's in only a couple of days. So how are they going to invite Ontario? How are we going to let the people across the province know that they have four hours in Toronto to come and share their thoughts?

We've also talked about the committee time, that each witness will receive up to five minutes for their

presentation, followed by nine minutes for questions from committee members. I'll say that the time that I've spent in committee, whether on the ORPP and pensions or a budget hearing, that five minutes followed by nine minutes—remember, that's a breakdown with three minutes of questions from each of the parties. I have found this process to be fascinating, because when it comes to the government side, oftentimes the three minutes of questions can be three minutes of just diatribe to talk over them, to fill up the three minutes so that the person who is there presenting doesn't have the opportunity to continue talking. So it isn't nine minutes of back and forth. It can be; there's an opportunity there. But generally speaking, if it's someone who is coming to present and they have a contrary opinion to the government, I've watched it happen that they don't have even a second of the three minutes, because they don't want to hear it. So even though they have invited them to maybe travel from up north—if they can get there from up north, not taking a train that doesn't exist—for this four-hour block of time—

Mr. John Vanthof: It used to exist.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: So did travelling bills, or so I've heard. What a magical time I've missed. But the three minutes can just be three minutes of government rhetoric over top, and that isn't what we want. We want fair and open participation by members of the community at large. So I would encourage the government to rethink their time allocation strategy as their only strategy and actually involve the rest of the province.

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

Mr. Naqvi has moved government notice of motion number 42 relating to allocation of time on Bill 113. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

I wish to inform the House that I have received a request for a deferral of this vote until tomorrow at the time of deferred votes, from the chief whip of the official opposition. This vote will be deferred until tomorrow at the time of deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

1510

MENTAL HEALTH STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS RELATIVES À LA SANTÉ MENTALE

Mr. Hoskins moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à modifier la Loi sur la santé mentale et la Loi de 1996 sur le consentement aux soins de santé.

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Ottawa South.

Our proposed Mental Health Statute Law Amendment Act, which I introduced in this Legislature on September 23, is our government's response to an Ontario Court of Appeal decision. That decision found that a provision in the Mental Health Act that allows a person to be involuntarily detained for more than six months was in breach of section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, specifically, the right to life, liberty and security of the person.

As a result, the court struck down that provision, but suspended the declaration of invalidity for one year in order to allow our government to make amendments to the Mental Health Act in order to comply with the court's decision.

If passed, these amendments would make the Mental Health Act align with the charter, and at the same time would enhance the rights of involuntary patients who have been committed to psychiatric facilities for longer than six months.

In order to provide some background: Involuntary patients are detained in psychiatric facilities because they have a mental illness and are at risk of harming themselves or others, or otherwise meet the criteria for involuntary committal under the Mental Health Act. Long-term involuntary patients are those who have been detained in those psychiatric facilities for more than six months. The majority of people who are detained in psychiatric facilities longer than six months generally have mood disorders, psychotic disorders or psycho-geriatric disorders. There are approximately 330 long-term involuntary patients in psychiatric facilities across this province.

According to the Mental Health Act, a physician may examine a person and determine whether or not they meet the criteria set out in the Mental Health Act for an application for psychiatric assessment, and that assessment is effective for seven days. This application by a physician is known as a form 1. The form 1 gives any person the authority to take the person who is subject to the form to a psychiatric facility.

At the facility, the attending physician, who can't be the same physician who issued the form 1, must then examine the person within 72 hours, and then either release them into the community or admit them to the psychiatric facility as either a voluntary or perhaps involuntary patient. The attending physician at the psychiatric facility is required to issue a further certificate of involuntary admission if the physician examines the person and determines that the person meets the criteria for involuntary admission, which, as I referenced, include whether they are at risk of serious bodily harm to themselves or others, or serious physical impairment as a result of a mental illness.

Under the Mental Health Act, a person can be detained involuntarily for an initial two-week period, for an

additional month on first renewal of the involuntary admission, for an additional two months on a second renewal of involuntary admission and for three additional months on a third certificate of renewal.

However, under our proposed amendments to the Mental Health Act, where a person's third certificate of renewal expires, they would be placed on a certificate of continuation, which would be valid for an additional three months. A patient may be put on subsequent certificates of continuation, each lasting for up to three months. This timing is similar to that currently provided for under the Mental Health Act in relation to fourth and subsequent certificates of renewal.

Under the current Mental Health Act, a patient is entitled to a review of his or her involuntary status after the certificate of admission—the first one—and after each certificate of renewal is issued. After an involuntary patient has been in hospital for more than six and a half months, and every year thereafter, there's a mandatory review of the patient's involuntary status before the Consent and Capacity Board.

The Consent and Capacity Board is a quasi-judicial provincial tribunal that considers applications for the review of matters, including findings of involuntary status under the Mental Health Act, and other matters, including reviews of findings of incapacity to consent to treatment by health practitioners. But the Consent and Capacity Board's jurisdiction is currently limited to a consideration of whether the prerequisites for admission or continuation as an involuntary patient are satisfied at the time of the hearing. If the prerequisites are met, the Consent and Capacity Board may confirm the patient's status as an involuntary patient, but if they are not met, the Consent and Capacity Board must rescind the certificate of involuntary admission or renewal.

The amendments we're proposing would provide additional rights to long-term involuntary patients in the form of enhanced powers for the Consent and Capacity Board when considering the continued detention of patients who have been involuntary patients for more than approximately six months. The amendments would also allow physicians and nurse practitioners to sit on the Consent and Capacity Board panels for less complex hearings. This would free up existing psychiatrist capacity for the more complex hearings anticipated by the amendments.

As the Court of Appeal required us to do, the amendments would maximize the liberty of long-term involuntary patients while still ensuring that appropriate conditions exist for a patient committed for a long stay in a psychiatric facility, if needed.

Our government is working with our valued system partners to improve mental health and addictions services in Ontario. This past November, we announced the next phase of our 10-year comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy. We know that mental health challenges during childhood and adolescence can lead to serious problems at school, family conflicts, drug abuse, violence and sometimes even suicide. That's why we

made a conscious decision to address child and youth mental health first, because a healthy start in life will lead to better mental health in adulthood and reduce the likelihood of substance abuse.

For the first three years of our strategy, that strategy was focused on mental health supports for children and youth. Almost 800 additional mental health workers are now providing services for children and youth in our communities, in our schools and in our courts. In addition, our Tele-Mental Health Service is providing nearly 3,000 psychiatric consults this year alone to benefit children and youth in rural, remote and underserved communities.

Last November, our government announced the next phase of our 10-year comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy, which will broaden and deepen our efforts and build on that first phase of our strategy, because the fact is, we need to do better for individuals in need of mental health and addictions services and supports, not only acute care but, importantly, longer-term care and supports that revolve around the patient.

1520

So our strategy will identify gaps, it will improve transitions between youth and adult services, and invest in improved services and care for Ontarians of all ages who experience mental health or addictions issues.

That's why we're making targeted investments like the \$138 million over the next three years to shift more mental health services into the community. We're making investments to ensure that those services are more timely, that they're more effective, that they're responsive and that they provide ongoing care and support that treats patients as people with dignity, breaking down the barriers that those struggling with mental illness and addictions too often face.

This investment will support better access to mental health and addictions services, including increased access to services such as supportive housing, short-term crisis support beds, peer support groups and treatment programs. It will provide support for shorter wait times for care through the new registry of in-patient mental health beds. It will provide doctors, first responders and emergency departments with up-to-date information about available in-patient beds across the province.

This investment will help to improve transitions between care teams so people don't have to tell their story multiple times.

Finally, it will provide for more, and early, intervention initiatives to reduce repeat visits to emergency departments.

We're already made significant progress on mental health services through working together, but we realize that there is a tremendous amount of work yet to be done. Moving forward, we have an opportunity to transform how mental health and addictions services are delivered, where people receive those services and how we pay for mental health and addictions services.

We've also established a Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council to advise me on the

strategies, priorities and investments to promote collaboration across sectors and report annually on the strategy's progress. I look forward to continuing to work with them and with all of you to implement the next phase of this strategy.

Addressing mental health and addictions is a shared responsibility. The provincial government can't do it alone. I know all of you here realize that. It takes collaboration and it takes co-operation. All parts of the system—our providers, administrators, government, community leaders and organizations—must come together to ensure the best outcomes for people with mental health problems or addictions.

Finally, we have a short time frame to address the Court of Appeal decision. These amendments are required by December 22 of this year in order to support the continued detention of patients under the Mental Health Act who have been involuntary patients in psychiatric hospitals for more than six months. Releasing such long-term psychiatric patients into the community would, of course, potentially risk the safety and well-being of the patients as well as, potentially, of the community at large.

So in the interests of patients and the community at large, I urge all members to support our proposed amendments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The minister indicated that he's sharing his time with the member for Ottawa South. I recognize the member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to follow the minister today, to the lead-off on second reading debate on our proposed amendments to the Mental Health Act, which, if passed, would help ensure that patients who are detained in a psychiatric facility longer than six months have their liberty interest protected, while at the same time ensuring that health care providers can continue to provide excellent care to these patients. The Honourable Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, introduced these proposed amendments on September 23 of this year.

We are taking action to comply with the decision of the Ontario Court of Appeal, which declared that part of the Mental Health Act is in breach of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Court of Appeal gave us until December 23 of this year to make amendments to the Mental Health Act that comply with the court's decision.

Specifically, the court struck down the provision of the act that allows a person to be detained in a psychiatric facility for longer than six months. This was because the Mental Health Act did not provide for a regular review of the conditions of the patient's continued detention to ensure that it would be the least restrictive within the circumstances that required that detention.

Bill 122 is intended to address the court's concerns. The amendments would enhance the ability of the Consent and Capacity Board to make certain orders in relation to patients who have been in a psychiatric facility as an involuntary patient for longer than six months. A

factor that the board would have to take into account would be that any limitation on a patient's liberty be the least restrictive, commensurate with the circumstances requiring the patient's involuntary detention. The board would make a decision based on the evidence before it.

The amendments would make it possible to detain a patient on a new form, a certificate of continuation, after the expiry of the patient's third certificate of renewal—that is, after six months and two weeks. A certificate of continuation will allow a patient who has been detained in a psychiatric hospital longer than six months to be detained for an additional three-month period, similar to the current certificates under the Mental Health Act. Subsequent certificates of continuation would allow a patient to be detained for further three-month periods if the patient continues to meet the test for being involuntarily detained under the act.

To ensure that long-term involuntary patients are not detained in a manner greater than is necessary to meet the important objectives of the Mental Health Act—that is, ensuring community safety and helping patients get what they need, get the treatment that they need—the Consent and Capacity Board would also be given the power to make a limited range of additional orders, in specific circumstances, when it reviews a long-term involuntary patient's certificate of continuation. These would be:

- transferring a patient to another psychiatric facility if the patient does not object;
- placing a patient on a leave of absence on the advice of a physician;
- directing the officer in charge to provide different security levels or different privileges within or outside the psychiatric facility;
- directing the officer in charge to provide supervised or unsupervised access to the community; and
- directing the officer in charge to provide vocational, interpretation or rehabilitative services.

Giving the Consent and Capacity Board the power to make one or more of this specified list of orders will give it the tailored tools to support the needs of long-term involuntary patients, while continuing to provide accessible and timely reviews for those patients.

Similar to the current regime in the Mental Health Act, the long-term involuntary patient would be entitled to a request a review of his or her involuntary status after each certificate of continuation is issued, and there would be a mandatory review of the patient's involuntary status when the first certificate of continuation is issued at six months and two weeks, and every year thereafter. The long-term involuntary patient would also be able to apply for an additional order any time they seek a review of the renewal of their certification where they have not applied in the past 12 months or where the Consent and Capacity Board is satisfied that there has been a material change in circumstances.

The Consent and Capacity Board would be able to make one or more of these new orders on its own motion. The Consent and Capacity Board would also be able to hear an application to transfer the long-term involuntary

patient, made by the officer in charge or the Minister or Deputy Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, at any time.

The amendments would also allow physicians and nurse practitioners to sit on the Consent and Capacity Board panels for less complex hearings. This would free up existing psychiatrist capacity for the more complex hearings anticipated by the amendments. Right now, there are a little over 300 individuals who are involuntarily detained in hospital for longer than six months, and they would be helped by the amendments we are introducing today.

Let me assure the members that the ministry continues to work closely with its health system partners to accommodate the new hearings starting December 23, 2015, as required by the court's decision.

Speaker, so many Ontarians have been touched by mental health and addictions in some way, and we're committed to supporting the most appropriate care for people experiencing mental health and addictions challenges. I urge all members to support our proposed amendments.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It is a pleasure to speak to this bill. These amendments are much needed. The care of our mentally ill people in this province is a very high priority and has been neglected for a long time. I hear stories from an ex-police chief in my community of Ottawa that up to 60% of the time policemen spend on the streets is occupied with looking after people who have mental health problems. The fact is that people with mental health problems end up on the street and get into all kinds of trouble with crime, drugs, alcohol etc., and that degenerates into just a vicious circle to the bottom of the world.

It is good to see these changes made. We need to go even further, I know and am sure, but it is impressive and positive that we're doing this much. We need to put more health care people on the street to look after the people on our streets who have these mental health troubles, and the only persons out there to look after them are policemen. It's an expensive way, and it's not their job. We need to have more trained, professional health care people on the street to help our people, especially young people, who end up in that vicious cycle of prostitution, alcohol and drugs as a result, in many cases, of mental health problems.

