



No. 163

N° 163

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 41st Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 19 April 2016

Mardi 19 avril 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



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Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 19 April 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 19 avril 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): During the next two days, the House will be paying tribute to deceased members Gary Leadston and Peter Kormos. I ask all members to have their memories in their minds during prayers this week.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS MODERNIZATION ACT, 2016 LOI DE 2016 SUR LA MODERNISATION DES ÉLECTIONS MUNICIPALES

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 14, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 181, An Act to amend the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 and to make complementary amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 181, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: Good morning, everyone. I'm pleased to be with you this morning to further debate Bill 181, the Municipal Elections Modernization Act, 2016. The bill is proposing, as it stands now, to implement a ranked ballot system starting in 2018. There are a few details that are missing, so we're a little concerned about that.

My colleague from Oxford is our critic for municipal affairs and housing. He did a great hour leadoff speech, which is sometimes difficult to do on topics, but there's always lots to speak about in regard to municipalities. He highlighted—and this is repeated constantly in the Legislature; certainly by members of the opposition it is—the lack of public consultation that was required before municipalities can change to a ranked ballot election.

What worries me is that the minister has made comments on this issue that actually overlook the concerns of a lot of our municipalities. He said on record that “any municipality can hold a referendum on any issue. Some may choose this route. So be it.” How can that be it? If we're going to be redesigning our local democratic process, we need more protection than “so be it.” I think it's pretty naive and, I will say, a tad condescending, and it certainly runs contrary to what the Premier has said

herself. She has said before that the Liberal Party was the one that championed open discussions on our municipal elections.

When this bill goes to committee, I certainly look forward to the government waking up and realizing that this Legislature should work with municipal officials to ensure that the bill reflects what they need to run modern, accessible, democratic and effective municipal elections. How can we have sections of the legislation be overruled by regulation despite going through this entire process in this chamber?

I'm also concerned that the bill currently contains no requirement for a referendum before changing the electoral system. I think there's a bit of a déjà vu there with what's going on federally and what they propose also.

But back to the provincial here: In 2007, the minister responsible for democratic renewal said that when it comes to the issue of provincial referendums, “Our democracy belongs to its citizens, and it is the voters of this province that should decide how their representatives should be elected.” I remember that election campaign because the referendum question of changing how we elect members was on that ballot, and there were a lot of long discussions at doorsteps explaining the mixed-member proportional representation alternative, especially in rural Ontario, where they actually want to directly elect their representatives and know who they are. That I remember as being a long campaign. Other issues were involved, but that was a long one that was quite a discussion at the doorstep. In fact, I know that Toronto city council passed a resolution, in October 2015, recommending that the province not proceed with amending the Municipal Elections Act to provide for ranked choice voting, and that if the province did proceed with this change, it should only be permitted after holding public consultations and a referendum.

I've come across several research papers that rightly point out that neither our Constitution Acts of 1867 nor 1982 recognize municipal governments as an order of government; that our towns, cities, villages and hamlets are simply creatures of the province. I get that a lot in my communities, and it is true; and I explain a lot that municipalities are the product of the provincial Legislature.

But times have changed, and now municipalities are taking on more and more responsibilities, even within the limited capacity of their small budgets. Scholars and academics have argued repeatedly that municipalities should be recognized as a competent and mature level of government. Now we see this government making unilateral changes without any sense of comprehensive or adequate

consultation, and without putting this issue directly to the people it will affect.

On the issue of third-party advertising, the bill proposes to have third-party advertisers register with a municipality, display their name and contact information on signs, and be subject to contribution and spending limits. Campaign contribution restrictions, including municipal bylaws to prohibit contributions from trade unions and corporations, would also apply to third-party advertising.

In order to register as a third-party advertiser, an individual, trade union or corporation must be an eligible contributor in that municipality. This means that when those parties are prohibited from contributing, they are also prohibited from registering as third-party candidates. Registered candidates and political parties are prohibited from registering as third-party advertisers. That's a lot to say so early in the morning, Mr. Speaker.

Although Bill 181 touches on third-party advertising, it does not prevent campaign contributions from unions and corporations. It simply gives municipalities the authority to pass a bylaw restricting these contributions. Also, donations up to \$25 will now not be considered contributions. There will also be a new spending limit on holding parties and other expressions of appreciation after voting closes.

The registration for municipal elections will now begin on May 1 instead of January 1. I know that, certainly in the big cities, everyone is waiting to see who is actually going to put their name forward on the first day of January. Now, that's going to be moved to May 1. That does address concerns that the municipal campaign is too long.

The nomination cut-off on the fourth Friday in July could have a very negative impact on people who want to run for council and will actually result in a longer writ period. For those watching at home, that means a longer period for the official campaign—usually those who are watching at 9-something in the morning on a Tuesday would know what a writ period is.

Anyway, municipal employees who want to run for local office will now have to be off the job and without pay for 13 weeks, up from the previous six weeks. That creates a huge barrier to running for office, and I don't think the government or anybody in the Legislature really wants more barriers to running for office.

Having municipal elections for a minimum of 13 weeks, which is more than three months, makes it difficult for people who have to take such a long leave of absence. Unfortunately, this hurts so many local leaders, and I will bring up volunteer firefighters as an example. Bill 181 will remove the leave of absence exemption for volunteer firefighters, meaning that if they run for municipal office, they will be unable to volunteer for that same period of time.

0910

This hurts our local communities. Especially in rural Ontario, we are short of trained people needed to fight fires and save lives, and we rely heavily on volunteer firefighters. This is something that definitely should be

addressed. In fact, I was just at one of my many volunteer appreciation dinners on the weekend, and the great number there were the volunteer firefighters that are so praised up in Wilberforce, in my township of Highlands East. This is such a serious issue, and it will have a real effect on our communities and on our people. That's just one example of the consequences that legislation can have without adequate consultation and input from the public.

I'm going to speak quickly; I have only a minute left here, Mr. Speaker. On the issue of filing financial statements, Bill 181 would see the nomination fee being refunded for candidates once the financial statements and auditor's report are filed with the clerk. Currently, if a candidate fails to file their financial statements and auditor's report on time, they are automatically removed from office and unable to stand in the next election. This measure is not strong enough. I'm glad that Bill 181 does address this issue somewhat, so that if someone misses the deadline, they could file in the 30 days after paying the clerk a \$500 late fee.

There are some other positive changes that the bill is proposing, but as a whole, especially on the issue of ranked ballots—we should still see this question put directly to the people. The bill does, in some parts, strengthen accountability requirements by having the clerk make an accessibility plan and adding a new requirement for the post-election accessibility report to be made public.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the time that I've had this morning—a little shorter than I thought—to speak to Bill 181, and I look forward to comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to be able to rise this fine Tuesday morning and add comments on Bill 181, which is the Municipal Elections Modernization Act. I think that when we see bills come through like this we hope that it encourages engagement. I don't know how many people are watching this morning, on a Tuesday morning, but they are already the engaged. So this conversation really is for those in the broader public.

To the comments from my colleague from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, she had made the point that if we are going to be protecting our democracy, we need more from the government than—I think the words were, "So be it." We need full investment and commitment. We talk a lot about consultation in this House, whether we're saying that there isn't enough and the government promises that there will be—and then there isn't and it isn't significant enough or it isn't widespread enough. But when we're talking about "modernizing" or maybe "optimizing" or whatever the buzzwords are—but improving and strengthening our democracy, we need everyone involved. Our municipalities should be having full input.

I didn't quite catch the comment from the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock about municipalities being treated like—you didn't say "treated like grown-ups," but given the full credit that they deserve for

the important level of government that they are and really bringing them in, because this is about them, about their communities, how to make democracy more accessible.

I should mention the accessibility plan, that we want to reduce barriers. But I think that part of engaging in the democratic process isn't just about sheer numbers; it is about the issues, it is about what is accomplished.

I know that my colleagues will be talking a lot about the third-party advertising and that piece. I'm out of time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I listened with great interest to the comments by the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. She wasn't part of the former government when in her own riding I remember people were crying. Faye McGee from Fenelon Falls said, "Why are you forcing amalgamation on the people of Fenelon Falls?" Your former government created this megacity that nobody wanted. All of the rural municipalities said, "We don't want the megacity of Kawartha Mistakes," as they used to call it. They wanted independent, small municipalities, and you didn't listen to all the people in your area.

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: Excuse me. You weren't part of the government.

The same thing happened in Hamilton. They made this megacity of Hamilton through into Aldershot and Dundas. The people in those communities said, "Please, we don't want this megacity. Government, please listen."

In Toronto, we had a massive referendum; thousands voted. They all said no megacity; the former government said, "We don't care what you say, local municipalities—East York, York, North York—we're making the megacity."

In Ottawa, the same thing: They made the biggest municipality in the world in Ottawa and the people said, "Wow. This is too big a city. How are we going to get real local democracy when you create this mega monster city of Ottawa?"