We support this bill, Mr. Speaker. We look forward to doing even more in this country. Mentally ill people are a needy group, and we have others that we do not do enough for. As a caring society, I would say we have a moral obligation to help these people. I look forward to doing more positive things like we're speaking of today, and I applaud the government for doing what is right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was interesting to listen to the Minister of Health and the parliamentary assistant to the

Minister of Health regarding Bill 122, An Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996. Speaker, I cannot tell you how many people want to amend the Mental Health Act. Things have changed dramatically in Ontario since this thing was written 20-some years ago. Finally we have a bill that will open the Mental Health Act. There is a pent-up demand from people wanting the Mental Health Act to be opened, and finally it is open.

But do you know what, Speaker? This is unbelievable: Since December of last year, we knew that we had to do something. We knew that we had to bring changes to this act, because the court ordered us to do so. But today is October 26, and I have not even done my lead. We have barely started to talk about a piece of legislation that—anybody who knows anything about health care knows there are a thousand people who want amendments to the Mental Health Act. We are opening up this act at the eleventh hour, really, because between now and the time the House rises, we're talking about a maximum of five weeks. This thing is going to have to go through, I'm hoping, second reading, committee, third reading and royal assent, and all this needs to be done before December 22, because on December 23, the door swings open and 330 severely mentally ill people get out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm delighted to be able to speak, as well, to Bill 122, the mental health act. The minister talked at length about the evolving care of treatments in our institutional, down to community health care, levels, and how important that is. Nowhere is it more important than in mental health facilities, where people who are on the street, who are suffering from mental health and addictions, can find neighbourhood and community supports to assist them on the road to recovery. I guess what the act is trying to do, if it's passed, we heard from the parliamentary assistant, is amend the act so it is completely in accord with the constitutional aspects.

In my own community, where we have the East End Community Health Centre, for instance—last week I was there to help them celebrate their 25th anniversary providing street care—they provide an incredibly holistic approach in all aspects of health, whether for seniors and youth, addictions and eating disorders, and mental health issues, where people find a safe haven. They come into the facility, they may just come in for a cup of coffee, but they're then able to transition, to move on and to receive the kind of specialized care they need, not just from psychiatrists, but even from dietitians—employment supports—and from nurse practitioners who can use their specialty expertise. The East End Community Health Centre was one of the first centres in Ontario that was using nurse practitioners to their fullest capacity and providing tremendous support to people.

We also know that for people suffering from mental health issues, finding housing is a critical component to their ongoing recovery and their success. An organization like the East End Community Health Centre can help them find stable housing in the community.

These kinds of issues are not completely centred around downtown, urban environments. We know people in rural communities and certain parts have issues as well. In my community, I can tell you that the kinds of changes being proposed here are extremely important to help mental health advocates do their work to help the community be healthier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to speak for a couple of minutes on Bill 122. I'll be interested in hearing from my colleagues, the members from Elgin–Middlesex–London and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, shortly on their views on the bill, as our critics.

The way we deal with people suffering from mental illness is probably one of the saddest chapters of our time and one of the things that I think we have failed most miserably on. I'm looking forward to the effect that this legislation will have because it has been so long either ignored or wrongfully dealt with. Our streets are full of people who end up in jail simply because their mental illness gets them there. They may take actions that are unacceptable in a lawful society, but it is the fact that they are suffering from severe mental illness that is the biggest factor in that action.

We have such a long way to go. We're never going to solve every problem, but anything that we can be doing to actually deal with people who are suffering from mental illness in a compassionate and caring way that addresses the illness and not always simply the consequences of it—and that's only one part of it. That's only one part of it, but one that pains me every day when I see people who are clearly struggling, and we have failed as a society to somehow protect them, even from themselves. There's so much work to be done, and this could be at least a positive step.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments.

I return to the member for Ottawa South for his reply.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to thank the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, the member from Nickel Belt, the member from Beaches–East York and the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for their comments.

In response to the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, I do want to say that I do understand what you're saying. Having had some personal experience with people close to me suffering from mental illness and addiction, when you see somebody on the street it's a really tough thing. We have to continue to work to do what we can, to get better at that, to reach those people and to make sure they don't get on the street. Once again, I very much appreciate his support for the bill.

In response to the member from Nickel Belt, I appreciate her desire to open up the bill. You are correct; we're on a fairly tight timeline here. It's a very specific piece of legislation that addresses a court decision. In fairness, I think that, in some of the time that it takes to address that court decision, you've got to get it right.

Because of the nature of the risks that are involved, for the patients and their liberty and their rights and, as well, the issue around public safety, you have to make sure that you get it right and satisfy that court decision.

1540

I don't think the concern she expressed in terms of the deadline is an indication of not being supportive of the bill. It's more of an indication of your desire to have something more expansive, which I don't think would have been prudent or right to do at the time. I do appreciate that we have a tight timeline.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank everyone for their comments. I look forward to the debate.

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

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I will be sharing my time with the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, who has been a remarkable MPP while he has been at Queen's Park for the last four-plus years. I'm very grateful to be working with him and—

Mr. Arthur Potts: Outstanding in his field.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Outstanding in his field. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today and speak on Bill 122, the Mental Health Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015. It's important that we have this opportunity to discuss mental health because it's something that does affect Canadians throughout our country. In fact, one in five Canadians will personally experience a type of mental illness in their own lifetime.

Mental illness, you could argue, is probably the leading cause of disability throughout our country, so it's important we get the opportunity to discuss mental illness quite frequently while we're here in the Legislature.

I am in agreement with my fellow critic from the NDP, the member from Nickel Belt, in saying that there are so many things we could do to improve mental health in this province. Opening up the Mental Health Act does not happen too often, and we did have the opportunity—and I've counted it; we have five weeks left to finish second reading, go through committee, have third reading and royal assent. It's not on the schedule to speak to this bill for the rest of this week, so this week's off. We have the week off when we're in our constituencies for Remembrance Day, and we rise for Christmas on December 10. So all of this has to be put in place in this short time period. I understand the government would have had time to create this bill; I get that. However, first reading of this bill was September 23. We've gone a month without debating this bill, which could have added an extra month to this time frame. I think that's the point the member from Nickel Belt was trying to point to. There are so many issues with mental health. You've taken a long time to fix this bill due to the court challenge. However, you're not maximizing the time we have left to have a true and honest, open, lengthy debate on some of the changes that are going forward.

For the record, our party does support this legislation. We hope we can get it passed by December 10. We have

amendments that we will be putting forward during committee. I hope, due to the seriousness of this issue, the government just doesn't use their majority and ignore the opposition MPPs' suggestions at committee—and in fact give it true thought and discussion and possibly supporting amendments as we go forward.

Before I get into the crux of my discussion, I want to make a few introductory remarks with regard to mental health. We must all admit that treatment has vastly improved over the years. Speaking as a pharmacist, treatment alone with medication I've seen in the community practice has greatly improved. We've gone from anti-psychiatric medicine, which would affect your white blood cell counts and could only be dispensed in certain small time periods and is still used throughout Ontario—it's a great medication. However, because of the blood tests needed to order it to ensure your white blood cells aren't affected, we've gone to newer medications which are very effective and can be taken once a day. They're so effective that they can even be taken under the tongue and dissolved. You don't have to swallow. You don't have to worry about patients in the community hiding their pills and spitting them out when you leave. These dissolve in your mouth and ensure compliance. So treatment has come a long, long way. We're not there yet, but I do commend how, as a Legislature, we've been supportive of helping reintegrate people with mental illness back into the community instead of how they did it decades ago: Put them in a building and keep them away from the community. It's great that we are now focusing on recovery and healing and giving mental health patients hope. I applaud the government for continuing to push that way and I applaud the opposition parties for supporting that issue.

What we need to deal with is the stigma of mental illness in our communities. Quite a bit of the stigma of mental illness is treating mental illness like a physical illness. It's nothing different from, say, if you have a heart problem, trouble breathing or a kidney problem. We need to treat the symptoms and, if possible, get you on a road to recovery.

My area, Elgin-Middlesex-London, has done tremendous events trying to deal with the stigma of mental health, and I'll continue to be supportive of that group in our community as we push forward. Of note, we did have Clara Hughes in our riding when she was biking across Canada with her big "fighting the stigma of mental illness." I thought it was great for her to do that. It was sponsored by Bell. Bell has Let's Talk every year, which I hope people are supportive of. It gets out the idea that mental illness does not have to be stigmatized. My own riding, as I mentioned earlier, has that program, but we seem to have always been involved with mental illness.

In 1939, a farm was donated to the government by a former Liberal Premier, Mitch Hepburn. Mitch lived just outside and south of St. Thomas, in central Elgin, between St. Thomas and Union, and his family still operates the farm across the road. They grow tremendously great apples. It's funny, just as an aside: The Con-

servative member who beat Mitch Hepburn was also an apple farmer. It was kind of interesting.

Mitch was a Premier of Ontario during the 1930s, and his family donated the land. In 1939, the St. Thomas Psychiatric Hospital was built. It was built for 2,400 patients and it was built on 464 acres of land. Part of the recovery for patients, at that time, was to do farming. They have some historic buildings where the first hands-on growing of food and milking of cows and such by the patients at the facility happened. It was state of the art at the time.

In the 1940s that area was actually taken over by the military and used as a Royal Canadian Air Force training facility. They trained over 60,000 people through World War II at that facility. Then, back in 1947, it was returned to the Ontario hospital system and 1,100 patients were situated at the St. Thomas psychiatric facility.

In 2001, St. Joseph's Health Care out of London assumed governance. At that time, the facility was Regional Mental Health Care St. Thomas. That's when we started moving more into community programs with the ACT teams, the team of nurses who help take care of and transition people out of hospital into community settings. The initial group was called the PACT team, but really they're ACT teams. I worked quite often with these groups. They're highly trained nurses who are out there ensuring that the medications are given to the patients at the right time. They ensure they're being taken care of in the community, and watch for any symptoms that they need to see their doctor for and such. I commend those people in the ACT teams who work hard every day in our communities. They've come a long way.

Just recently, in 2013, they closed down our regional mental health care centre, and now the government has built the Southwest Centre for Forensic Mental Health Care for 80 to 90 patients. That's an area that has taken in the patients who have had trouble with the law and who aren't guilty due to their mental illness. This hospital facility not only houses them; it helps treat them on a road to recovery.

The other part that happened is that the government created 17 beds in our St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital for our mental health patients in the community. If they need a bed to stay in short-term treatment, they have the bed there, and out of those 17 beds are the treatment teams the ACT teams will work out of in order to have community programs. It's part of pushing and creating teams out in the community that take care of our mental health patients.

1550

I just wanted to give you that quick history of where I come from in Ontario and how mental health has always been integrated into our society from before and for years to come. Not only are there quite a few mental health patients within my area; it has also created quite a few employment opportunities, with health care professionals, social workers, PSWs etc. taking care of those with mental health issues. So it does affect our local economy, but it also serves to ensure that people are adequately taken care of.

I mentioned earlier the stigma about mental health and how it affects the lives of Ontarians. As I said, it needs to be treated as just as important as physical health. Unfortunately, just last week, Health Quality Ontario's annual report highlighted that hospital readmission rates for patients with mental illness or addiction have not improved in five years. So while the government is working to improve conditions, we can't just say we have the best system. We need to do more. We need to work harder.

The health critic from the NDP mentioned that we could have done a lot more with the Mental Health Act being opened. Health Quality Ontario's annual report highlighted the fact that that is a reason why we needed to have more in-depth discussion with regard to the Mental Health Act and how we can improve mental health.

Some 4,000 Canadians die every year due to suicide, and the majority of those are due to mental illness.

Mental illness is also severely costly on business, costing them \$6 billion in lost productivity throughout Canada due to absenteeism. Those who believe they are fighting mental illness are more likely to see their family physician than any other health care provider, and community mental health services are less expensive—sometimes up to five times less expensive—than hospital-based care. So these ACT teams—

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Presenteeism, too.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Pardon me?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Presenteeism.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Presenteeism. Thanks for being present today, too.

Community mental health services are less expensive, so—

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: It means being physically present but not really there.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Well, I'm glad you are here.

They are five times less expensive than hospital-based care. I'm glad the member opposite is listening, because we're having a conversation. I know the Speaker probably doesn't like that. But that hits home how mental health services are less expensive in the community than in the hospital.

It can be even cheaper. The coordination of some services in the community through the CCAC, where we account for 40% of the money not reaching front-line care, but going into the bureaucracy—I think that's another thing this government can work on: cheaper, more supportive care, with the roundabout of health care professionals supporting the people with mental health conditions. The more money getting to the front-line services, the better services we'll have.

Mental health problems do not necessarily remain between the patient and a health care provider within the hospital or doctor's office setting, and can very quickly become unsafe if part of this pattern is broken. In 2012, one in five contacts with first responders involved someone with a mental illness, and in 2013, according to the London police, more than \$14 million, or 15% of the

budget, was used to deal with calls for people with mental illness.

Not only is it harmful to people with mental health conditions when they aren't able to be treated; the cost on our other emergency services is taxed when people with mental health conditions aren't helped. If the province properly funded and coordinated mental health, then our first responders would not be wasting their dollars and resources waiting at hospitals, but would be out there doing the jobs they should be doing. This could cause a severe financial burden to our cities, and ultimately creates an unsafe environment where professionals like our police officers, ambulance, paramedics and firefighters spend more time transferring or dealing with mentally ill patients than watching over our communities.