This legislation is not perfect, but I just want to give a bit of history about people who preach about local democracy, respecting municipalities, when I know full well—I was in this chamber when small municipalities, rural municipalities, came here and pleaded to be heard and the former government said, "No. We know what's best. You're getting your megacities. Just be quiet. We know what's best." And they moved on.

So, please, just a little bit of historical perspective here. This bill at least tries to open it up a bit for some more input.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's always a pleasure to rise to debate in the assembly, particularly when my colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock has provided us with, I think, a sound debate with good ideas on the floor of the assembly.

Of course, I'm very disappointed in the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. He wants to talk about a government

decision from four governments ago. At some point, this Liberal government has to take responsibility for its own actions and the way it treats municipalities across this province.

In defence of my colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, she's got a beautiful riding. She has a riding that has been attacked by this Liberal government with respect to horse racing, with respect to casinos and modernization. They're also talking about hydro rates, which is very important because she also comes from a community, not dissimilar to mine, where local decision-making was stripped from municipalities by the Green Energy Act and they were forced to deal with unwanted wind turbines in her community.

If we want to talk about local government and respect for local government, I think the member opposite might want to be aware of what his government has done to rural municipalities, and even urban municipalities like mine in Ottawa, across this province.

I'm also getting very disappointed with this Liberal government each and every day I stand here. When a Progressive Conservative or a New Democrat comes up with an idea, it is immediately panned by the members opposite. They don't take any criticism seriously. They don't think the thoughtful points that we bring forward on behalf of our constituents and our stakeholders are relevant. I'm here to say, Speaker, that my colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes actually did bring forward some valid points and I think that the Liberal government would be best suited and well-informed if they would work with her, work with our leader, work with our critic on some of these matters of the day, particularly as it pertains to Bill 181, but there are a number of other issues where they could learn a little bit from this side of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's a pleasure to rise, as always, to bring the voice of my constituents from Windsor West and to speak about Bill 181, which I had an opportunity to speak a little more in depth to last week, during debate. I think that there have been a lot of great points brought forward from the two parties on this side, the two opposition parties. The member from Nepean–Carlton really summed it up nicely when she said that perhaps the Liberal side of the House needs to be listening to this side of the House, because as I've pointed out in previous debate, we are here to bring the concerns of our constituents—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock, please.

I would ask the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—you're in direct line with the Speaker. Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's the job of all MPPs, regardless of what party you are from, whether it's New Democrats, whether it's Conservatives or whether it's Liberals, to represent your constituents and bring the voice of your constituents to the chamber. It's unfortunate because

we've seen over and over and over again more frequently that the government side is not listening to this side of the House.

Not only are they not listening to this side of the House, but when we do have constituents come forward and speak to the government, they're not listening to the constituents—the stakeholders—when they come to them directly. That's one of my concerns about this bill: They are ramming it through without fulsome consultation. How much time have the stakeholders actually had to have a say in this legislation?

0920

I seem to recall that last week, when I was up for debate, they were saying, "We consulted beforehand." That's great: Get some ideas beforehand. But once you've actually drafted the legislation, it's important to go back to the stakeholders and say, "This is what we've come up with. Is this what you were thinking of? What concerns do you have about it? What good things do you see in this bill?"

I think that it would serve the government well to actually listen to those of us on this side of the House and the stakeholders who come forward when they want to be part of consultation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now back to the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the comments from the members from Oshawa, Nepean–Carleton and Windsor West.

The member from Eglinton–Lawrence: There's lots of history to be learned in the last 13 years that you've been here in government. You had an opportunity to do some things in my riding, but you chose not to—or your minister over there, and I won't get into names; the minister is not here anymore—on municipal affairs when you first got elected there in 2003.

My colleagues have made good points about not listening to our municipalities, and that is our obligation here in the Legislature: to bring forward the concerns of our municipalities. The member for Nepean–Carleton listed off a long list of things that they have done in rural municipalities—taking out our horse racing, and taking out our slots at racetracks and giving them to the bright lights of the city of Peterborough and the possible new casino. We're still going to fight that.

Industrial wind turbines: My goodness, how much do we have to continue to fight at that—

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm getting a signal here. Through the Speaker, I say to the Legislature: Industrial wind turbines are being forced upon rural municipalities, in environmentally protected areas and beside airports. I know that Peterborough Airport, which actually is in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock—proposed industrial wind turbines by airports that have flight schools.

None of this makes sense, and this government has heard from us on all these topics. As per what has been going on for several bills, not just for Bill 181 today, they

have not listened to either the opposition parties or the people in our municipalities. And guess what? We're citizens of Ontario too, and we deserve to be listened to.

I end on that, Mr. Speaker, and hope they make changes to this bill at least.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? The member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's my turn now. Be quiet, you.

Mr. Speaker, good morning to you. It's a beautiful morning outside. I enjoyed my walk into Queen's Park this morning.

Just think about it: Two years from now, we're going to be potentially putting this piece of legislation into action.

Over the weekend, I met with the Algoma municipal leadership across Algoma–Manitoulin. In my riding of Algoma–Manitoulin, we have 37 municipalities. I can tell you with pretty good certainty, Mr. Speaker, that Bill 181, the Municipal Elections Modernization Act, was not discussed with many of them, because—

Mr. Mike Colle: Why not?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm going to tell you.

I was standing with them. We talked about various other pieces of legislation that were going through the House, which they were aware of. When I talked to them, I looked at them all. There were roughly about, I would say, 15 to 20 municipalities in one room. I asked everybody, "How familiar are you with Bill 181?"

I don't know if you've ever had this drive, Mr. Speaker, but sometimes, when you're driving through my riding late in the evening, your lights will hit a whole bunch of eyes, and they're deer eyes. They don't know where to go, and that's what happened during that discussion: A lot of those mayors or even councillors were not aware of what this was going to do. They're very much in favour of having some reform. They know that it's coming. But some of the suggestions that have come through this piece of legislation are quite concerning, particularly in my riding of Algoma–Manitoulin, and for other members across the north and within smaller municipality structures.

One of the things that is really concerning is the potential impact that this might have on community firefighters. We wear various hats within our communities. I see my friend across the way, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. You know what I'm talking about. Many of these individuals are not only your volunteer firefighters. Some of them are the mayors. Some of them are your councillors. Some of them are your individuals that are sitting on the school boards. Some of them are your recreational-activity individuals.

This is somewhat concerning in this bill. We need to make sure that those community leaders are extremely well consulted about the negative impact that this might bring to their communities, because we have limited resources in our communities. It's not that our resources are any better or any worse. It's just that our resources,

and the individuals that are there, we rely on them on a regular basis to step up and take care of those communities.

I want to try and cover a few other things within my short time that I have here this morning, Mr. Speaker.

This bill was greeted with some enthusiasm by people in my community and by progressives everywhere in this province, who do see some of the benefit of ranked balloting. New Democrats support reform that strengthens local democracy and removes the influence that comes with big money in municipal elections. However, ranked ballot provisions are packaged in Bill 181 with a number of other initiatives that do raise concerns.

In particular, we are very concerned about the third-party advertising provision. Also, the general public has not been given enough information on this bill. We certainly want to make sure that that third-party advertising is not intended to silence individuals or organizations within our community. That's what we want to make sure doesn't happen, and that's why this needs to be a greater discussion. Everyone who sits here knows well that the Liberal track record on respect for democracy has been poor. Whether it is one of their past large scandals or recent revelations of big-ticket fundraising—even in events in order to meet fundraising quotas—it is clear how they don't hold much regard for transparency and democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I'm only giving this from a perspective of individuals across my riding. When I go into the Tim Hortons and I sit down and have a coffee with Mrs. Tremblay or Mr. Paquette, this is what they're telling me. They are completely frustrated when they're listening to the legislation that is being brought forward, but also by the lack of thoughtfulness by this government when they're making decisions.

The government's stripping away of the advertising act last year has resulted in taxpayers now paying for partisan commercials. Governments in provinces across the country, like BC, have used third-party advertising restrictions as a way to give candidates and well-resourced third parties a de facto monopoly on free speech during elections. We see this too often. Those well-financed lobby groups have more power to influence decisions, due to the fact that they are able to purchase access to those very decision-makers.

How it is currently written, this bill places serious restrictions on the ability of NGOs, charities and community groups to advocate for their issues during an election. I know that in the north, in my communities, many of these groups have very few resources and already have so much difficulty being heard. Usually it's once or twice a year that many of these municipalities have the opportunity, during ROMA/OGRA conferences, to discuss many of their issues. Many of the smaller organizations in Algoma-Manitoulin simply don't have the funds or access to speak to the government nor have their issues heard during an election.

0930

Many of the mayors I've spoken to over the weekend shared my concerns. We want to strengthen local democ-

racy, but not at the expense of having many of our communities' interests heard, especially during an election. When we talk about trust and it being a two-way street—other members have raised similar concerns.

On many occasions, the government has made funding announcements in my riding and they have failed to notify me or invite me to these events. Many of these projects are ones that I have been working on for significant amounts of time; however, the government uses these announcements to toot their own horn without acknowledging the hard work of opposition members on these files.

There are certainly some good pieces of this bill. I haven't had an opportunity to read all 65 pages of it yet, but I have to agree with many people who have actually spoken to this bill over the past few days to say that, yes, although the government did announce that they were going out to consult on the municipal act one year ago, they only tabled it a few days ago. Actually, I think it was April 4.

It is a big piece of legislation, and we need to make sure that we give it the focus that it needs. We need to get this right. We need to get it out in the public and really engage our municipalities. In having the discussions with the mayors that I've had across Algoma-Manitoulin, I'm glad that we will be engaging in that discussion. They're looking forward to engaging in the discussion.

My time is running out. How fast it is when you're having fun, Mr. Speaker.

In other areas of the province, it may not be much of an issue. Some of the municipal elections in my communities could have over a dozen people running for office at one time. This may not be such a big issue where other municipal elections would be held, such as here in Toronto.

As I've mentioned before, this is a very large bill. It was just tabled recently, and I am concerned that not enough due diligence was done in the duty to consult.

I want to remind you of the weekend that I had with the Algoma District Municipal Association over the course of the weekend, where some of those mayors were caught off guard with Bill 181.

I look forward to the coming weeks, when I can go home and do some of the consulting, speak with the northern mayors and councils and hear what their concerns are. Issues of concern in northern Ontario communities don't generally reflect those of larger urban areas—so we need to ensure that we do that. I will commit to those communities in Algoma-Manitoulin, to reach out to them and make sure that I get their feedback so their views are reflected here and we can bring a complement to this piece of legislation, to make sure that it doesn't create barriers or disadvantages either in northern communities or other communities across Ontario.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your time this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I appreciated the comments from the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. I think he is very sin-

cere when he says that he does listen to his local representatives and his local constituents. I commend him for that. I'm sure you're the same, Mr. Speaker. When you go to the local Timmy's in Chatham, they're not talking about municipal election reform; in your riding they're talking about the wonderful interest there is in locally grown products in Chatham-Kent, like the great soybeans you have and the tomatoes you have. That's what they're talking about.

I think we've got to somehow remember that the average person spends five minutes a month thinking about politics. What we need to do here is put this in perspective. There are interested parties, there are municipal leaders, there are associations like AMO and ROMA, and I think we need to bring them here to Queen's Park to hear their depositions on this because, as you know, Mr. Speaker, there are varying opinions on different parts of this bill. Some people like ranked ballots; some people don't even know what ranked ballots are. I don't know what they're saying in Chatham-Kent about ranked ballots; here in Toronto, one council said, "We love ranked ballots," and then as soon as the election took place they changed their mind and said, "We don't like ranked ballots." We don't really know where they stand here in Toronto on this issue.

I'm not sure where the NDP stands on ranked ballots, to tell you the truth. Are you in favour of ranked ballots or are you not? I haven't heard that. I'm not a great fan of ranked ballots; I'll tell you the truth. I think there are some issues with them. I think you should come forward and tell us what you think of ranked ballots, because there are some issues with them.

Anyway, this is a good discussion. This is what the core of this bill is: to get people thinking about the importance of some of these changes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for his presentation on Bill 181. I just wanted to say—and it relates too to what the member from Eglinton-Lawrence just mentioned about the fact that people don't seem to understand what ranked ballots even are. I think that's one of the most important things in this bill and the challenge we face with it. The fact is that municipalities are going to be allowed to implement ranked balloting for their municipal elections in 2018 when there's absolutely nothing in the bill that requires consultation with the public so they understand what ranked balloting is.

I mentioned this in my opening remarks, and the parliamentary assistant in his paper at home suggested, "No, no, the member from Oxford is wrong, because in fact, it's right in there that they must hold a public meeting." I checked the bill, and I would advise the member to read the bill because there is not a mention of a single public meeting about this issue in the bill. I think it's very important that that happens, because when you change the way you elect your council and the administration of your municipality—that in fact, people understand how

that's being done. I don't think that the local municipalities, just because it affects them in a positive way, should be allowed to implement a new balloting system.

When the province decided that we needed to look at a new balloting system, we went to the people. We did a referendum on it. Guess what? Even though the government of the day decided that maybe this was a good thing to put in the referendum, the people of Ontario said, "No, let's stick with the tried-and-true system that we presently have." It may be the worst system in the world—except for all the others. I think that we should at least do that for the people in municipalities so they can have a say in whether we change the way they get elected or not.

And again, in the final wrap-up, I would ask the parliamentary assistant to read the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's a pleasure to rise again today to speak to Bill 181, the Municipal Elections Modernization Act, 2016, and to add comments to what my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin said.

I just want to say the member from Algoma-Manitoulin is probably one of the most community-engaged MPPs that I know. All you have to do is look on his Facebook to see that he is all over his riding—and it's a large riding. It's not like Windsor West; it's a large riding. There's a great expanse of land, and he manages to get to every single corner of his riding. He does a lot for his communities. He's always talking to people. He's always engaged.

I think that's important to note because he does talk about legislation with his community, with his constituents. The problem is that when his constituents don't know about the legislation to begin with, it's the member from Algoma-Manitoulin who's highlighting it for them. It shows a failure on the government's side to actually get the legislation and the information out to the different ridings, to the constituencies.

A member from the opposite side was kind of alluding to how it was him dropping the ball, by the mayors and councillors not knowing about the legislation. But in fact, it is the government side that has failed to get the information out.

On that, I'd like to talk about what the member from Eglinton-Lawrence said, when he admitted that a lot of people don't know about the legislation. They don't know. The government side doesn't know where people stand, and that's the point. I'd like to thank him for making my point: The government side doesn't know because they're not consulting. They're not giving people enough time to have input. That's a problem—and it's not just on this legislation; it's on everything. All we have to do is look at the budget and how the finance committee hadn't even tabled a report before the budget came out. This is an ongoing problem, and I really think the government side needs to listen to communities and listen to the people on this side of the House.

0940

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I had the great pleasure to speak on this bill. I was in the House for a lot of the debates that took place on this bill. I think we're close to nine and a half hours on this very important bill.

Certainly, for me, having been part of the consultation, let's say, for Ottawa, and throughout the province—we know this is something that municipalities have asked for at various levels. We want to make sure the municipalities are ready for 2018.

I thank all members of this House for sharing their very valuable thoughts with us. Some thoughts need clarification. I think, on the opposite side, there were questions. I know that will be maybe be part of regulations. Having said this, I think it's time that we look at—throughout this process that I've had the pleasure of learning in the past two years is—I think it's time to refer the bill to committee. I would ask the House to consider it. I think when we talk about consultation—we did consult. We did go through the province. But from the valuable insight that we received from the opposition—now I think it's time to look at bringing it to committee, having the real work take place, the next part of our real work take place, and then bring it back to this House.

So I ask the members to consider referring this bill to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member for Algoma–Manitoulin for final comments.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Mr. Speaker, I'm somewhat disappointed with the last speaker, because that is exactly what frustrates constituents from my riding of Algoma–Manitoulin and across this province: when we hear words like, “We've had enough discussions.” No, we have not. We have not had an opportunity—each and every one of us here in this House—to bring those views forward and engage with our communities. This has just come to the House.

I want to thank the member from Ottawa–Orléans for having participated in the debate this morning.

To my colleague here from Windsor West: Yes, I do engage quite a bit with my communities, because that's how we can actually get more people engaged in our election process.

As the member from Eglinton–Lawrence said, the perspective from individuals is that we're in a bubble here. We think that everything we're doing here is out there. We fail to recognize that it's not getting out there because people are frustrated with what's happening here and have disengaged with this process. That's what our role is: When we go back to our communities, we go to each and every one of those corners and actually sit down and engage with someone to explain, “This is what's happening and this is why it's happening. This is what they're looking at. These are the good decisions. These are the bad decisions.” I believe that's our role as far as what we need to do.

We've always been in favour of proportional representation, my friend from Eglinton–Lawrence; that has always been there. We know that modernizations or changes to the elections act have been asked for. That's what we see coming.

Also, the member from Oxford: You're absolutely right—

Mr. Mike Colle: What's your position on ranked ballots?

Mr. Michael Mantha: On ranked ballots? People don't understand, like you just finished saying. You don't understand it yourself. You stood here and said the people didn't understand it. That's the point.