This bill, the Mental Health Statute Law Amendment Act, comes into compliance with an Ontario Court of Appeal decision. These amendments are in response to the Ontario Court of Appeal decision in 2014. This found that the Mental Health Act violates section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as it provides insufficient procedural protections for involuntary patients who are detained in psychiatric facilities for more than six months. The entire law is being amended because of this one case.

It's worthy to note that the court gave the government one year to make these changes we mentioned earlier. If these changes aren't put in place before we recess for our winter break, 339 patients will be released into the communities. It's tough to deal with, when this bill was first read on September 23, and October 26 is the first date we're actually opening debate on this legislation. We only have five more weeks left before this bill must be put into effect to come into compliance with the Court of Appeal.

As it stands now, the Mental Health Act allows for repeated renewals of a patient's involuntary status—one month under a first certificate of renewal, two months under a second certificate of renewal, and three months for a third or subsequent certificate of renewal. Currently, form 4—the certificate of renewal—is used when the doctor determines that the patient must remain in a hospital involuntarily for an extended period of time. There is no mechanism for civilly detained patients to challenge the conditions of their treatment.

The Ontario Court of Appeal ordered that the words "or subsequent" be struck out. The bill now creates a certificate of continuation in its place. This is a new form capable of detaining a patient after the expiry of the third certificate of renewal. The certificate of continuation would allow a patient to be detained for a three-month period, similar to the third certificate of renewal. Subsequent certificates of continuation would allow a patient to be detained for further three-month periods.

When a patient is issued their first certificate of continuation, they are entitled to apply for a hearing with the Consent and Capacity Board to confirm whether the prerequisites for involuntary status are met. This happens at approximately six and a half months. The bill would

allow the board to hear an application made by the patient or on the applicant's behalf before 12 months have passed. If a patient doesn't apply to have their detention reviewed, it will be automatically reviewed by the Consent and Capacity Board every 12 months.

This bill will add a regulation-making power that will give rights advice to patients with respect to their ability to request orders regarding their detention. Prior to the amendments in this bill, patients would be detained involuntarily. They would stay either at the facility for any number of days or they would be released. No changes to the term of their detention were allowed.

The proposed amendments would give the board increased powers to make one or more of the following orders in response to a patient application at their certificate of continuation hearing: They can transfer the patient to another facility if the patient does not object; place the patient on a leave of absence for a designated period, upon the advice of the doctor; direct the officer in charge of the psychiatric facility to provide the patient with a different security level or privileges inside and outside of the facility; direct the officer in charge of the psychiatric facility to allow the patient to be provided with supervised or unsupervised access to the community; or direct the officer in charge of the psychiatric facility to provide the patient with vocational, interpretative or rehabilitative services.

The board will be required to make the above decisions while keeping in mind public safety, the ability of the psychiatric facility to manage and provide care for the patient and others, the mental condition of the patient, the reintegration of the patient into society and the other needs of the patient. Limitations to the patients' liberty must be the least restrictive with the circumstances requiring patients' involuntary detentions.

A doctor may issue a community treatment order to reintegrate the patient back into society. The board would be required to consider that notice when reviewing the patient's involuntary status. A community treatment order is issued by the doctor solely on—it is their discretion alone to issue an order if they so choose; a community treatment order may not be suggested by anyone else. Community treatment orders are often facilitated by the local Canadian Mental Health Association. Community treatment orders are helpful to get patients integrated back into their communities, and if successful, are less of an economic burden on our health care system.

As I said, we have a couple of amendments. We've heard from a number of psychiatrists already in my office regarding this bill. I would bring their issues forward and maybe we can have a good debate about it, either through the rest of second reading or perhaps even at committee level, when maybe they can get the opportunity to come and speak themselves.

They have concerns regarding the Consent and Capacity Board panel. They're concerned that allowing a substitution of a psychiatrist with any doctor or nurse practitioner for form-16 applications degrades the board's authority as an expert tribunal relating to mental

health. They feel it will have a deleterious effect on patients coming before the board and the evolution of the laws governing mental health.

1600

The Consent and Capacity Board was created to function as an expert mental health tribunal to adjudicate matters of great importance to patients, doctors and society. From the beginning, the board has always maintained the importance of three equal perspectives as a way to ensure the most appropriate outcomes. All members of the board—the lawyer, psychiatrist and community member—have specific expertise that the board requires and should value equally.

The deference afforded to the board by the courts is derived from a function of its expert panel members. By removing the psychiatrist expertise from the panel, both the hearing itself and the deliberation process will be negatively affected. The panel will be less equipped to elicit relevant psychiatric evidence as part of its duty. As a result, the board will be more likely to miss the subtleties of the specific psychiatric presentations, which are often highly relevant to the ultimate decision made by the panel members. Replacing this perspective with a less expert one risks bad decisions being made. These bad decisions may well be subject to the more successful court appeals, which will expose the board to greater scrutiny and perhaps erode its current standing as an expert tribunal.

The deliberation process will also be at risk, as non-psychiatric physicians and nurse practitioners may feel less able or comfortable stimulating relevant discussion on issues that may shape both the decision itself and future legal precedent.

The treatment of mental health patients is quite complex. You learn quite a bit in your dealings with them day to day. Basically, this psychiatrist is saying that you wouldn't replace the lawyer in a consent board with a—what do you call it?

Interjection: Paralegal.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Paralegal; thank you. You wouldn't replace one with a paralegal. He's basically saying, "Don't take the expert away from the board." I know the minister has said it frees them up for other activities; I think the problem may be that maybe they're not attracting the doctors, the psychiatrists, to the board. Maybe we should figure out the root causes of why those psychiatrists aren't available at the board level and keep the expert level at the highest possible level at all times during this process.

The other discussion that we should be able to discuss right now is from another psychiatrist who brought this forward. The proposed amendments with Bill 122 neither reduce the number of individuals requiring lengthy hospitalizations nor ensure the right to receive timely treatment needed to improve their condition and obtain their freedom. Presently, when a patient appeals a Consent and Capacity Board finding of treatment incapacity to court, with rare exception, treatment may not begin.

He goes on to talk about the higher cost of withholding treatment from patients. He even mentions the

World Health Organization: the "aim of mental health legislation is to protect, promote and improve the lives and mental well-being of citizens." Unaltered, current Ontario law and Bill 122 do the opposite. For most individuals suffering from severe mental illness, treatment with medication is required to establish a level of stability necessary to allow for engagement in important psychological treatments and social supports that further facilitate recovery.

Even this government itself in 2010—the all-party Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, led by Minister of Labour Kevin Flynn, who wasn't the Minister of Labour at that time, and Dr. Helena Jaczek, who is now the Minister of Community and Social Services; Liz Sandals, the Minister of Education, and Jeff Leal, her agricultural minister, were all on this committee. They presented their final report. The committee acknowledged the excessive and unnecessary suffering permitted under the current legislation and expressed certainty that these harms could be avoided through legislative or policy changes that ensure that involuntary admission must also entail treatment.

We are having this discussion on this bill, which I think the government had ample time since 2010, since their own members—part of this all-party select committee—brought forward these recommendations, to be prepared to, when they do open the Mental Health Act, perhaps add these items in. Maybe, hopefully, during our deliberations at committee, we'll have a good discussion and perhaps, as amendments, we could fix part of this bill and fix part of this problem.

The minister also made mention of the mental health and addiction strategy. They had their 10 goals: improve the mental health and well-being of all Ontarians; create healthy, resilient, inclusive communities; identify mental health and addictions problems early and intervene; provide timely, high-quality, integrated, person-directed health and other human services.

The government has focused on youth for the last three and a half years, and that's fine. We're supportive of improving the health, but they could do more.

In my riding alone, look at the housing availability for those with mental illness. The wait-list to get into a group home in our riding is decades long, 10 to 20 years. The only way to get into a group home is, unfortunately, for someone to pass away. Otherwise, people slip away. They end up in some sort of housing that doesn't have the supports in place, and fall through the gaps. We've seen problems in London and area with regard to some of their group homes, with the effect that they're not livable conditions.

With this health strategy in place, I think this government can work to improve the life of more than just the youth with regard to mental illness. It's not something that goes away in a short period of time. You technically need to deal with this throughout the years.

Before I close and let Mr. Walker speak, I just wanted to touch upon something I went to on Friday night, which I thought was really neat. It's called the Healing Palette.

It's the 10th anniversary. Each year, near the end of October, a group of mental health patients who meet weekly for support—they're using art to help their healing and recovery—put on an art display. I've got to commend Anne, who organizes the event. The art on display is quite tremendous—the talent they have. During the evening, they also recite the poetry or the prose they have written, and it's usually quite engaging when they talk about how mental health issues have affected them. This year, we were given the opportunity to listen to some of the music that they've created, which was quite entertaining.

I was talking to one of the supporters of the group. He's a gentleman who, three years ago, was homeless in Toronto. He has mental health issues. He is now a regular contributor and presenter. He transitioned from Toronto back to St. Thomas, where he was born and raised, got the treatment he needed and the support in the community, and he started writing. He is a gifted writer. He wouldn't present the first few years because he wasn't ready yet. Over the last two years, he has been an avid presenter of his writings.

It just shows that with proper programs and support in place, people with mental illness have a place in our society and can be whole in our community. I'm glad our community is there to embrace people with mental health conditions—and we'll continue to do so.

We need to ensure that we have support for the front-line workers who help support people with mental health. We need to have a broader discussion than this bill on mental health, and hopefully, the government can bring forward other legislation that we can have open debate upon. There's a lot to talk about.

We've had the mental health strategy put forth. I mentioned two items that might be voted down by this government in committee that would strengthen this. The member from Nickel Belt definitely has issues that she would like to discuss on mental health. There is a plethora of supporters and stakeholders throughout Ontario who would like to see changes to the Mental Health Act. I believe she said 15 years was the last time this bill was changed dramatically in any way. Treatment has changed so much, and the ideology of how to support people with mental health issues has changed, so I think it's time we had a broader discussion.

I will turn the floor over to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London indicated he's sharing his time with the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

I recognize the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's an honour to rise this afternoon and share my time with my friend, colleague and the MPP for Elgin–Middlesex–London, Jeff Yurek. Jeff is a very knowledgeable member. It has been a pleasure to serve with him for my four years. He's very involved in a hands-on capacity, as a pharmacist. When he talks about health care, he's someone who has spent his life—they have a company with his brother. I believe they've taken

that over from their father. I'm not certain if Grandpa was part of that as well.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: He was a railroad man. There you go. St. Thomas is famous for that as well.

1610

It's a fabulous thing to see Jeff and to be able to see what he brings to caucus with his knowledge. It's a pleasure to be an associate critic with Jeff. Part of that is because we both want to ensure that the health care system provides the absolute best care, at the front lines, to the patients that we can. We want to minimize, wherever possible, the bureaucracy and the administration so that everything is going to the front line. He referenced it a number of times in his remarks about front-line workers and the need to ensure that they have the resources in our communities when people need them.

Mental illness is something that, again, strikes—we can't predict it; no one knows when it will happen. But what I can tell you, from the families that I've talked with in my riding, they need those services when that happens, and they want to know and have a comfort level that when they are there, they will be there. I'm very appreciative of the comments that he has made and pleased to contribute to an issue that I know all of us are passionate about.

Mental health is slowly coming out of the shadows. Of course, it wasn't always the case. For centuries, people suffering with mental illnesses were stigmatized, judged and even blamed, rather than helped. Today, its prevalence in society is undeniable. One in five Canadians has bouts with a mental illness. This means that each one of us here knows someone close to us who experienced that angst and got swept up in that whirlwind of self-doubt. This number reflects how widespread our vulnerability is and how widespread mental health challenges run in our society.

I recently read that mental health manifests itself more in Western society than in other cultures. From anxiety to depression, it creeps up on us more often for reasons not yet understood. It may be that we test and push ourselves in the workplace and at home, and perhaps is a result of us striving to keep up with the individual expectations we set for ourselves. Perhaps this type of self-induced pressure is putting us at risk of anxiety disorders.

No doubt this is the single issue we hear about very frequently in our work as the people's representatives. I know of some of the struggles that constituents in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound endure as they try to find care for themselves or their family members and loved ones. In fact, I am made aware on occasion of the crisis that families are facing in finding mental health and addictions treatment for their loved ones, particularly children. The reality is that there are simply not enough services to help people battling mental illness.

Just a few months ago, my office received a call from parents who were trying valiantly to locate a psychiatric bed for their teenaged son after he had attempted suicide. The young man spent three days in a local hospital, but

his condition was deteriorating, and the parents were anxiously searching for a bed so he could start receiving the care he needed. We knew it wasn't going to be easy to find him a bed because all 252 beds in London were occupied, as well as the other 190 in this part of southwestern Ontario. To clarify, there are 443 adult and adolescent acute in-patient mental health beds in the South West LHIN. As we all know—or we're certainly hopeful everyone knows—that's a large geographical area, especially in times of bad weather and winter months when travel is not easy. We don't have public transportation to help that support, so it's very challenging. My region has about 59, and again, not a single bed was available, and no one knew how soon one would open up.

Now imagine breaking the news to the parents, who are already feeling very helpless and alone: There is no bed, no in-patient treatment available for your child. Imagine how agonizing each day felt. Mr. Speaker, it's one of the most challenging—as I know you have probably shared in your distinguished career—and difficult things to be confronted with: a parent in their time of need, and sadly there isn't always that miracle cure, there isn't that miracle ability to change. I've certainly found that to be my most daunting, when someone comes in with a challenge like mental health and they're reaching out and they're grasping and they're desperate; it's very challenging because of the lack of resources. That's not necessarily a criticism. It's not meant as a partisan slight. It's just a case of, mental health truly is something that, as I've been here for my four years, I have certainly become much more aware of how much of a need there is, how much our society is being impacted and how we need to make sure we turn our focus and attention to this very challenging issue.

It was a similar pain felt by a mother who was frantically searching for treatment for her young daughter suffering from an eating disorder. “My child will die unless someone helps her,” she pleaded. In the end, and I'm proud to say as an Ontarian, generosity prevailed. The family crowdfunded to pay for her treatment, as there was nothing available anywhere within a 200-kilometre radius of my riding. It again just speaks to the realities that many people in our great province face. Across our country this is actually a challenge, and it's something I think we all have to ensure we're making a priority, putting those resources in to ensure there are services as required.

It's not just parents who are disappointed with the state of our mental health system. The people who work in the mental health sector are frustrated too. We know the need is great, and it will take all of us to make it happen.

Our purpose with Bill 122 is to create an integrated mental health system that places people living with mental illness at its centre, a key theme recommended by the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions spearheaded by my friend, our former colleague and MPP for Whitby, Christine Elliott. I'd also like to

acknowledge and thank the other member from our caucus who was part of the committee's work. That's my friend, colleague and MPP for Dufferin–Caledon, Sylvia Jones. Our caucus believes in the work of this committee and its recommendations, and we are supportive of this bill.

Bill 122 aims to improve health and quality of life for people living with mental health problems and illnesses. Specifically, this bill will put our mental health laws in compliance with an Ontario Court of Appeal decision. When a patient is issued their first certificate of continuation, they are entitled to apply for a hearing with the Consent and Capacity Board, the CCB, to confirm whether the prerequisites for involuntary status are met. This happens at approximately six and a half months. The bill will allow the board to hear an application made by the patient, or on the patient's behalf, before 12 months have passed. If a patient does not apply to have their detention reviewed, it will be automatically reviewed by the CCB every 12 months.

This bill will add a regulation-making power that will give rights advice to patients with respect to their ability to request orders regarding their detention. Prior to the amendments in this bill, patients would be detained involuntarily and would either stay at the facility for X number of days or they would be released; no changes to the terms of their detention were allowed.

The proposed amendments would give the CCB increased powers to make one or more of the following orders in response to a patient application at their certificate of continuation hearing:

- transfer the patient to another facility if the patient does not object. The board would also be able to hear an application from the officer in charge, the minister or deputy minister in relation to transferring the patient;

- place the patient on a leave of absence for a designated period upon the advice of a physician;

- direct the officer in charge of the psychiatric facility to provide the patient with a different security level and/or privileges inside or outside the facility;

- direct the officer in charge of the psychiatric facility to allow the patient to be provided with supervised or unsupervised access to the community; and

- direct the officer in charge of the psychiatric facility to provide the patient with vocational, interpretation or rehabilitative services.

The board will be required to make the above decisions while keeping in mind the following:

- the safety of the public;
- the ability of the psychiatric facility to manage and provide care for the patient and others;
- the mental condition of the patient;
- the reintegration of the patient into society;
- the other needs of the patient; and

- that limitations on the patient's liberty must be the least restrictive, and commensurate with the circumstances requiring the patient's involuntary detention.

A physician may issue a community treatment order, CTO, to reintegrate the patient back into society. The

board would be required to consider that notice when reviewing the patient's involuntary status. A community treatment order is issued by the physician solely, and it is their decision alone to issue a community treatment order if they so choose. A community treatment order may not be suggested by anyone else.

As we have heard already, the challenge of mental illness and addictions in Ontario is 1.5 times higher than all cancers put together and more than seven times that of all infectious diseases. Sadly, up to 70% of mental health problems begin in childhood and adolescence.

Its economic impact in Canada is estimated at \$51 billion per year. Therefore, providing better mental health services and programs is the smart thing to do. It's the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased that our generation is helping to change the attitudes towards mental health problems and mental illness.

To us, this is about inclusion, about challenging people's attitudes to mental health. It's about delivering more and better services so that all Ontarians can lead better lives. As I said earlier, it needs to be when the patient needs it. We have to ensure that time is of the essence.

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Finally, I want to recognize and commend the work of our local mental health champions in Bruce and Grey and the tremendous amount of work they have done and continue to do.

My colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London, Mr. Yurek, suggested—and I'm going to share it again, because I think it's a great corporate initiative—the Bell Let's Talk program. Certainly, I am proud to attend that every year. They do a great job. Again, that's something that anyone at any time can tap into.

He also referenced indirectly—but I'm going to talk about it a little bit more—community living and the challenge in regard to group homes and not enough spaces in group homes. We're hearing that. I formerly was the critic of community and social services, and certainly it was one of the biggest things that I was hearing. I was invited all over the province to hear from parents who were experiencing those challenges. Sadly, a number of the patients that need those services have a mental illness of some shape and description, and those services are significant and paramount. My colleague from Perth–Wellington has now taken over that critic's portfolio, and I know he's hearing the same things. It hasn't gone away. It's not going away. It's something that, again, we all need to be addressing, and ensuring that funds for those programs are at the front line, not eaten up in bureaucracy and administration.

Yolanda and Jamie Cameron of Wes for Youth and team; Phil Dodd, the executive director of Keystone Child, Youth and Family Services, and team; and Claude Anderson of the Canadian Mental Health Association, and specifically the 24/7 response line, and team: They are great, great resources in the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Wes for Youth was founded by Yolanda and Jamie Cameron after losing their son Wes to suicide. I want to

extend special commendation to both Jamie and Yolanda, and especially Yolanda. I'm out a lot in my community on the weekends, and I see her tirelessly, at every event possible, making sure that people in our backyard are aware of the services that are available through Wes for Youth Online. She has worked tirelessly—Jamie as well. Jamie is just a little more in the background; he likes to be more in the background. I'm not certain, to be frank, that Yolanda likes really enjoys or likes this occupation, but she has poured her heart and soul into going out to our community, into establishing this Wes for Youth Online. Certainly, I think it was originally intended to benefit those in our backyard in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and neighbouring Huron–Bruce, but with the advent of the electronic age, this is a resource that anyone across the world can tap into and have access to in their time of need. Sometimes I think people may want to actually have an opportunity to tap into something that's not in their own backyard, because there may still be that concern of who knows and those stigmas that we've talked about before.

I want to just again extend my heartfelt thank you and appreciation to both Jamie and Yolanda, because they are going out and doing their best to ensure that no one else has to suffer what they've suffered through in the loss of a child. Thank you. My heart goes out. Thank you for the legacy you've created in honour of your son, Wes.

Wes for Youth aims to be a hub for youth mental and emotional wellness: support for children aged 13 to 19 in our region and, in fact, as I've mentioned, as a result of the electronic age, across the world. As Yolanda and Jamie explain, "Today's teens communicate and connect in a very different way than their parents. They are the first generation to be raised with texting, messaging, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc. It keeps them 'in the loop' 24/7 and they rely on it for expression, integration, acceptance and approval. Social media is their comfort zone and where many go first, rightly or wrongly, for all their answers. If teens need or are willing to accept support or counselling for any problem, large or small, we believe many will choose social media before more traditional resources."

This group wants young people to know that it's okay to have problems and, most importantly, that it's okay to ask for help. They send out a message to anyone out there who is watching or listening, whether a grandparent, a parent, a brother, a sister, a cousin or a friend: Please, on both sides, never hesitate, if you're struggling and challenged, to ask someone for help. If you're on the other side, do what you can to provide that help, even if it's being there to make the call or to extend a resource, whether electronic or traditional, to try to do your part.

It's very challenging. You hear from parents who say, "I should have known. I should have seen something. I should have been aware." As a parent of two boys, it's one of those biggest things, certainly when it happens so close to your own backyard, where you start to challenge your own thinking. Am I paying enough attention? Am I really listening? I implore everyone.

But at the end of the day, for a parent, these types of things are not normally detectable. There is not something that is going to be like a lightning rod going off. To all of those families who have suffered or may, sadly, suffer: Don't beat yourselves up about it. Do what you can. Make sure. It's more important that we always offer an open and encouraging society that says, "Please, please ask for help."

If teens need or are willing to accept support or counselling for any problem, large or small, we believe many will choose this social media. This group wants young people to know that it is okay and, most importantly, that it's okay to ask for help. I encourage all of you to check them out at www.wesforyouthonline.ca.

Keystone is a not-for-profit, mainly provincially funded children's mental health centre serving Grey and Bruce counties. They run programs for teens at risk. Also, when a young person shows up in the ER, the hospital's emergency room, displaying suicidal tendencies or depressive behaviour, Keystone is notified and a risk assessment is done. With the help of the family, the youth is transitioned to the residential program.

I've met with Mr. Dodd a number of times. He and his team do remarkable work. One of the challenges that I continually hear from him is, again, having enough resources to do it in a timely manner whenever it is needed, because you can't control volumes. A number of our budget processes try to put a number on it based on a past year or on what the budget parameters should be. I think that one of the challenges that we all, as legislators, have to remember is that something like this is very daunting. It's hard to pin a number on it. We need to ensure the resources are there at any time when suicide happens.

I'm just going to talk a little bit here, as well, about a group, victim services. Very similarly, they came to me. In many parts of our province, these organizations are under stress in regard to funding resources, particularly in rural Ontario where we don't have all of those other amenities and services right close by. In my case, from top to bottom my riding is a three-hour drive in the best of weather. We are very disparate population-wise, but a large, large geography. Victim services, typically, have to be there. They get that call and they have to attend with, hopefully, the police, or get called by the police to attend. I'm going to talk about that a little bit later, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to put a little thought out: They are a group, again, about whom we really have to be thinking. We can't just put them into, "This year, you're getting the same as last year," based on numbers that someone in a back room is crunching. It's about need. It's about the reality that they can't control the variables. They don't know if 50 more people this year are going to call in their time of need, asking for that help. How many people, after they've had some challenge and are that victim, are going to call? Those people may very well go into a depressive mental state. It's very implicit in what we're talking about in Bill 122, to ensure that we also are giving victim services, one of those agencies, our utmost respect and thought process.

The Canadian Mental Health Association Grey Bruce recently rolled out its mobile urgent response team, which is now operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The urgent response team, URT, works in collaboration with first responders to provide community-based crisis intervention for people in distress. Their mandate is to reduce unnecessary emergency room visits or revisits by providing immediate support in the community. The team has now expanded to nine full-time and two part-time Urgent Response Team members, stationed in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound—typically covered through the Owen Sound and Markdale locations—and Huron-Bruce: Owen Sound, Southampton, Kincardine and Walkerton. So it's collaborative, particularly in my colleague's—Lisa Thompson from Huron-Bruce—and my ridings. They're integrated health care systems for the most part, three separate corporations, but we do work very collaboratively. Again, that's the reality of rural Ontario. We have to band together. We naturally collaborate and partner out of necessity.

They have a target response time of under 55 minutes. In the past, it was left to police to deal with clients experiencing a mental health crisis and take them to the hospital. That approach wasn't fair to police or to those in crisis. Those types of calls usually involve two officers and can take up to four hours, if police need to take the person to the emergency room. If an Urgent Response Team member can attend with police and make an assessment, it will prevent police and the client from waiting in the emergency room for hours, only for the client, potentially and in many cases, to be sent home again.

Again, I've had numerous police officers in my community come up and talk to me about this very issue. It's not that they don't have very basic training. They certainly are more qualified than I would ever be to go out on one of those responses. But I think what they're suggesting is that this is a very specialized area. It's not something they're dealing with on a day-in-and-day-out basis. They haven't received extensive and ongoing comprehensive training in the area of mental health, so they are concerned when they're going out: Are they able to give the best service possible? They are concerned about the time that is taken away, and then their communities aren't able to be defended—"protected" is probably a better word—by them, because they are doing something else.

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Again, it's not that they don't want to be doing this; they just feel very strongly that you want to have people with that specialized skill and the experience of doing this on a full-time basis to be there. It's certainly something I heard again when I spoke with Mr. Dodd. Those people are very experienced; they've gone into this as a vocation. Speaking through you, as I should, Mr. Speaker, it is their chosen vocation. It is something they get up every morning wanting to do. They want to get better and better, and they immerse themselves in it.

That is who I think you want, Mr. Speaker, if you have someone you are trying to help—a family friend or even

a stranger who is in need of services. You want a person who is truly trained, experienced and committed. Again, it's no slight on the police. They're actually being very good to say, "This isn't really our area. This is not something we have as much experience in as those specialists."

In my backyard, the 10 satellite hospitals throughout Grey and Bruce often have individuals present in their emergency rooms in a mental health crisis. These individuals may not be in a serious enough state to warrant sending them to our schedule 1 hospital in Owen Sound, Grey Bruce Health Services, for further psychiatric treatment. Previously, hospital staff would have to send these individuals home, only to have them return—sometimes within days or, sadly, even hours—because the circumstances that led to their crisis were not mediated. The urgent response team can prevent these revisits to the ER by meeting with the person at the ER and developing a plan to assist them in the community through short-term support or referral to other appropriate resources.