Hearing the member from Ottawa–Orléans indicating that it's time to send this to committee—it is not time to send this to committee. We need to have further discussion. So let's have that discussion. Don't shut down debate, like you've always done on other pieces of legislation. Allow me, on behalf of Algoma–Manitoulin, to bring those views forward, like every other MPP in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Interjections.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I really appreciate the welcome, and that members are that excited for me to speak and use my 10 minutes to talk about a very important bill.

Speaker, I'm pleased, and thank you for recognizing me to speak on Bill 181, the Municipal Elections Modernization Act.

I never had an opportunity to serve at the municipal level. I've been very privileged to be elected as a member of provincial Parliament. As all members in this House will recognize, in our jobs we engage and interact with our municipal leaders on a regular basis, and it's a very important part of our job to work on municipal issues that are important to our local communities, and I'm no exception, Speaker.

I've got four wards within my riding of Ottawa Centre. Within my community, I've got four city councillors who I have a very good working relationship with. We work very closely together, and our staff work very closely together as well, not to mention the mayor, who is actually a former member of this Legislature and who is a close friend and somebody who works extremely hard in representing our city. I have a great opportunity to work along with them.

I want to make a couple of points on this bill, but I will start with a very important premise that is very much an important part of this bill—on two key elements: the issue of ranked ballots, which has been heavily debated in this Legislature, and the issue around campaign financing. On both of those points, it is quite clear in this legislation, the onus to make decisions on behalf of their citizens, the primacy of elected representatives, is set to be on our local councillors. There is a recognition that the municipal governments are duly elected, that they are elected by our citizens in the communities that we represent, and they have a very important role in deciding what kind of municipal system they have in place.

There's a strong element of respect that is very much part of Bill 181. We have this discussion often that we have three orders of government in Canada; we don't

have three levels of government. There is no hierarchy between the three governments, between federal, provincial and municipal. What we have is three orders of government with their equal responsibilities and jurisdictions. A very important aspect in those three orders of government—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Actually, there is something called the Constitution.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I hear references to the Constitution, and I will ask members opposite to actually look at the Constitution. It speak of orders of government; it doesn't speak of levels of government. So I know what I'm speaking about in that regard.

When you look at the orders of government, Speaker, in order for those orders of government to work in a way that they represent the interests of citizens, there has to be respect and there has to be recognition that all three orders of government are duly elected. That principle, in my view, is very much part and parcel of this legislation, both on ranked ballots, for example, and on the issue of campaign financing, around placing a ban on corporate and union donations.

The authority to take those steps is not ordained in this legislation. The only thing this legislation does is give that opportunity to the municipal councils to make that decision on behalf of their citizens, because they are duly elected and they have the capacity to make those decisions. I think that's the right approach, that's the respectful way to take, as opposed to the provincial government telling municipal governments to do X, Y or Z. We're saying, "If you want to introduce ranked balloting in your community, in your municipality, then we're giving you the authority to do so, but the decision is yours." The same thing with putting a ban on corporate and union donations: "You have the capacity, just like we've given to the city of Toronto through their legislation, to make that particular decision." Because then you have got a robust, organic process within the local communities between elected representatives—the mayor and the city councillors—and the community who make those decisions. So I very much respect that fundamental notion in this legislation.

I want to quickly speak to ranked balloting. This is an issue that I have heard regularly about in my community. There's an organization called Ottawa123 who have been very active in this regard. I have received correspondence and have held meetings with constituents who have advocated in support of ranked balloting, and I'm happy to see that it's part of this legislation, giving, again, in the case of my city—the city of Ottawa and the city of Ottawa council—to make the determination whether they want to introduce ranked balloting or not. Of course, they would be required to go through a public consultation process as we all consult with the public and do so.

Speaker, I think that is a very important part of this legislation. I think if municipalities like Ottawa choose ranked balloting, it has a great potential of increasing voter participation, getting more people engaged in local decision-making which has a huge impact on our lives.

There are many other important aspects in this bill and I've been quite heartened to see the kind of passionate debate that has taken place on this issue and others.

I am very surprised to hear that the NDP somehow is against ranked balloting. I think that comes as a big surprise. I would think the NDP would be supportive of ranked ballots. At least that was my impression. I'll leave it up to them to answer to their constituents as to how they feel, because I think people who I've spoken to very much support the notion of ranked balloting as something that is an important step that we're taking to foster democracy in our province.

This is an important debate. There is a lot in this bill, as I've mentioned before. There have been about 10 hours of debate that have taken place in this Legislature. Almost half of the members have spoken on this, and I think it will be very important—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on a point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker. The minister has had the opportunity to speak to this bill, and I see where he's going, where others haven't.

Democracy is not a hockey game. It doesn't have a time limit. It's not 60 minutes. The clock doesn't run out on democracy, and never will. But I can see where this minister is going: He's about to bring down the guillotine on this—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. That is not a point of order.

Back to the minister.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Well, Speaker, thank you very much.

As I was saying, clearly there is a lot of passion and clearly there is a lot of interest from all sides that we should be doing more consultations in the committee process and listen to people.

I think it's an appropriate time to move this bill forward so municipalities have ample time to prepare as well for the next municipal election if this bill is passed. Speaker, I sincerely believe it's time that we put this bill to vote for second reading, and hopefully it will be referred to committee where important work takes place. There are many other important bills that we need to also debate in this House. Therefore, I move that the question be now put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Naqvi has moved that the question be now put. I am satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question be put to the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I believe I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion that the question be now put, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion that the question be now put, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, this vote will be deferred until after question period today.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Orders of the day. I recognize the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: No further business, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please. Since there is no further business this morning, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 0954 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Toby Barrett: We're welcoming chicken farmers today—and wings tonight. I know that Henry Zantingh, the chair of CFO, is here, and Ed Benjamins, Rob Dougans—and Michael Burrows, representing the chicken processors.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: We're delighted, of course, to have Zachary Gan as a page, but we're equally blessed today to have his mother in the gallery, Patricia Gan, and family friend Robert Baker. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I would like to introduce Tim Klompmaker and Murray Booy, who are both on the board of directors with the Chicken Farmers of Ontario. They're here with Team Ontario today for their annual Queen's Park day. They're meeting with members of the Legislature all day to talk about the chicken industry in our province—I met with them this morning—along with a new kosher chicken processing plant that will be opening soon in Ontario.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome Fran and Ian MacFarlane, grandparents of page MacFarlane Benham. Welcome to question period.

Mr. John Vanthof: On behalf of the New Democratic caucus, I would also like to welcome the chicken farmers and processors here today. It's a great industry.

We have some friends from MPAC here as well.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's chicken day at Queen's Park. I'd like to welcome representatives from Ontario's chicken industry. Welcome to the board members, district committee representatives and staff from the Chicken Farmers of Ontario, including Henry Zantingh, who is the CFO board chair, and Michael Burrows, who is the board chairman for the association of chicken producers for the province of Ontario. I'd like to recognize Tim Klompmaker, who is the director and resides in my riding of Peterborough.

I encourage all of you to come out to the chicken farmers' reception this evening in the Legislature dining room from 5 to 7. It'll be a wingding of a time.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd love to take this opportunity to introduce Adrian Rehorst. He's a great ambassador for the Chicken Farmers of Ontario and a proud farmer from Bruce county.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to introduce, in the members' gallery—we have page Ariel Wendling with us. Her grandmother Denise Lafontaine is here, and her mom, Rosanne Wendling, with her daughters Kyara, Mia and Matteya, who have been pages formerly. Welcome.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: It's my pleasure to introduce a school from my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood: grade 12 students from Cedarbrae Collegiate. Welcome.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to introduce individuals from the great riding of Oxford: Marty Graf, the chief executive officer of Community Living Tillsonburg, and my constituents Fran and Ian MacFarlane, who are visiting today to watch their grandson, page MacFarlane Benham. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have some friends from the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. here today: Dave Settington is here from Leamington; the mayor of Stratford, Dan Mathieson, is here; and I believe the mayor of Thunder Bay, Keith Hobbs, is in the building or expected soon.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'd like to introduce a very good friend of mine, Kelly Dunn, who brought her grade 12 class from Cedarbrae Collegiate to the Legislature today.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I've got to introduce as well Henry Zantingh, the chair of the Chicken Farmers, because he's the chair and he's from my riding, in Smithville, and if I don't recognize him he cuts off my chicken supply. Adrian Rehorst is also here from the Chicken Farmers; and Rick Kaptein, Murray Booy, Henk Lise, Murray Opsteen, Mark Hermann, Michael Edmonds and Kathryn Goodish.

My last introduction, to save you some time: I also want to recognize a former mayor of Dryden and the premier of the north, Craig Nuttall. Craig, it's good to see you here as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Chicken for everybody.

Further introductions?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I have two introductions, if I may. I'd like to welcome representatives from MPAC who are here today, and Dan Mathieson, board chair of MPAC. They'll be hosting their second annual Queen's Park day today and will be hosting a reception this evening in rooms 228 and 230. Welcome, all members from MPAC.