The recent Health Quality Ontario annual report highlighted the unfortunate reality that hospital readmission rates for patients with mental illness or addictions have not improved in five years, and suicide rates have not improved in a decade. Mr. Speaker, that is not what we want to hear. These are areas of very big concern, particularly for those people who are suffering through these. We clearly need to do better for our most vulnerable.

Our caucus recognizes the devastating effects of mental illness and the attached stigma it has on the lives of thousands of Ontarians. We recognize that mental health is just as important as physical health, and we believe it needs to be treated that way. It's certainly something that in my time as a member of provincial Parliament—I've been privileged to represent the great people of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for the last four years—I am hearing more and more about. I hear from the mental health community—the practitioners who are out there and the volunteers who are working—that mental health has never been in a priority state.

I go back to the select committee that I talked about. Certainly members of your caucus, the Liberal caucus and our caucus worked collaboratively on that. A lot of great recommendations came out of that, and I think it did raise the profile to understand that mental health is playing a significant role in our society. It needs to be a priority if we're going to address it appropriately.

The purpose of the bill is to come into compliance with an Ontario Court of Appeal decision. My colleague from Elgin-Middlesex-London has, I think, made us aware that this was originally introduced in September, and yet it's a month until we've actually been able to start to speak about it. There are a lot of amendments that are going to be presented. It needs to get to committee, and it needs to get through, but it needs the time, because this is a very complex issue. It is something we need to give priority to, as I stated before, and I think that we, in

our caucus, want to ensure that it gets moved forward as quickly as possible, so that we can address those.

I'm just going to reiterate a couple of facts, because I think, due to the fact that for many years it maybe hasn't been as high-profile, and people have not made it the priority it probably always needed to be, but for whatever reason it wasn't brought forward. The challenge of mental illness and addiction is 1.5 times higher than all cancers put together, and more than seven times that of all infectious diseases. The economic impact of mental illness in Canada is estimated at \$51 billion per year.

I believe my colleague from Elgin-Middlesex-London stated that there were 4,000 suicides per year. Mr. Speaker, that simply is not acceptable. We need to do more.

I'm going to reiterate a couple of things as well. Mental health is, in my opinion, just as important as physical health. We need to treat it that way. Mental illness affects Ontarians of every age and demographic, and yet services remain inadequate. Again, I'm saying thank you to those providers out there. I believe that anyone involved in mental health, depression and addiction is out there doing their very utmost best, obviously, every time. Again, I trust many of those people on the front lines. They pour their heart and soul into it. They, I trust, are never walking away in a time of need. But what we need to understand is that this is something that is growing. The numbers are getting larger. There are more people, which is a good thing, and the challenge becomes—I think many of our speakers, certainly my colleague from Elgin-Middlesex-London and I, talked about stigma. Many, many years ago, people wouldn't come out. They didn't want people to think, even, that they had a mental illness.

I had some folks in my office a couple of weeks ago very concerned about employment. Their son goes through some challenges from time to time, and they're worried from a conscience perspective: Do they actually tell the employer when they're going for the job interview that there are some challenges? Their fear is, of course, that they won't get the job if they're actually honest and sincere and upfront. On the other hand, they believe that they can certainly help a company, an organization; to be contributing members of society. And, frankly, they want to be. But there's that real challenge, that real balance.

They were very respectful of the employer's concerns, that you may not wish to take on an employee who has those types of challenges, because no one typically can know when it's going to strike. You really don't know how long that may be in place. So it's a double impact to the company. It was a really honest, sincere and thought-provoking discussion I had. You could see the challenges that are faced by a family with someone who has that. And then you go to the extreme, as I mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker, in regard to the suicide rate, and people who get to that point and the challenges that they're facing.

I think that none of us want to be in a position where when that the call comes in that you have to say,

“There’s not enough. I can’t help you today.” We need to find ways, we need to find models that work so that we are all in a place to be able to provide those services when they’re needed.

Just last week, Health Quality Ontario’s annual report highlighted the unfortunate reality—and I’m going to readdress this—that hospital readmission rates for patients with mental illness or addiction have not improved in five years. I say it time and time again in this House that—and again, it’s kudos to our hospitals, the workers, the staff who work to operate our hospitals. This is not anything negative toward them, but the readmission rates have not improved in five years. That is our most costly form of health care, someone going through those doors, particularly if they’re only going through the process where they’re sitting there for a few hours, then they’re being sent home and have to readmit. That is just a duplication.

Suicide rates, as I mentioned earlier, have not improved in a decade. With all of the resources that we have today, with resources out there like the Bell Let’s Talk program and, in my backyard, Wes for Youth Online, it’s hard to fathom, Mr. Speaker, that we haven’t been able to move that gauge a little bit. I applaud people like Jamie and Yolanda Cameron for all the efforts they have put in, as I mentioned earlier. I just can’t say enough about the energy, the tireless devotion and contribution that they’ve put in as volunteers, and the community that has banded around them. Wes for Youth Online has kind of come out of the legacy, if you will, of their son Wes. It’s just been a remarkable program in my backyard.

They’ve raised a lot of money. There have been Trillium grants, which is a great program of our province. It goes back into a community. They’ve developed a centre so they can accommodate in a number of different fashions. They have hands-on people who are employed, who actually have those types of skill sets if someone walks in off the street or after having a bit of an incident and needs some kind of support, counselling resource. They have the online resource that anyone from anywhere can call into, or they can actually go online and send it in that way.

Many people still want that anonymity. They want to be able to deal with this on their own terms and conditions, and I think that’s very important because, in many cases, we are, sadly, a judgmental society. Those are the stigmas we have to break down. We have to ensure that there’s money, in my mind, in public health, Mr. Speaker, to our health units to be able to do the promotional side of making sure people are aware of the needs and the challenges of people who may have a mental illness out there.

On October 10, 2015, I believe, my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London would have been very integral to this, and on behalf of our caucus released a statement. I’m just going to read a little bit of that to you, Mr. Speaker, because I think it bears repeating, and everybody in here is encouraged to repeat at least portions of these words every day to try to raise that awareness:

“Statement from the Ontario PC Party on World Mental Health Day

“On World Mental Health Day, the Ontario PC Party stands in solidarity with Ontarians and Canadians directly and indirectly affected by mental illness.

“‘World Mental Health Day is an opportunity for Ontarians to learn and discuss mental health problems and understand that mental illness can affect anyone,’ stated PC health critic Jeff Yurek (Elgin–Middlesex–London). ‘The Ontario PC Party believes that mental health is just as important as physical health. We need to treat it that way.’

“Affecting one in five Canadians, mental illness is a leading cause of disability in Canada.

“‘This year, World Mental Health Day is focused on dignity in mental health. Sadly, people with mental illnesses are often faced with misunderstanding, and even blame,’ added MPP Yurek. ‘The Ontario PC Party believes we have a responsibility to raise awareness of what can be done to ensure people with mental health conditions live with dignity, respect and inclusion.’

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“‘I commend the numerous organizations and front-line workers providing leadership, increasing the awareness of, and working to, provide equitable access to mental health services,’ said leader of the official opposition Patrick Brown. ‘Mental illness affects Ontarians of every age and demographic and yet services remain inadequate. We need to work to combat the stigma associated with mental health, start talking and provide greater access to treatment.’”

Mr. Speaker, it’s been an absolute privilege to stand here for a number of minutes today and share my thoughts on behalf of myself, my constituents in the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and my colleagues. I recommend and encourage everyone to raise the bar, to be there to support mental health and make it the priority that it needs to be.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It’s a pleasure to weigh in on this very important issue. I commend the members from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and Elgin–Middlesex–London for speaking, ultimately, about the rights of Ontarians to have access to appropriate, affordable and accessible mental health resources. That’s where the smart investment is. I think both speakers made those points quite well.

In my own region of Waterloo, just this weekend, the Waterloo Record has released a report. They’ve done an assessment of the cost—emotional, to the health care system, to the justice system—of not providing appropriate access to care. A lot of that stems from the stigma that is still very much attached to mental illness. But the stats are quite something, Mr. Speaker. The assessment was that between 2011 and 2013, Waterloo Regional Police responded to 4,516 calls about a mentally ill person, and 3,520 of them were about attempted suicide. This is the kind of research, this is the kind of evidence,

that should inform public policy on the issue of mental illness and the broader issue of well-being, because when you look holistically at the entire health portfolio, mental health has for too long been something that you do as an afterthought, as an aside.

When you look at the timing of this piece of legislation—the court made a ruling on the amendments needed to the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act dated back to 1996, but the ruling came down on December 23, 2014. This is October 2015, and we are just getting to this piece of legislation. It needs to be accelerated. There is an urgency to not acting. There's a cost to not acting.

I'm happy to be part of this debate today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I might, with your permission and indulgence, Speaker, just speak a little bit as a physician about the characteristics and the quality of symptoms of depression for those who are listening and, of course, in general support of this particular act.

Many issues occur, for example issues with regard to sleep: people cannot fall asleep or they take too long to fall asleep; even after sleeping a number of hours, they feel unrested or they may lose interest in things. We have a fancy word called “anhedonia” which means they lack the ability to experience pleasure in things that they experienced previously. They feel an enhanced sense of guilt. They lack energy. They have difficulties with concentration: for example, reading the same page again and again, and it just doesn't seem to take.

There may be an extreme increase or, usually, a decrease in appetite. There may be what we call psychomotor agitation or psychomotor anger, where people basically want to punch a hole in the wall. There even may be what we call suicidality, which means that folks may think it's better to go and meet their maker, to end it now and to basically leave this world.

All of these symptoms, Speaker, make up part and parcel of major depression, minor depression and, of course, there are many other subcategories. I cite these particular symptoms—which was quite a lengthy checklist—not simply to highlight, but perhaps just to help educate through this particular forum here in Parliament, as we're debating a bill that's very important, with regard to the Ontario Mental Health Act.

These are important issues. Something on the order of about 10% of the Canadian population suffers from these illnesses at any one time. Unfortunately, we are finding that young people, whether it's even in the teen years or in adolescence, may experience it. There are often many triggers. Whether it's a family breakdown, for example, moving away from home, a divorce, a tragedy, a widowing etc., we need to keep all of these things in mind as we're going to address these issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's a pleasure to rise to speak to the comments of the members from Elgin–Middlesex–London and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

I guess all of us here as MPPs have had to deal with this issue in our ridings because of a sense of frustration sometimes that our constituents have with the system. I would like to speak to the care of people who have mental issues, and I would like to talk about the people who are directly involved with these things.

Certainly the police are. I hear stories of police who go to these calls and have to deal with a situation, and then have to go and sit in emergency rooms at times with people who are having these problems. They'll sit in these emergency rooms for six or seven hours sometimes waiting for a professional to come in and help treat the patient. I would hope that the government looks at this when looking at this bill, that we have the proper numbers of professional people to help out in these situations. Police are required to go to these calls, to keep the peace and certainly to look after the patient for a certain period of time if they have to go to a hospital to deal with this situation. But too often they get there and there is nobody to look after these people and help them with their problems.

We all know that there are all kinds of cutbacks going on with the health care system. So I worry that, even with legislation such as this, we're not going to have the numbers of qualified people to help with situations like this in emergency rooms, and police, who are really not qualified as psychiatrists to look after these patients, are going to have issues with mental health issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good afternoon, Speaker. It's good to see you in the chair again this afternoon.

I'm adding my voice to those of the members from Elgin–Middlesex–London and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. It's always a challenge to do so, Speaker, because they are two of the stronger voices in their caucus and they always bring great points to bear when they speak on such heavy issues as this.

There are 107 members of the Ontario Legislature at the moment, and I'm willing to bet that in each and every constituency office on a weekly basis two or three people come into our offices asking us to deal with issues relating back to mental health.

It could be anything from social housing to transportation, birth certificates, identification or whatever it is, but they come to our offices seeking help, and sometimes if we can't give them exactly what they want, their tempers can get a little overheated with our constituency staff. I know my staff deal with this on a regular basis. I have great respect for how calmly they deal with the people who come in with mental health issues, and I have great respect for everyone in Ontario who deals with those suffering from a mental illness on a daily basis.

I had four members of the police association from Windsor here last week. When I talked to them, they confirmed to me what their chief had been reported in the paper as saying, that more than 80% of the police calls coming into the Windsor Police Service are dealing with

issues around the Mental Health Act—people who have some triggers that have set them off and the police are having to deal with those issues. So there is no more important issue that we're facing than issues surrounding this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London for final comments.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you to those who commented on our hour leadoff on Bill 122. It's great to hear the discussion, and I look forward to the third party's hour lead, coming up next.

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I think it's good that we have these discussions with regard to mental health. It's good that we get information and keep the discussion going. As I said earlier, it's too bad that we didn't have a more substantive bill to deal with at this time. It's not too often that the government comes forward with changes to the Mental Health Act.

The amendments put forward by some psychiatrists who came and met with me, I think, are valid discussions to have at committee going forward. Hopefully, the government will come forward and listen to our side of the House in discussions and come up with some sort of resolution that ensures, with regard to the consent and capacity panel, that a psychiatrist is included on all types of panels going forward, so we have that expertise at that level.

I definitely want to thank the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for assisting me in the comments today. What he brings forth from rural Ontario and the Owen Sound and Bruce area usually resonates throughout the province. That's an area that usually doesn't have the services available to them, but it does have a certain core population that does need access to those services. Each and every day that the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Bill Walker, is here with us representing his constituents is a bonus not only for them but also the Legislature as a whole.

I hope to hear quite a bit more debate. I know we only have five weeks left in order to get this bill passed and signed into royal assent. We have a short time period, and that makes it all the more important that this government actually sit down and listen to the opposition, because this is all that's left to ensure this bill gets passed. This government had a year to do it. They dragged on their time. We'll deal with what we have left.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to do my one-hour lead on Bill 122, An Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996—1996: Remember that number.

Let's start by saying, why do we have this bill? We have this bill because back in December 2014, a year ago or so, all five judges on the Court of Appeal looked at the Mental Health Act and decided that parts of it were unconstitutional and needed to be changed.

Basically, on December 23, five justices of the Court of Appeal of Ontario ruled unanimously in a case—I will refer to it a number of times; it's called *P.S. v. Ontario*, and "P.S." are the initials of a man you will hear a little bit more about—that portions of the Mental Health Act violated the Charter of Rights and Freedoms; more specifically, section 7 of the charter, which states, "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice." Basically, there is a gap within the Mental Health Act such that people can be detained indefinitely, even though the Consent and Capacity Board does not have full power, in accordance with the principle of fundamental justice, to rule on the treatment or lack thereof of patients who are receiving such care. As such, long-term patients are being deprived of their right to liberty without procedures in place that protect the principle of fundamental justice.

What does that all mean? This man had assaulted a child, went through court and was sentenced to almost four years in jail. He spent his four years in jail, and on the day that he was to be released, he was brought, under a form 1, to a psychiatric hospital. For the next 19 years, this man stayed in the full-security unit of a psychiatric hospital.

Year after year, the Consent and Capacity Board—this is a board made up mainly of psychiatrists that every year has to review the cases—would see the man, make recommendations for his well-being, make recommendations for what could be the broad strokes of a care plan, but none of this was ever followed up. To make matters worse, this man was also deaf from birth, which means that he had difficulty communicating, like a lot of deaf people do, and none of his needs had been met, or were very sporadically met.

Although every year, when the Consent and Capacity Board would look at this man, who had a terrible, terrible diagnostic—he is, and doesn't deny it, a pedophile. Whenever he would come back in front of the Consent and Capacity Board, the Consent and Capacity Board would say, "Yes, this man still meets the threshold to be kept in a secure unit in a mental health hospital, but provisions should be made," because, first of all, he's deaf and also he is not a threat to people his own age. He is and will continue to be a pedophile. He is a threat to children, but he is not a threat to you and I, Speaker, because we don't look like kids at all. So there should be freedom and flexibility to allow him to have more freedom than a fully secure unit of a psychiatric hospital, because unless he comes in contact with a child, he is not a risk to people like you and I. He is a risk to children.

But none of this is presently feasible. You see, Speaker, the only thing that the Consent and Capacity Board can do is to say, "Yes, you go back into your secure unit." They can say, "Yes, we will send you to another secure unit in another psychiatric hospital," but that's it; that's all. They made the Consent and Capacity Board recognize that this same man—we're talking about 19 years. They tried to say, "Well, we would like you

to”—they recognized that he’s not a threat to people that are not children, to say that he has special needs because he’s deaf, but it didn’t matter. They did not have any power. All they could do is make suggestions to better help this man, but none of those suggestions were ever followed. He was always in a maximum security psychiatric unit when they have recommended many times that a medium security unit would have been quite adequate to look after him. This was never done.

So looking at all of that—unfortunately, this man is not the only one. We are allowed to share some of his case because of the court, and all of that information has become public, but there are 338 other people like him who are going through the same thing. They have been in a secure unit in a psychiatric hospital being reformed—and “formed” means there is a process to get a person into an involuntary hospital. The first one is that you fill out a form 1. A form 1 would allow a hospital to keep you for 72 hours. Those are the most commonly used. Somebody has a mental illness. Things are not doing good. Most of the time, they’re in the community. Things are not doing good. They are refusing treatment. They are becoming a risk to themselves or to society and a physician will sign a form 1. Most of the times, the police is involved.

My colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo talked about the statistics in her riding as to how often form 1s are used by police, who will go and apprehend the person although they have done nothing wrong. They will be brought to the hospital, and the hospital is allowed to keep them for 72 hours. If 72 hours is not enough, then you will need to sign a form 3. Form 1 gives you 72 hours. If 72 hours is not enough, we have a form 3. A form 3 will allow what is called committal; that is, to keep you in the hospital against your wishes for another two weeks. If, after two weeks, things are good, life is good, you get your plan of care, you go back into the community, or you stay in the hospital of your own free will to continue with your hospital treatment.

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If that doesn’t work, then before form 3 expires, you sign a form 4 certificate. With a form 4 certificate, the first time, we keep you for a month. If a month is not enough, we can do another form 4; that will be two months. And then we can do a form 4 every three months for the rest of your life. The court doesn’t think this is right. The court doesn’t think that the balance has been taken appropriately. I will quote from the court decision to really set the tone, and this is something that New Democrats fully support. It goes a bit like this, and I’m quoting from a court document, so sometimes I’m not too sure how to pronounce some of the words but I will do my best, Speaker. Listen up:

“It remains to be seen whether Ontario will appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada”—they’re not too sure; it doesn’t look like we will. “However, so long as the Court of Appeal’s decision stands, it calls for an important shift in the balance to be struck in Ontario’s mental health law. Prior to the Court of Appeal’s decision, the nature of involuntary detention under the MHA depended primar-

ily on balancing public protection against patients’ best interests as determined by medical professionals. This left little room for patients themselves to play a role in determining the course and nature of their treatment.” Because at the end of the day, they can get better.

“The Court of Appeal’s judgment effectively states that this balance must be changed by providing meaningful procedural avenues for patients to seek the accommodation and treatment they need to be rehabilitated while being involuntarily detained. The Court of Appeal’s decision indicates that Ontario cannot wield the power to detain mental health patients indefinitely where such procedural protections are absent.

“Underlying the Court of Appeal’s decision is an important shift away from traditional views of mental health institutions as warehouses designed to protect society from permanently afflicted individuals, and towards a view of these institutions as places of recovery designed to facilitate the reintegration of patients into society. For advocates of the civil rights of individuals with mental illnesses, this marks a significant step towards substantive equality.”

That is a substantive step, and a step that we have been told has to be taken before December 22 of this year. The court has given us one year to make those changes.

So what is in the bill? What kind of changes can we expect? There are quite a few and I think they’re going in the right direction. One of the first ones that will happen is that the Consent and Capacity Board—remember, those are the people who review the cases every three months. You have to have your form refilled every three months. Every four times you fill out the form, you see the Consent and Capacity Board, so it turns out to be every year. Every year the Consent and Capacity Board will review the case, but now they will gain new powers to make orders concerning the matter of detention for involuntary patients who have been in hospital longer than six months. The Consent and Capacity Board right now can only say that you stay or you go.

If the bill is passed, the Consent and Capacity Board will be able to say, “Transfer the patient to another psychiatric facility,” if the patient agrees, does not object, and place the patient on a leave of absence from the hospital on the advice of a physician, including prescribed terms and conditions with which the patient and physician must comply. So it could very well be that, with the right set of medications, talk therapy and other plan of care, the person functions quite well. If they agree to take their medication, if they agree to the talk therapy and they agree to all of the elements of the plan of care, and a health care provider is there to make sure, then the person could be released. It would be the Consent and Capacity Board that would review all of this, but it would lead toward reinsertion into the community in a safe manner.

They can also direct that the patient be provided with a different security level or different privileges within or outside the psychiatric facility.

Remember this gentleman we were all talking about, Mr. P.S.? Well, the only thing that was available to him

was a maximum-security psychiatric hospital. It didn't matter that the Consent and Capacity Board said, "I think we should try him in medium security. I think we should try him in something different." They did not have any authority to mandate this. They could just make recommendations, and their recommendations were never followed. After the bill goes through, they will be able to dictate those changes, and those changes will have to be taken seriously and executed.

They will also be able to direct that the patient be provided with supervised or unsupervised access to the community—this is also something that the Consent and Capacity Board sometimes recommends, but if the hospital decides to ignore, they are free to do so—and order an independent assessment of the patient. Sometimes new treatments are available, or new assessment tools. You can really narrow where the risk to society is and where is the risk to self, so that if for a big part of the day and a big part of the patient's life they are at no risk to themselves or society—the risk can be narrowed down, mitigated and dealt with—then more opportunities open up.

Also, under these amendments, the province is seeking to allow physicians and nurse practitioners to sit on Consent and Capacity Board panels for less complex hearings. Right now, as I said, it is mainly psychiatrists who sit on those. Basically, we would free up some psychiatrists' time for the more complex hearings. Certainly the new hearings for involuntary patients who have been in psychiatric facilities for longer than six months would fall under that, so there would continue to be psychiatrists who would review those. But for some of the easier cases—often people who haven't been there that long or who did not ask for their case to be reviewed—physicians and nurse practitioners with an interest in mental health would sit on those.

I can tell you that in my community, many people with severe mental illness have as their primary caregiver a physician or a nurse practitioner. They may have a psychiatrist who sees them, but they are not their primary care. Even if they have a diagnosis of severe mental illness, it is their primary care provider—their family physician, their nurse practitioner—who looks after them, who adjusts their medications, who keeps them a safe, functioning, happy human being in the community. This is finally recognizing that, yes, family physicians and nurse practitioners play an important role in community mental health services. The bill would allow them to be recognized for their important role and give them the right, if they so choose, to sit on the Consent and Capacity Board.

Those are some of the biggest changes that the bill will bring. The timing of the Consent and Capacity Board hearings will change somewhat, and there are other related amendments, but before I get too far into it, I will explain a little bit more as to how this will all work.

1710

So we had the Ontario Court of Appeal that said, "You have to change the Mental Health Act. We give you 12 months to do this." The clock is ticking. We have until

December 22, two months or so from here. We have a bill that took nine months to be brought forward. Since December 23, everybody knew that the Mental Health Act had to be changed because the clock was ticking. Well, nothing happened, Speaker, for nine long months. The press wrote about it. People wondered about it. A whole bunch of people had opinions about what should happen, and the government went on radio silence for nine months.

Then, on September 23, Bill 122, An Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996, finally arrived. It is in direct response to the Court of Appeal telling the Legislature that something needed to be done. They put that forward for first reading on September 23. On September 23, you could hear a common sigh of relief: "Phew! Finally, we have a piece of legislation that comes forward. Let's get on with this because we all know how to count: September, October, November, December." At the time, we had three months left to go from a bill with an act that is 20 years old—to go forward with a bill that needed to be changed, that the courts said, "You must change it." They took nine months, and then they gave us this bill, and everybody said, "Well, we have three months; we better get to it." A month later, nothing had happened.

On October 26, it finally comes back. Well, we have to talk about timing, Speaker, because—and it will become more obvious as I go on with my speech—the Mental Health Act is something that—it doesn't matter where you go in this province; it doesn't matter who you talk to in this province; anybody who has had any dealing with our mental health system will tell you that the act has to change.

I was on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, and I see some of my colleagues from that work here in the House with me. We did a tour of Ontario. We held hearings on 30 different days. We heard from 230 presenters from all regions of Ontario. We received over 300 submissions. We went north, east, west; we stayed in the centre; we flew to fly-in-only First Nations. I think we did a pretty good job of making sure that we heard from a wide variety of voices throughout Ontario. It didn't matter where we went; we heard the same thing over and over and over: Our mental health system was failing more people than it was helping.

Our mental health system is in need of mega reform. There have been over 16—I'm not exaggerating—different reports in Ontario that ask for reform. All of those reports—I'm only counting the reports that have been done by the Ontario government since 1983—only those reports. I'm not looking at the one done by the Senate, the one done at the federal level, the one done by public industry, the one done—there are many, many more. Just within the Ontario government, we have had 16 reports, all of them saying that we need to change, all of them making recommendations so that the Mental Health Act is amended to better respond to the needs of this very-much-changed mental health system.

If you can put yourself back in 1983, if you can put yourself back in 1996 and think about what people

thought about mental illness in those days—don't get me wrong. We still have lots of stigma attached to mental illness, but go back a couple of decades, and the stigma was huge. The language used to describe people who were facing mental illness was repulsive by the way we just rejected, refused to help, refused to care for, refused to have any empathy because you had a mental illness.

But things have changed. Look at what Bell Let's Talk did. They did fantastic work to show that mental illness is a disease, sometimes chronic, that can be managed, that can be cured, that affects one in 10 of us. That is the main reason we know a whole lot more. People are coming forward a whole lot more to say, "I have a mental illness, and I need help." I never thought I'd see the day where a police officer would come into my office and say, "I need help. I have PTSD." I never thought I would see the day where firefighters would come into my office and say, "I need help. I have PTSD." This is to show you how much ground we have covered, the long road that we have achieved in people coming forward to say, "We want access to mental health services. I have a mental illness. I want help for it, and I expect the mental health system to be there for me."

All of this was not thought of in 1983; all of this was not thought of in 1996, the last time we looked at this bill. So what I said in my two-minute response to the minister was that there's this huge pent-up demand for changes to the Mental Health Act. Then we hear that the Mental Health Act is finally open. People are going to want to be heard on this bill. People are going to want the government to listen to what they have been saying for such a long time, what the 16 reports commissioned by the Ontario government in those years have been asking for.

But now we have six weeks left, Speaker. We have six weeks to do first reading and have a few of my colleagues have comments on it, send it to pass second reading and have committees. I sure hope—and I guarantee you that I want to give people an opportunity to be heard. It is so disrespectful when people finally gain the courage to get involved with the legislative process to come to Queen's Park to testify in front of a committee—for a lot of them, this is the one and only time in their lives they will ever do this. Let's be respectful and listen to what they have to say, so that they can bring forward as good a bill as possible, even if we explain to them, in respectful terms, that we have to be limited in this.