I would also like to introduce visitors: Carlos Morgadinho, who is the president of the 25th of April Cultural Association—Toronto's 25 de Abril—which is a Carnation Revolution honour from Portugal, as well as board members Manuel Martins and Tomas Ferreira. Their guests from Portugal include Kernel Rui Guimarães and his wife, Adalberto Loureiro. Bem-vindo ao Ontario.

Remarks in Portuguese.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm really excited to welcome, from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex today, Wade Miliken, Rick Collier and Bill Rayburn.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I'm proud to welcome today, from my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry,

Grand Chief Abram Benedict and Chief Ryan Jacobs. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to welcome a good friend of mine to the House today: the mayor of St. Catharines, Mr. Walter Sendzik.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome Alf Chaiton, who is a constituent and lives in my riding of Ottawa Centre and is a member of the MPAC board, who are visiting here at Queen's Park. Welcome, Alf.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would members please join me in welcoming the family and friends of the late Gary Leadston, MPP for Kitchener–Wilmot during the 36th Parliament, who are seated in the Speaker's gallery: his wife, Anna, and friends Bonnie Devries, Paul and Wendy Pickett, and Dave Cannon. Mr. Leadston is survived—

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You got ahead of me. Mr. Leadston is survived by his four sons and their families, who could not be here with us today: Sean Leadston and his wife, Lee; David Leadston and his wife, Jessica; Steven Evoy and his wife, Kari; and Christopher Evoy and his wife, Tanya; and grandchildren Ethan, Violet, Hudson, Lincoln, Isaac and Parker. Welcome.

Also with us in the gallery is Mr. Steve Gilchrist, MPP for Scarborough East during the 36th and 37th Parliaments. Welcome and thank you very much.

GARY LEADSTON

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I believe you will find we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to Gary Leadston, former member for Kitchener–Wilmot, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister is seeking unanimous consent to pay tribute. Do we agree? Agreed.

I think we have arranged tributes. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm honoured to rise today to offer tribute to former MPP for Kitchener–Wilmot Gary Leadston.

Gary was a lifelong servant of the public. He served as a police officer, as a municipal councillor, as a member of provincial Parliament, and he served with a smile on his face and a door always open to the public. Gary's contributions to his community will be dearly missed.

We are joined here today by some of Gary's friends—his wife, Anna; and his four friends Bonnie Devries, Dave Cannon and Paul and Wendy Pickett. Welcome. I want to say thank you for being with us here today to celebrate Gary's life and public service.

Gary had two children, Sean and David Leadston; two stepchildren, Steve and Chris Evoy; and four grandchildren, Ethan, Hudson, Lincoln and Isaac.

Gary was born in Guelph and moved to Kitchener in 1960. He started his career as a police officer in the old Kitchener city police force. Wearing a uniform was

something that ran in his family. His father was a police officer before him, and two of his brothers were a fire-fighter and a warrant officer in the Canadian Armed Forces, respectively.

When I learned that this tribute to Gary was coming up, I reached out to some people in Kitchener–Waterloo who knew Gary and who worked with him, to get their sense of what he was like. The overall sentiment I heard was that Gary was open, always friendly, social, and a real people person who worked hard to represent the community he represented.

1040

Former member of Parliament for Waterloo Walter McLean told me, "Gary had a strong sense of community. He was a leader who understood the larger issues of safety and security but was not captive by them. He was open to different perspectives, and he was an open listener." Those are valuable skills for anyone in public life to have. And while no one I spoke to told me this, he must have been very punctual because, in 1968, Gary left the police force to work for the Waterloo County Board of Education as a truant officer.

He first ran for office in 1978, winning a seat on Kitchener city council, where he served with distinction as a bridge builder and a booster of the city.

A few years later, Gary added regional council to his list of responsibilities, sitting on both regional and city council until 1994, when he ran for mayor of Kitchener. While he wasn't successful in that bid, he quickly won the nomination for the riding of Kitchener–Wilmot for the PCs, who swept the region's four seats in the 1995 provincial election. Gary sat in this Legislature from 1995 to 1999.

Even though Gary wasn't here at Queen's Park for a long time, he made his name known. His former seatmate in the Legislature and former MPP for Cambridge, Gerry Martiniuk, recalled how Gary's office on the fourth floor became the "party floor," as other MPPs came by to hang out and eat his food. Apparently, he had a slow cooker in there. I would have stopped by as well.

While he was here at Queen's Park, Gary advocated for issues that mattered in his riding, always with an eye towards public safety. The former basket-weave interchange on Highway 7/8 in Kitchener was a traffic hazard that Gary recognized needed to be improved. In 1996, there were 116 accidents close to this interchange. He invited the then Minister of Transportation, Al Palladini, to come visit the site and witness the havoc first-hand. To his credit, he got the minister to visit the riding, and in 1998 the changes were announced.

On behalf of New Democrats, I want to thank Anna and Gary's family and friends for sharing Gary with us and his community. Our community is stronger for his service. He left us too soon, but his life was well lived.

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

Ms. Daiene Vernile: It is a great honour, as the member for Kitchener Centre, to pay tribute today to Gary Leadston, who served in this Legislature from 1995 to 1999. Gary's family and friends are here today as we pay

tribute to his service to the province of Ontario. They know him as a selfless public servant who served his community as a volunteer on many organizations and as an elected representative locally and in the province.

But in preparing this tribute, Mr. Speaker, I did my homework to get the inside story on Gary Leadston, the things you won't find in a newspaper obituary or on Wikipedia. This background, I believe, gives fuller insight into the true person, and I want to share that with you, to offer a deeper appreciation of former MPP Gary Leadston.

Gary was born in 1941 in Guelph, Ontario. He was educated at the Ontario Police College and at Wilfrid Laurier University. He worked as a beat cop in Kitchener. This experience taught him a great deal about dealing with people.

As a civic-minded champion of the community, Gary was a founding member of the Big Brothers Association of K-W and served as its president in 1975.

Gary decided to enter local politics, winning a seat on Kitchener city council, and served from 1978 to 1994. He also sat as a member of our regional government from 1981 to 1994. In 1987, he was named chair of the Waterloo Regional Police Commission.

A councillor who served with him told me that one of his greatest feats was that he voted in favour of the new Kitchener city hall. In the early 1990s, construction of this modern, costly new building was a hotly debated issue in my community. There were those who thought it was a waste of time and a waste of taxpayers' dollars. But in a final intense debate, Gary sided with those who saw the broader good in building what is now the focal point of downtown Kitchener. Mr. Speaker, he had the courage of his convictions in the face of opposition because he knew it was the right thing to do.

Those who served with him on Kitchener city council told me that you couldn't find a more fun-loving, likeable guy. In fact, at city council meetings, Gary was the one who always had a joke to tell that made the long hours during those council meetings bearable. He was very good at making people laugh.

At community events where he'd be asked to speak publicly, it was said that Gary was on par with any professional comedian. One colleague told me he laughed so hard one night at Gary's string of hilarious jokes that his face actually ached for hours after the event. This was a politician who knew how to please a crowd.

After serving locally, Gary decided to take a run at provincial politics in the riding of Kitchener-Wilmot. One of his close colleagues told me that he actually thought Gary was quite liberal in his politics, so why run for the Conservative Party? Well, they were the ones who came knocking, and, in 1995, Gary Leadston was swept to power with the Conservative wave led by Mike Harris.

During the four years that he served at Queen's Park, Gary was committed to representing the people of his riding. Here at the Legislature, he was committed to supporting and even entertaining his colleagues. As you heard, on his fourth-floor office, he had a slow cooker. It was known for feeding anyone who came by.

This is when I came to know Gary Leadston. Anchoring and producing a weekly news and current affairs program for CKCO-TV in Kitchener, I remember the times that I interviewed our local MPP on various issues. He was always forthcoming and friendly.

But when the Harris government decided to reduce the number of provincial ridings from 130 to 103, Gary found himself pitted in a nomination battle for the riding of Kitchener Centre, which, unfortunately, he lost. He and his family later moved to Rideau Ferry, and he went on to serve for many years on the Ontario Parole Board.

Gary Leadston died at home on December 2, 2013, of pancreatic cancer at the age of 72, but his legacy in my community will long be remembered. He fought for and won the construction of Lackner Boulevard, a new indoor pool at Stanley Park, and the erection of the old clock tower at Victoria Park, the new city hall and regional headquarters.

To his family: Anna, you have a great deal of which to be proud. Gary was a husband, father and grandfather who made his mark as a community leader. He cared, he was committed and he made us laugh. He was a people person who made a difference.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: Today, I'm proud to stand here and speak of the life and legacy of a community leader in my region: a long-time local municipal councillor and a former PC MPP from Kitchener-Wilmot, Gary Leadston.