I have told you what the bill sets out to do, but the more eyes that look at it, the more people think about it, the better we can make it to fulfill exactly what the Ontario Court of Appeal has told us to do. What we've got in front of us is a good first step. Can we do better? Absolutely. We all know that passing a bill is not an incremental process. It's not like, "Well, we'll do a little bit of it today and maybe in a couple of months we'll reopen the act and do a little bit more. Maybe next fall we'll reopen the act and do a little"—it's not like that, Speaker; 1996 was the last time. You have to wait a long time before a piece of legislation gets opened again.

So you see the dilemma that we are in. We've now boxed ourselves into six weeks to meet the court-imposed deadline. We have just started second reading today. Only three people—actually five: The Liberals shared their lead, and the PCs shared their lead—five people out of 107 will have had the opportunity to speak to the bill. We know that for the rest of the week, it is not on the docket to be brought forward again, which means that when we bring it forward again, the soonest we can bring it forward will leave us five weeks. One of those is a constituency week, when we won't be here. So, really, starting next week, the clock is ticking to do a whole lot of work.

1720

I don't understand why we have boxed ourselves—we didn't. Why did the Liberal government box all of us into this really, really tight deadline for something that is so much in need of sober second thought? We are talking about holding people in hospital against their wishes for decades at a time—not exactly a light type of decision. On the decision-ranking scale here, holding people against their wishes without their having done any crime—we're not talking about the justice system. The justice system has its own set of rules and they deal with it. We're talking about holding them in hospital against their wishes for months and years and decades at a time. I think it is worth all of our brain power to give it a little bit of time. Unfortunately, we're not afforded this little bit of time.

We already know that there are issues. I'm going to quote from a letter from Mr. Arthur Gallant. Why I'm bringing this up is because when the minister did his lead, he made the reference to the Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council. This is another council, and the name is long enough to explain to you exactly what it's all about: the Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council. This has been put together by our present Minister of Health to counsel him on mental health and addictions, including this bill that we are talking about. When he put the council together, he invited Mr. Arthur Gallant to be part of this council. Mr. Gallant looks young to me; he's 25 years old—

Interjection: That's young.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's young.

For the past 12 years, he has been a mental health advocate. Some of you will remember the name because it was one of five Canadian names at Bell's Let's Talk—Faces of Mental Illness. He was part of all of their commercials, all of their Twitter. You will remember some of the TV advertising that Bell did. He was one of the five people who were showcased in Bell's Let's Talk—Faces of Mental Illness.

In November 2014, about a year ago, he received an email from the office—oh, I forgot to say that his mother had a mental illness for a long time, that he was a mental health advocate and that he had been diagnosed with a mental illness when he was 13 while he was in the care of the children's aid society and has lived experience himself. So that's Mr. Gallant.

He received an email from the Minister of Health on November 14, asking him if he was interested in being appointed to the province's Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council. I'm quoting from the letter:

"I was honoured to have received this email and felt as if I would have the ability to make a difference being part of this council.

"Once the membership list was released, I was disappointed to learn only two members (including myself) out of 20 members were ... representing the voices of people with lived experience." So the council is made up of 20 people; two of them have lived experience, and the rest of them are providers or work for the ministry. "Everybody else on the council were health care executives and there was no mention of any type of lived experience they might have brought to the table. I should also note that I was the youngest person appointed to the council by a long shot." As I said, he's 25 years old.

We all know that most severe mental illness strikes during adolescence. We saw that the first phase of the mental health strategy for the province of Ontario was to focus on youth. It was to focus on school services and community services and really focus on youth, for good reason. Most mental illness will show itself during adolescence or early adulthood. To have a young person on the council I think makes sense, especially a young person with lived experience, but only two with lived experience out of 20.

He goes on to say, "Initially, I took this news in stride. I thought my work was cut out for me, and I was determined to ensure my voice was heard and that I was adequately representing all Ontarians with lived experience on this council.

"From our first meeting back in February 2015, I was quickly shut out. Nobody was asking me for my advice, and whenever I spoke, I was interrupted and shut down. I felt as if I was simply keeping a seat warm during council meetings. I was also excluded during council conference calls.

"At the beginning of the council's term, working groups were formed to break down some of our work. At our first meeting, I witnessed council chair Susan Pigott going up to some of the members, asking them if they wanted to be chair of any of the working groups. I emailed Ms. Pigott, suggesting somebody with lived experience be appointed chair of one of the working groups. My request was denied. When I asked for feedback from Ms. Pigott as to why somebody with lived experience could not be chair of one of the working groups, she refused to give me any sort of rationale. Instead of being chair of one of the working groups, Assistant Deputy Minister Nancy Kennedy offered to have me make public appearances on behalf of the council and suggested I seek some sort of leadership opportunity from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. None of these opportunities ever came to fruition.

"Over the spring and summer, my frustrations continued to build as I felt shut out during council meetings

and didn't like that I was being excluded from council conference calls. It became clear to me that the council did not value the advice of its two members with lived experience, and instead favoured the health care executives.

"I spent all summer reaching out to the council secretary, Ms. Pigott, various ministry officials, and Minister Hoskins's office. My calls and emails went unanswered.

"Earlier this month, I reached my breaking point and made the decision to resign from the council. When I asked Ms. Pigott for a meeting to discuss my resignation, she once again refused and felt as if such a meeting would be counterproductive. All follow-up emails to Ms. Pigott have been ignored. Minister Hoskins and his staff continue to ignore my phone calls and my emails. While I spoke directly to the new Assistant Deputy Minister of Health, he refused to offer any concrete solution to continue to include the voices of people with lived experience on the council. He also says the ministry will not pressure nor request for Ms. Pigott to speak to me, and the choice to do so remains solely hers.

"I was concerned that if I resigned from the council, that I would have regrets. Based on the government's treatment of me after submitting my resignation, it has simply affirmed my decision.

"I resigned from this council"—and I'm referring to the Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council—"because nobody was listening to me. The work of this council is important and I believe the government had the right idea in forming the council. Capturing the voice of people with lived experience is paramount. Appointing two members to the council with lived experience was a big first step; however, to appoint us to the council without treating us as equals isn't right and it isn't fair. All I was ever asking for was an opportunity to be heard. I wanted my advice to be just as valued and considered just as seriously as the health care executives on this council. Instead, I was shut out!

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"The experience [of] patients and survivors of the mental health care system is crucial. They bring a perspective that is unique, one of a kind, honest, that you can't get from anybody else. In order to properly ... execute the province's mental health and addictions strategy, the province needs to capture the voice of people with lived experience. Clearly by appointing me to the council there was an attempt to do so, but the province fell short....

"I have written a letter to the Premier's office several weeks ago," at the same time as he wrote to me, "and I have yet to receive a response. I am reaching out to your offices in the hopes that you can also put some pressure on the Ministry of Health to change how it treats people with lived experience. I don't like how this council is functioning and I don't appreciate having my calls and emails unanswered.

"Should you or your offices have any questions, feel free to be in touch with me.

"Yours very truly,

"Arthur Gallant."

I did reach out to him, Speaker, and we have permission to share his letter, which I read into the record today. I did that to really illustrate the point that although we have a piece of legislation that is in response to what the Ontario Court of Appeal had said we must do, and although there are some really good steps taken in the bill in front of us, we can do better. There are people with lived experience. Those are people who lived under form 4. They know what it is to be on the other side. They know the frustration that comes from wanting something that is reasonable, wanting something that is just and fair, and being denied because of a process.

But if this young man—who, as I said, is a very eloquent speaker about the face of mental illness—if this young man who was personally invited by the minister himself to come and share his experience with council was shut out, I'm really afraid that when it will come time for those people who will want to come and address us in committee, the same thing will happen: that we will have a leader on the other side who will time-allocate this thing, that we will have, like, two hours for hearings for hundreds of people who want to be heard.

Will we do a step in the right direction? Yes, the bill is a step in the right direction. But will we do as good as we can so that people who have to live under those orders that force them to stay in secure units in psychiatric hospitals are dealt with in a way that respects their human rights? I'm not sure. I think we are setting ourselves up for a half-baked bill, a bill that will fulfill what the court has ordered us to do, but a bill that will miss an opportunity to bring fairness to people with mental illness, a bill that will miss an opportunity to show that since 1996, when this bill was written, to 2015, or 2016, really, by the time the bill is put into effect—that during those 20 years, perceptions toward mental illness have changed, that opportunities for people with mental illness have changed, and that this has to be taken into account.

I want to come back to the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. This is something that everybody in this House agreed to. When we released the committee findings—the report is very short, by the way: 18 pages. That's it. That's all. Anybody can read this in an hour: 18 pages of recommendations from months and months of work, and 23 recommendations. I bring that forward because, out of the 23 recommendations, half of one has been acted upon, Speaker. We have 23 recommendations and, out of all of those 23, half of recommendation number 11 has been acted upon. It had to do with use and abuse of prescription narcotics. The rest have not.

Yet, there we stood, and most of the people who were there are still here. We had consent from all three parties. This is a report that was unanimously supported by all three parties to move forward toward better mental health and addictions services. Within this report, there are recommendations to change the Mental Health Act. We have already had all sides of the House agree that we need to change the Mental Health Act. It is in our recommendations, and I will read them into the record because I'm afraid some of them have been forgotten. “The core

basket of mental health and addictions services should be available to the incarcerated population, and discharge plans for individuals with a mental illness or addiction should be expanded to include the services of a system navigator and appropriate community services.” And we have the link as to what needs to be changed in the Mental Health Act.

Recommendation number 21: “The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should create a task force, incorporating adequate representation from, among others, mental health clients and their caregivers as well as mental health law experts, to investigate and propose changes to Ontario's mental health legislation and policy pertaining to involuntary admission and treatment.” Sound familiar, Speaker? “The changes should ensure that involuntary admission criteria include serious harms that are not merely physical, and that involuntary admission entails treatment. This task force should report back to the ministry within one year of the adoption of this report by the Legislative Assembly.”

That was a report that was done by the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. This committee was created by this Legislature. The report was tabled. It was agreed upon by all sides. It talks about what the court also talked about, that we needed to work on changing the Mental Health Act. It said that it wanted a report back to this House within the year, and nothing has been done. Yet, we have an opportunity with this act being opened to do something that we already know everybody agrees to.

Recommendation number 22: “The task force created to investigate and propose changes to Ontario's mental health legislation and policy should also investigate and propose changes to the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004. The changes should ensure that family members and caregivers providing support to, and often living with, an individual with a mental illness or addiction have access to the personal health information necessary to provide that support, to prevent the further deterioration in the health of that individual, and to minimize the risk of serious psychological or physical harm.” That is also in the report.

I wanted to bring that forward as an example of work that has been done. Remember: There have been 16 such reports. In all of those 16 such reports done by this Legislature, by the Ontario government, they all asked for changes to the Mental Health Act. Some of the changes that they have asked for are directly related to what the court has asked us to do. The court has asked us to look at involuntary confinement, and this is what recommendation number 22 of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions final report also talked about, and it is an opportunity to move this forward.

I can tell you, Speaker, that there will be people who will want us to do that work, who will want us to say, “Listen, the court has asked you to look at involuntary”—I say “confinement,” but that's not the right word. It just escapes me right now.

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Interjection: Detention.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Detention. Thank you. We have work that has been done for the exact same process of involuntary admission and detention into a psychiatric facility, but I'm afraid, with the very little bit of time that we have allocated to this, we won't be able to. Let's get this right, Speaker.

When I took the briefing on this, there was a sense of panic in me because I know that the deadline is there. So in my panicky state, I asked, "What will happen on December 23?" Because not too many bills go to second reading, committee, third reading, and royal assent in six weeks—very, very few.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Only when time-allocated.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Even with time allocation, it'll be a tough go. But, yet, can you hear the tick, tick, tick of 339 people who are presently held on a form 4 in maximum security psychiatric hospitals throughout our province, who are also going, "Tick, tick, tick, my turn will come up. This law is null and void. Here's my key to freedom. Let me out now. You have no right to told me back"—because the court said that we had no right to hold them back. When the judge, and I will quote from the judge again, knew that we could not simply open the door and let the 339 people who were presently on repeat form 4 go out, he did say that—give me a second to find exactly what he said. "By failing to provide the board with powers"—he basically says that he would give us a year to do this. He was ready to do this right now, but understood that there were going to be severe implications if he did that, so he gave us a year to do that.

So here I am at my briefing, and I asked the questions that I'm sure everybody being briefed would have asked: "What happens if we miss the target? What happens if, on December 10, we rise and we have not quite finished this bill? December 22 rolls around and it's 'Merry Christmas, everybody. Here's the door. See you soon'?" What I was told was that they have already asked the court this question, and the answer that came back was, "You will get a three-month extension." So quickly, you go December 23, January, February—all right. We will have been back in here for all of three to four weeks. Okay. We've just gained three to four weeks. This is still a complex piece of legislation. Or you don't get the grant for an extension and, on 23rd, you have to re-form everyone. Basically, you have to start back at—remember, at the beginning of my speech, I explained form 1, 72 hours; form 3, two weeks; form 4, one month; re-form 4, two months—you get the point.

Interjection: It's just revictimization.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Revictimization, but can you see that some of them don't want to be in a psychiatric hospital anymore? Some of them would very much like to be free in the community, without any treatment plan, without any medication, without anything, and they can hear their clock ticking, too.

I don't want to scare people. That's not what I'm there to do, but there is a risk, Speaker. There is a risk. To say that we will re-form all of those people through form 1, form 3, form 4, and everything will go clickety-clack; and that the psychiatrists will be there in time to sign the

report so that we—who are we kidding here? Psychiatrists are human beings just like everybody else. You have to re-form everybody for 72 hours, and then do form 3, and 72 hours later—this is not going to happen. Some are going to fall through the cracks. Some are going to bolt out the door.

The question remains: Why didn't the government bring this bill forward sooner? I don't understand those things. It's not like we're opposed to it—not at all; much to the opposite. It takes a court order to get the government to talk about mental health. Speaker, I could talk about mental health every day.

I know that we fail more people than we help. I know there are solutions that exist in those 16 reports that are gathering dust that would make our mental health system way better than it is now. I know there are people in need, right now, who don't get the care they need. I know there are kids on wait-lists who will age out of the kids' system before they get onto any sort of support. I want our mental health system to do better.

Finally, a court mandated us to talk about mental health in this House—yay—and then I have this thing that comes in September and second reading that starts on October 26, with a deadline that's keeping me up at night. Why is it that every time we talk about mental health, it has to be so difficult? Why is it that there has to be kicking and screaming before the government will put a piece of legislation forward that helps people with mental illness? I don't get this. I don't like this. I want us to do better. We owe it to them to do better than this, but I'm stuck with a government that controls the agenda.

They say, "Oh, it'll be discussed at House leaders'." Well, without breaching any secrets of the House leaders' meetings, let me tell you that there is no such discussion. They come with the schedule and say, "We're talking about 122 on Monday afternoon, and this on Tuesday, and this on Wednesday, and this is it." If it's not there, it is not there. It's not like I can say, "Hey, listen. I'm really worried. Bill 122 has to be talked about again." If it were up to me, we would talk about nothing else this week so that we have a chance to make this bill as strong as we can, so that it can move forward before Christmas—but not at all; we have it on the docket once, today, and for the rest of the week, forget it. It's disappointing.

Je viens d'apercevoir qu'il ne reste que trois minutes 50 secondes, et j'aimerais dire quelques commentaires en français.

Je suis en train de parler de la Loi visant à modifier la Loi sur la santé mentale et la Loi de 1996 sur le consentement aux soins de santé. La raison pour laquelle on parle de ce projet de loi est que la Cour d'appel de l'Ontario nous en a obligé.

Il y a des gens qui ont des problèmes de santé mentale et qui sont confinés dans un hôpital psychiatrique à cause d'une procédure qu'on appelle formulaire numéro 4. Avec ce formulaire-là, on peut garder les gens dans un hôpital psychiatrique à l'infinité. La Cour d'appel de l'Ontario a regardé ça et a dit que ça devrait être changé. Ils nous ont donné 12 mois pour faire le changement.

Douze mois pour faire le changement? Les 12 mois ont commencé le 23 décembre 2014. Neuf mois plus tard, le gouvernement a présenté le projet de loi 122. C'était au mois de septembre. On a dû attendre un autre mois avant qu'ils l'amène, et ça nous amène à aujourd'hui. Donc, entre le 23 décembre et le 26 octobre, très, très peu a été fait. Pourtant, c'était une belle opportunité puisqu'on va rouvrir la Loi sur la santé mentale pour faire des changements à cette loi-là.

Il y a eu 16 différents rapports qui ont été faits par les différents gouvernements de l'Ontario pour apporter des modifications à la Loi sur la santé mentale. La loi n'a pas été changée depuis 1996. Entre 1996 et 2015, il s'en est passé des choses dans la santé mentale. On ne regarde plus la santé mentale et on ne la traite plus de la façon qu'on l'a traitée en 1996. Tout a changé. Que tu regardes les traitements, que tu regardes les médicaments, que tu regardes la façon dont les gens interagissent avec les gens qui ont des problèmes de santé mentale, tout a changé. La loi aussi doit changer.

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On a une opportunité—ce n'est pas une opportunité; on a une obligation d'y faire des changements parce que la Cour d'appel nous a dit qu'on devait faire des changements. De nous limiter à une période de temps de cinq semaines pour faire des changements à une loi qui a tellement besoin de changements, je trouve ça un manque de respect total—un manque de respect pour nous et un manque de respect pour les gens qui ont des problèmes de santé mentale. Je ne comprends pas pourquoi le gouvernement est si négligeant quand ça vient à s'assurer qu'on a un bon système de santé mentale et de bonnes lois pour l'encadrer.

Mais les faits demeurent. On a un projet de loi qui doit passer la deuxième lecture, aller en comité, faire clause-par-clause et recevoir troisième lecture, ainsi que la sanction royale, avant le 10 décembre. C'est quasiment du jamais vu, même avec un projet de loi pour lequel on a tellement de gens qui veulent être entendus et tellement de gens qui veulent avoir des changements.

I thank you for giving me this opportunity to put a few things on the record regarding Bill 122. Bill 122 has some good steps in it to look at the directive that was given to us by the Ontario Court of Appeal. This opportunity to open up the Mental Health Act will come with a lot of people wanting to be heard. I sure want to be respectful to everybody who wants to be heard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for her comments.

I'm happy to have a couple of minutes on Bill 122, the Mental Health Act. I want to begin by thanking the minister for his work on this file. Also, I know the parliamentary assistant has done a great bit of work on this as well. I know it's a difficult file for the minister, and I want to begin by acknowledging his efforts in this regard.

I've heard him speak on this particular legislation, Bill 122, the Mental Health Act, and the work that went into bringing the legislation forward on two or three different

occasions. I know it is, without a doubt, a difficult file for him, where he has tried very hard, as best he is able, to balance the rights of the individuals who are the subject of this discussion with the broader public safety issues that are associated with what we're bringing forward. It's not easy.

At the root of this is a Court of Appeal decision that has decided that the involuntary detention of mental health patients in psychiatric facilities beyond a fixed period of time is seen to be in conflict with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms—I think it's section 7 of the charter. It's been ruled that the legislation, as it's currently constructed, does not accommodate the charter provisions. So the minister has been tasked with bringing forward a piece of legislation that will try and bring the Mental Health Act into conformance with the charter.

I know that he has brought amendments forward that we're hopeful will receive the support of both sides of the House so that we can move forward on this—as I've said, a very, very difficult issue. The more we're talking about mental health and its issues in the broader public today is always a good thing. Helping to do anything that we can to remove the stigma associated with mental health and its consequences is a good thing. I'll close on that front, Speaker, as my time is up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions or comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: That was Frank Underwood, but I don't have a ring on.

It's a pleasure to comment on the speech by the critic for the third party. I give her a lot of credit. She does her homework, she does her research and she always has a very, very interesting and informative address for this Legislature. I appreciate the work that you do, I say that to the member from Nickel Belt.

To the Minister of Natural Resources: He's right. The more we talk about this, the better it is, but we must do more than talk as well. I'm going to have a chance, I hope—I hope, before they invoke closure on this bill, I'm going to have a chance to speak. I am already, I say to Lucas over there in the under press, anticipating the closure motion on this bill, which will come, because this is how this government works. But I'm hoping that I'll have a chance to speak a little bit on a personal basis.

My grandmother spent the last 32 years of her life in a mental institution, when things were treated a whole lot different than they are today. Are there improvements that could be made? Yes, there are. This bill will start working on that, but we have to really rethink—not just talk about it—how we deal with people who are suffering from mental illness. I was just speaking to a constituent of mine today, a gentleman who is under the auspices of Community Living. He's now incarcerated because of, yes, inappropriate behaviour. But we have to ask ourselves, are those the kind of people that we should be having in our correctional system, or should they be taken care of in our psychiatric system?

There are shortcomings from every direction. I understand the problem is bigger, sometimes, than we can solve in a day. This is a good start, but as I said to the

minister, yes, we need to talk about it, but we also have to work to find solutions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you to the member from Nickel Belt for doing her hour lead in such a comprehensive way and giving us the context of how this bill came to this place and why it is so important.

For me, I just want to say that there are a number of issues that actually are playing themselves out right now in the province of Ontario, but when this—she mentioned the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions—committee travelled around the province and heard first-hand what the real experiences of people in this province are with regards to accessing resources, and the recommendations came out, this was a moment of hope for people outside of this place.

I was at the time the chair of the mental health coalition, which brought school boards and all partners, from public health to police forces, to the table. We were genuinely hopeful that these recommendations would be put in place, and to hear that really only half of one of these recommendations has been acted upon is disappointing. I must say that there is an opportunity here, though. The act is open; we have the chance to show real leadership on the mental health portfolio. Just to revisit the fact that we have people who have been detained for so long, and that balance of their rights and their illnesses and the lack of control that they have and the options that they have, is discouraging.

One of the recommendations from this report said, “The core basket of mental health and addictions services should be available to the incarcerated population, and discharge plans for individuals with a mental illness or addiction should be expanded to include the services of a system....” For me, coming from Waterloo region, it’s hard not to think of Ashley Smith, who had a disgusting experience in the justice system, which ended in her suicide while being detained.

This is the opportunity for leadership, and thank you very much to the member from Nickel Belt for her leadership.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It’s a pleasure to respond to the member from Nickel Belt. Her presentation, obviously, showed her passion for mental health.

What I would like to say is that there have been significant investments by this government and previous governments in mental health. The challenge, as we all know here, is that we have limited resources to work with. It’s very hard for us to meet the needs, so we have to continually work to make sure that we are investing in the right way to make sure people get what they need.

I take to heart what the member from Nickel Belt said in terms of the timing of the bill; we have a fairly tight time frame right now. I’m encouraged by the fact that the

bill was tabled on September 23, which I think is four weeks or so—ample time. I’m sure the member has been briefed on it and has had a chance to look at it. I haven’t heard a lot of suggestions in terms of amendments to the bill in the debate today, but I’m encouraged by the fact that we’re talking about it, and there’s some suggestion that there’s an understanding of the deadline.

As the Minister of Natural Resources said, this is a very difficult issue. This is balancing people’s rights to their liberty with their interest and the public interest. The Mental Health Act did not provide for the continued committal to be commensurate with the circumstances that existed. This is a very specific piece of legislation to address a very specific need, with a timeline on it.

We know what the task is in front of us. We all agree that this is something that we have to do, and I think it’s entirely doable for us to do this. We don’t have to open up the Mental Health Act in order to achieve what we need to achieve to make sure that we comply with the court order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Nickel Belt for final comments.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The Court of Appeal said, “The declaration of severance was suspended for 12 months so that Ontario’s government could respond with legislative changes.” That has to do with the fact that the court decided that there was a breach of the rights of P.S. under the charter and that we need to make changes. The changes will be changes to the Mental Health Act. The Mental Health Act has not been changed for 20 years and is in dire need of change. Many, many different reports say that the Mental Health Act needs change.

So we have this piece of legislation that more or less complies with what the court has asked us to do. As the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry said, the minister put forward, to the best of his ability, what could be a response to the court—and I have no doubt that the minister has many abilities to do this, but if you take the abilities of 107 of us, we have even more. If you take the time to listen to what people who want to be on the record have to say, we have an opportunity to respond to the spirit of what the court wanted us to do even better, and we will go into this when some of my colleagues take the floor later on, whenever later on will happen.

I wanted to set the tone today: that it is going in the right direction, but we can do better than this for an issue that is so fundamental to the freedom of people with mental illness; that is, to be held against your will in a psychiatric hospital.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I’d like to thank all members for the debate this afternoon. The time for debate has now expired.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Since it is now just shortly after 6 o’clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1803.

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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	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
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
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonnell, 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
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka 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) Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	York–Simcoe 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) Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Halton 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) Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Essex 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) Potts, Arthur (LIB) Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB) Rinaldi, Lou (LIB) Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB) Sattler, Peggy (NDP) Scott, Laurie (PC)	Perth–Wellington Beaches–East York Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord Northumberland–Quinte West Guelph London West / London-Ouest Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP) Smith, Todd (PC) Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB) Tabuns, Peter (NDP) Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB) Taylor, Monique (NDP) Thibeault, Glenn (LIB) Thompson, Lisa M. (PC) Vanthof, John (NDP) Vernile, Daiene (LIB) Walker, Bill (PC) Wilson, Jim (PC)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton Prince Edward–Hastings Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud Toronto–Danforth Mississauga–Erindale Hamilton Mountain Sudbury Huron–Bruce Timiskaming–Cochrane Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound Simcoe–Grey	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB) Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt 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) Yurek, Jeff (PC) Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB) Vacant	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke Elgin–Middlesex–London Willowdale Whitby–Oshawa	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: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier / Greffière: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Toby Barrett, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
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
Jim McDonnell, Eleanor McMahon
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Robert Bailey, Vic Dhillon
John Fraser, Wayne Gates
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Cristina Martins, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Randy Hillier, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qadri
Laurie Scott
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jack MacLaren
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Steve Clark
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Eleanor McMahon, Monte McNaughton
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 / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Jennifer K. French
Monte Kwinter, Amrit Mangat
Kathryn McGarry, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Daiene Vernile, Bill Walker
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier / Greffière: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Norm Miller
Jagmeet Singh, Peter Tabuns
Glenn Thibeault
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment /
Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère sexuel**

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Sylvia Jones
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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