I'm very honoured to share this House today with MPP Leadston's friends who are joining us in the Speaker's gallery: Bonnie Devries, Dave Cannon, and Paul and Wendy Pickett. Thank you for being here.

Unfortunately, the long commute has meant that many of his family could not make it: his sons, Sean and David, his two stepsons and his four grandchildren. To his family who are unable to be here with us today, know that this Legislature and our community have you in our thoughts.

To Gary's wife, Anna, who is with us in the Speaker's gallery: Thank you for being here today to help share Gary's stories.

Although I've never had the pleasure, unfortunately, of knowing Gary personally, I've had the opportunity to hear stories recounted to me by those who knew him best. Speaker, when you ask anyone about Gary, their immediate response is the same: Gary was a true people person who cared deeply about his community and, by all accounts, was a great guy.

City councillor Geoff Lorentz, who remembers Gary as a mentor when Lorentz first came to city hall, humbly said, "He was always proud of his job and proud of the people he represented.... He was a great guy. He knew everybody in his ward, and everybody knew him."

It's with this love of his community that, in 1995, Gary easily secured his place here in the Ontario Legislature. The veteran municipal politician won his campaign by more than 7,000 votes against the runner-up. Gary, 53 at the time, walked into his victory party to thank his supporters, simply stating, "I can't say enough, from the bot-

tom of my heart, how much I love each and every one of you. And I love winning.”

My caucus colleagues, both former and present, remember Gary as a social, fun-loving guy who had an affinity for storytelling and could get a room full of people laughing until they cried. Everyone loved being around him.

1050

Former MPP Marcel Beaubien said, “Just like with everyone in life, there were good times and bad—we just had a lot of good times.” He said this as he recounted a story that is famous in my neck of the woods in this Ontario Legislature: the fourth floor, which Gary referred to as the “fun floor,” and where many members’ offices still reside today, in fact.

This story takes place after Gary’s colleagues had returned from a successful moose hunting trip. Gary loved cooking, but more importantly, like any of the current PC members, Gary loved to eat. In order to bring everyone together, Gary hosted a moose meat cookout right above us, here in the House, on the fourth floor. For those of you who have been on the fourth floor, you know this Legislature is simply not conducive to a wild game cookout, but that didn’t stop Gary. The smell of meat filled the halls and many began to make their way toward the delicious smell. There must have been at least 40 people in attendance, everyone from MPPs to cleaning staff. As the cookout went on, Gary entertained everyone with his charismatic sense of humour. No one knew how he could remember so many jokes, but that’s what he loved doing, and he did it very well.

As history shows, Gary truly was the life of the party. Gary loved life. He loved his job and he loved to spend time with his colleagues at the end of a busy day here at Queen’s Park. A large group of PC MPPs would gather almost daily, after the House wound up, in Morley Kells’s office on—you guessed it—that same fourth floor.

Gary would always be discussing the issues of the day with his colleagues. No matter what the issues were, they were problems worth solving, and Gary always worked hard toward a solution. His roots never digressed from the constituency-based politician that he was when he walked through these doors.

Just like Gary said when he first arrived, “I enter the legislative building with a tremendous sense of pride and humility.” His colleagues knew, and know, this is exactly how he served during his time here at the assembly. Gary was the kind of MPP this place absolutely needs: reliable, professional, thoughtful, caring, courageous and, above all, dedicated to the needs of his riding and to the province of Ontario.

Through sickness and health, Gary’s sense of humour and love of life was as strong as ever. Former colleague Gerry Martiniuk visited Gary in the hospital bearing, of course, a St. Jacobs summer sausage. He remembers that Gary kept him in stitches for the hour they were there, in circumstances which would break most people.

Gary unfortunately passed at the age of 72 after a hard-fought battle with pancreatic cancer, in his home of

Rideau Ferry, Ontario, where he lived with Anna. It is with great sadness that he has left us.

On behalf of the Ontario Legislature, I want to thank MPP Gary Leadston for his contributions he has made to this province and to the community and the region of Waterloo. We will all fondly remember the proud legacy that he leaves behind.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to thank all the members for their very thoughtful and heartfelt tributes to Gary.

To the family and friends, as is the tradition of our House, we will make sure that you receive a DVD and a copy of Hansard, of these tributes for your keepsake. Finally, we thank you for the gift of Gary.

EARTHQUAKES IN ECUADOR AND JAPAN

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to observe a moment of silence before question period as a sign of this House’s condolences to the people of Ecuador and Japan, and those who have lost loved ones in the recent earthquakes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent for a moment of silence for the House to pay tribute to those who lost their lives in the recent earthquakes. Do we agree? Agreed.

Could I ask everyone in the House to please rise for a moment of silence?

The House observed a moment’s silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Pray be seated.

It’s now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Ross MacLean from Barrie wrote to me to share his family’s story. His daughter recently turned five and waited three and a half years for IBI treatment. She has now been receiving treatment for just three weeks. The family has already seen a marked improvement.

Mr. MacLean knows autism doesn’t end at five. His son actually benefitted from IBI until the age of 12. Clearly, autism doesn’t end at five, and neither should IBI treatment.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier explain why her government thinks it’s okay to kick Mr. MacLean’s daughter out of treatment after just three weeks?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to answer the question and I will do that, but first I want to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on completing the Boston

Marathon. It's no mean feat to complete a marathon, so congratulations.

Mr. Speaker, of course what we want is for that child, and every child in Ontario who has autism, to get the service that they need. So we want that child—I'm sorry, I've lost her name in the moment—to get the intensive treatment that she needs, which is why the transition into the new program will include service in those intensive services.

We understand that the \$8,000 that will be for the initial transition is not enough; we understand that. That's why we're setting up the program that will allow her to continue with intensive services.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: I also received an email from Tia Riopel from Uxbridge. She is the mom of Jolie-Anne Jones. I want to read to you the impact IBI had for Jolie-Anne. To quote the family, IBI "gave her a voice, words, the ability to make eye contact and make friends."

"IBI opened her eyes to her family...."

"After six months of IBI, she acknowledged the presence of her grandfather for the first time and gave him a hug."

That's how the family describes it. Listening to that, how can you take away IBI treatment from Jolie-Anne's family?

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier think as a parent and a grandparent and explain how she can take IBI treatment away from all these children and families? We don't need political talking points. Will the Premier do the right thing and not take these kids off the wait-list?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The opposition party wants to frame this as though we're taking something away from people. What we're doing is we are providing services that are tailored to the children, and those will be intensive.

I need us to hear from some of the people who have been advocating for these changes, people who are experts in the field and are working with the very children that the member is talking about.

Peter Szatmari is the chief of the child and youth mental health collaborative between CAMH, SickKids and U of T. Peter Szatmari has been working—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville, second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: He has been working in this field for decades. What he says is that it is so important to personalize intervention services for children with ASD. This funding opportunity is a significant step in that direction. Early intervention for all, but different interventions at different times, is an essential step in the right direction. That is what we are doing.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: No matter how you slice it, thousands and thousands of kids have been taken off the wait-list for help—not through being provided IBI, but simply abandoned. These children can't be abandoned.

I'm going to tell you another story, this one from the Saunders family. On March 28, their daughter Sloane came off the IBI waiting list after two long years of waiting. One week later, they were told Sloane was now too old to receive treatment, and her IBI would end in September. As the Saunders family said, this is "life-changing therapy."

Autism does not end at five. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier do the right thing? Hearing the overwhelming response from families in Ontario, from those with a loved one with autism, will she do the right thing and stop these cuts to the IBI therapy? Will the Premier do the right thing: yes or no?

Interjections.

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

Premier.

1100

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The 333 million new dollars that are going in to create the program and to provide a transition—we know that autism doesn't end at five. We also know that sitting on a waiting list and not getting any service is wrong. I am actually quite shocked that the opposition parties—both of them—would be advocating for keeping children on a waiting list and not getting them service. So—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Labour is not helping.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want Sloane to have the service that she needs—to get that intensive service. As importantly, I want all of the children who are on that waiting list who are not getting service to get the intensive service that they need in the same way that Sloane is getting that service. That's the change that we're making.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Since I can't get anything but political spin on the autism cuts, let's talk about something else. I came across a—

Interjections.

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

Question, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: To the Premier: I came across a photo of a Hydro One bill the other day. It was dated April 13, 2016. It read: "On-peak: zero kilowatts per hour used. Mid-peak: zero kilowatts per hour used. Off-peak: zero kilowatts per hour used. Total cost of electricity: \$113."

Why is it acceptable for Hydro One to charge this family \$113 for not using any electricity?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: As recognized, Hydro One needed to be improved. We've made the changes necessary to provide greater consumer experience; that has been done. We've modernized the electricity system. That needed to be improved, and we've done so.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to use that line as well.

Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We continue to advance on those improvements so that consumers have the ability to get the services they need—

Interjections.

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

If you think that this is some kind of game, that as soon as I sit down you start up again, you're sadly mistaken. If that happens again, I'll nail you.

Carry on.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Throughout this process that's necessary to be competitive—I appreciate the member's question. That's one of the very reasons why Hydro One has made the changes they've made.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: I didn't hear something remotely to be an answer in that response, so I'll ask the Premier again.

As CityNews puts it:

"The math doesn't seem to add up.

"Despite a mild winter which saw Ontarians conserve electricity, hydro rates are set to increase next month because we saved too much energy.

"It defies logic but that's the reason given" by the government: that you use less and you get charged more—only in Ontario. The family got charged \$113, and now has to pay more. It's unbelievable.

Does the Premier find it acceptable to charge hydro customers more to use less? Simple question: yes or no?

Hon. Charles Sousa: When it comes to pricing, the member has just reinforced the necessity for us to make these enhancements and these improvements to Hydro One, which is exactly what we've done.

In 2013, in our long-term energy plan, the average projected payment was about \$167 on a monthly bill. What the opposition fails to acknowledge is that prices are, in fact, coming down well below those very projections. What we must do is continue to provide the services necessary to improve—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, come to order. The member from Prince Edward-Hastings, come to order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Even when we take into account the OEB's most recent rate decision, the average household bill will be under \$150 per month. That's about \$200 per year less than the projections that were given

publicly more than two years ago. We have made improvements.

I recognize the member's question toward a specific individual, and those are all the reasons we put forward an ombudsman, which is necessary to address her issue directly. That is why, again, we've made those appropriate changes at Hydro One.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Once again back to the Premier: It's unbelievable that the Minister of Finance can actually say in this House that hydro rates are going down. No one in Ontario believes that, not even for a second.

Let's examine the problem: Brady Yauch, the executive director of the Consumer Policy Institute, explained the rise in hydro rates by saying this: "This province has overbuilt the electricity sector significantly and it has to pass on those costs." In fact, Ontario is now procuring an additional 900 more megawatts of costly energy, much of that from costly wind projects. It's not just that it's overbuilt; it's that they continue to overbuild. The question is, why? Maybe we could ask the wind companies that attended the \$6,000-a-plate dinner with the Premier and energy minister: "Why?" Is this about rewarding your friends or is this about affordable hydro rates?

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy House leader, come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We've been very clear in our long-term strategy, in our budgets and in our regard to providing a prudent plan on Ontario's energy, and we've shared those investments, substantive investments, to introduce new, clean power plants and eliminate coal completely from our system. I'd also highlight that in the last two elections, the opposition have made no plans and have not identified any publication of what those electricity costs would be going forward—they keep those details secret.

Mr. Speaker, eliminating dirty coal generation from Ontario, from our electricity system, now enables us to be 90% emissions-free. There were 53 smog days in Ontario in 2005; in 2014, the smog days were zero—none—because of the efforts and investments that we've made to improve emissions and a cleaner environment, something the opposition does not support. That's unfortunate for future generations. We—

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

ELECTORAL REFORM

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Earlier today, I stood with the leader of the official opposition and the leader of the Green Party of Ontario, and, together, we called on the Premier to form an independent panel that will recommend changes to how

election campaigns are funded so that we can bring about real change in a way that is transparent, in a way that is open and in a way that is trustworthy.

Will this Premier agree to appointing a non-partisan panel to bring fairness to Ontario's election rules?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm committed to changing political donation rules in Ontario. We have put forward a proposal in terms of bringing in draft legislation in the spring. We have said that there is already a broad consensus on the direction that we need to go. I had a meeting with the leaders of the opposition parties to get their input on some of the questions, because there are questions. Even though there is a consensus on, for example, banning union and corporate donations, there are questions around a public subsidy, for example. I have no idea where the leaders of the opposition parties stand on the details around that. I look forward to hearing from them.

It's interesting, because my understanding from the press conference this morning is that there was a desire to have input into the draft legislation. I have asked for that input from the opposition leaders, and I will come back to that in my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, apparently the Premier didn't listen at that meeting that she had with the leaders of the opposition parties. We told her, quite clearly, that she should not be changing Ontario's election laws unilaterally, because that puts us on a very slippery slope.

1110

Today I, along with the leaders of the official opposition and the Green Party of Ontario, set our partisan interests aside, and together we are asking the Premier to do the right thing and put her partisan interests aside. It's not just political parties. Democracy Watch has said, "The unilateral decision by the Liberals on changes that will be made goes against their own commitment to consult with Ontarians."

Will the Premier listen to Democracy Watch and the leaders of three of Ontario's four major parties, and agree to meaningful public consultation through an independent panel before changing Ontario's election laws?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's quite remarkable that the leader of the third party is basically saying that there is no democratic process that we follow in this Legislature. It's quite remarkable. What we have said—

Mr. Randy Hillier: You don't follow it very well.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —is that we bring forward draft legislation and, in an unusual process, send the legislation out for consultation after first reading and then allow for that consultation to take place between now and the fall; then, allow the legislation and send the legislation out for consultation again after second reading.

Mr. Randy Hillier: This morning, you had a closure motion on Bill 181.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That would mean the opposition parties can call whatever witnesses they want to speak to the committee.

What's also interesting is that, right now, the House leaders are having a conversation about how the opposition parties might give input into the legislation before it's drafted. That seems to run counter to what the leader of the third party said this morning.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What is remarkable is that this Premier is clinging to her power instead of doing the right thing by the people of Ontario. That's what's remarkable, Speaker, and it is very unseemly in a democratic province.

Today's press conference wasn't about me, nor was it about the leader of the official opposition, nor was it about the leader of the Green Party—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Leader.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It is actually about Ontarians, and perhaps this Premier needs to think about them when she's thinking about this issue. We came together in the spirit of co-operation and consensus to call on this Premier to do the right thing.

For nearly 30 years, election laws were updated with consensus and non-partisan input. We are calling on this Premier to build on that the tradition, instead of putting Ontario on a slippery slope where any political party with a majority can change election laws whenever they want.

Will this Premier agree to establishing a non-partisan panel that will make recommendations on how to ensure election laws are fair for all Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not willing to delay the process. I'm not willing to slow it down. I'm not willing to buy into the stalling tactics of the opposition parties.

As I said, right now, my understanding is that the government House leader is having a conversation with the other House leaders about how the opposition parties might have input into the legislation, if they choose, before the legislation is drafted, but that obviously starts with the opposition parties actually coming forward with some substantive opinions about some of the issues that have to be grappled with in order to write the legislation. Then that legislation can go out and the opposition parties can call whomever they choose to come and speak to the legislation across the province.

That's the definition of the democratic process as it works in this Legislature, Mr. Speaker, and as it works in the province of Ontario. I look forward to their participation in that.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question's also for the Premier. The leaders of three of Ontario's major political parties joined to say that our elections should be

fair and Ontarians themselves should be involved at every step of the way if changes are going to be made. None of us is asking to be in charge, but we are saying that the Liberal Party shouldn't be in charge of making the rules either. The rules that govern our democracy should be built fairly and they should be built to last, not made according to the whims of any one political party.

Will this Premier agree to create a panel, chaired by a neutral party, outside of this Legislature, with members from political parties, Ontarians and civil society, like business, labour and academia?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am quite confident that business and labour and academia—folks from each one of those sectors and beyond—will come to speak to the committee, to speak to the legislation after first reading. The whole point—

Mr. Randy Hillier: And be ignored, all of them.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I hear the heckling on the other side. The point, just to inform the member opposite—

Mr. Randy Hillier: You ignore them all.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark, second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The point of sending the legislation out after first reading would be to hear that input, in order to be able to amend the legislation in ways that would be appropriate, given the remarks that will be heard at committee. That's the whole point of sending it out after first reading. So I look forward to that debate, as the legislation comes forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, those of us on this side of the House are confident that regardless of what anybody says in a committee process that's run by the Liberals, the Liberals will do whatever the heck they want at the end of the day. We see it over and over and over again.

Ontarians deserve to know—no matter who they are, how deep their pockets are or where they come from—that their voice will actually be heard. That's why we need to make election laws with a process that is fair and that is open. Three of Ontario's major political parties have set partisanship aside and agreed on the ground rules for a process that is fair, that is open, that is transparent and, most importantly, that is a process that Ontarians can have faith in.

Will this Premier do the right thing and agree to that process?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the leader of the third party is preoccupied with the process, but there are some things we actually don't need to consult on, and I'd be interested to know what they think about that.

For example, we don't need to consult on whether or not we should move to a ban on union donations. We don't believe we need to consult on a ban on corporate donations. We don't think we need to consult on issues around reforming third-party advertising and putting maximum spending limits on third-party advertising. We

don't think we need to consult on the issue of whether we should reduce the maximum donations.

We have put forward our proposal. We really do hope—we really sincerely hope—that the opposition parties will participate in the legislation discussion. The Premier has welcomed your input. You are just focused on the process; we're focused on action.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier of this province has an extremely important decision to make: She can agree with the growing consensus of political parties and civil society that changes to our election laws should be made based on fairness, consensus and with the approval of Ontarians, and establish a non-partisan advisory panel on political finance reform and election participation. Or she can go it alone, making all the decisions in the backrooms of the Premier's office and ramming things through a Liberal-dominated committee, giving Ontarians more reason to be cynical about politics and this Liberal government.

Speaker, the question is very simple: Which is it going to be?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Can we have one idea from you? Just a little one?

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: No ideas?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment, in case you didn't hear me, come to order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, he was late, so he probably didn't get the—

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

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It is surprising and interesting that the leader of the third party is opposed to changes that the NDP government has made in Alberta. In Alberta, the NDP introduced an Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta. The Premier introduced legislation, and then it was sent to committee for public consultations.

In fact, as you heard from the Premier, we're adding an extra round of public consultations after first reading, which is a very unusual step—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask all members to come to order, because it's not one side.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Here in Ontario, we're consulting before we introduce the legislation. We believe it's important to get this right. But we also believe it's important that we get this done. We are moving forward because we think that this kind of reform needs to be made, and it needs to be made now.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Every week, we're hearing

about the crisis in health care, the rationing of our system that leaves many without health care services. Now we're hearing that people will die due to the government's mismanagement of the health care system.

Allo stem cell transplant is the only treatment for patients with acute leukemia, MDS or other life-threatening diseases. The Princess Margaret hospital is rejecting new patients requiring stem cell transplants because they've run out of money. The option now given to patients is to seek treatment in United States.

Ontarians expect our health care system to be better than that. Speaker, will the minister ensure that emergency funding is available so that Ontarians can receive the life-saving treatment they require in Ontario?

1120

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question.

Mr. Speaker, our government has increased funding for stem cell transplants in this province by over 600% in the last four years. We've done this to meet increasing demands; I know the member opposite knows this as well.

This is a good thing. Recent advances, technological advances, and pharmaceutical advances in care have actually made stem cell transplants—particularly the allogeneic type; which is a transplant from a different donor into the individual—a safer and more effective option for more patients than ever before. We're seeing the result of that technological advance in the increased opportunity for Ontarians to benefit from that procedure.

The increase in eligible patients: It is true and accurate that the wait times for stem cell transplants have grown in this province. That's why our government is working to make sure that we meet that growing demand.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Minister, you're not meeting the growing demand. In fact, I find it insulting to the people of Ontario that the Ministry of Health has money to run radio ads promoting how great they are and not enough money for people needing cancer treatment.

Mr. Speaker, back to the minister: How many funding emergencies must Ontarians face before this government acts? Lack of funding for life-saving treatment is unacceptable.

For a treatment where time is of the essence, current patients at Princess Margaret must wait, on average, 200 days, which increases the chance of treatment failure. For new patients needing treatment, there is no viable option for transplants in the province. They must travel to another country.

Speaker, we have seen the rationing of care for mental health and dementia patients, and the rationing of care through postponement or complete cancellation of knee and hip surgeries across the province. But to ration life-saving treatment? Has the government's mismanagement of health care reached a new low?

Speaker, will the minister stop the rationing and act now to ensure life-saving stem transplant is accessible—

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

Interjections.

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

Minister of Health.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, it's somewhat hypocritical, because that member—

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I withdraw.

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It's somewhat surprising, then, Mr. Speaker, that the member opposite would take this particular approach. In fact, the entire opposition have voted against our budget that actually allocated nearly 30 million new dollars for stem cell transplants in this province. That money is flowing.

We're aware of the operational concerns. There are six hospitals across this province that will benefit from that increased funding, but we're also aware that we need to deal with these wait times immediately. That's why Cancer Care Ontario is working with the patients and the hospitals currently on the wait-list to ensure that that out-of-country option is available for them if they choose it.

But it's that \$30-million investment that they voted against that will really make the difference, Mr. Speaker.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. In the past, the Premier has created expert panels to study everything from reports by other expert panels to what should be sold in grocery stores. But the Premier is dragging her feet on creating an independent panel that will make sure Ontarians can trust that new election rules that are developed are actually fair and put democratic values first. This is very different from other bills; this is a democratic bill that will address the way our elections are governed.

Will the Premier join with Democracy Watch, the NDP, the Greens and the PCs, and agree to establish a transparent, fast-moving, non-partisan panel willing to meet any deadline set to make sure that the new election rules are fair in this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, I will say to the member opposite: What's more democratic than taking a bill to the democratic institution that is represented by people who have—elected those representatives? Speaker, there is nothing more democratic than this House.

I think the rhetoric coming from the NDP is very dangerous when they start arguing that somehow this place and the members who are elected in this House are not democratic and do not have the expertise, do not have the credentials and do not have the validity to work on issues such as reforming our campaign finance rules.

I ask the NDP to come forward with their substantive ideas so that we can work together, listen to experts within the legislative process and pass this very important piece of legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: What's dangerous is when one party uses its majority to rewrite election rules in the province. That's what is dangerous.

In 2004, the Supreme Court of Canada said: "Electoral fairness is key. Where Canadians perceive election rules to be unfair, voter apathy follows shortly thereafter." We want to ensure that people have trust in the process to ensure that the results are also very fair.

The Premier can show leadership today. She can agree to ensure that our election rules are made in an impartial manner through an independent panel that's non-partisan and, most importantly, is based on consensus decision-making. In an open process, Ontarians can trust the results.

The question is simple: Will the Premier do the right thing? Will she ensure that an independent panel is struck that abides by the principles of consensus-based decisions, or will she go it alone and keep the process entirely under the control of the Liberal majority?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Basically, what the NDP process does is it prolongs this process and undermines bringing in new campaign financing rules in preparation for the next election. This side of the House—the government and the Premier—is not interested in prolonging this matter. We want to bring in the legislation this spring and, as a result, what we want to do is have very robust consultation both after the first reading and after the second reading in the Legislature.

I understand that the member opposite may be a little confused because we haven't used that process where we can take a bill after first reading—but we have an amazing opportunity, through our rules, to take a bill right after first reading. We want to have those consultations throughout the summer, listen to the Chief Electoral Officer, listen to the leader of the Green Party and experts and Ontarians, and get their views so we can work together collaboratively and pass a piece of legislation that will foster democracy in Ontario.

ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. We were all deeply saddened to hear about the tragic news at Attawapiskat last week. It's important to note that our government took urgent steps to respond to their call for help. We've learned that Ontario is providing \$2 million in immediate support and is addressing long-term assistance to the community at this time of need. It is the right thing to do. But Attawapiskat is just one of many communities in Ontario facing these sorts of challenges.

Could the minister please tell us how the government is working with indigenous communities to address the everyday challenges that they face?

Hon. David Zimmer: The health and well-being of all First Nations people is a priority for this government, especially those in communities like Attawapiskat and other remote First Nations.

I want to start by commending my colleagues the Minister of Health and the Minister of Children and Youth for their very swift response to the crisis in Attawapiskat.

Our government recognizes that more work needs to be done to improve the health status and overall well-being of people living in remote communities. That's why our 2016 budget included greater investments in indigenous health services, access to education and northern infrastructure.

We also now have a federal partner that is willing to work with First Nations and provincial governments to maximize investments and to complement our work in addressing these issues. That was not the case with the previous federal government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'd like to thank the minister and his staff for all of their hard work on this very important issue.

The challenges these communities face are systemic: inadequate housing, risk of flooding, limited access to clean drinking water, and insufficient educational supports. These are issues affecting indigenous communities right across Ontario.

While we are now fortunate to have a federal government that is committed to working with our indigenous partners, Ontario does have a role to play. It's very encouraging to see that in the 2016 budget we have included a number of very significant investments for indigenous people, such as funding our long-term strategy to combat violence against indigenous women.

Speaker, could the minister please tell us what our government is doing to help remote communities address the issues that they face?

1130

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, in the 2016 budget we set out a number of commitments that benefit remote communities. Some of them are:

—\$13 million to support indigenous communities' fight to adapt to climate change and to develop micro-grids and energy storage options;

—\$100 million over three years for our long-term strategy to end violence against indigenous women and girls. This includes funding for additional front-line service workers to provide access to family services and \$80 million for a new family well-being program to help families in crisis and support communities;

—other investments in indigenous health, such as additional funding for the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Strategy to address the very high costs of program delivery in remote communities, \$1.3 million annually for Ontario's Aboriginal Health Access Centres and \$2 million for engagement on public mental health.

This government is very serious about addressing these issues, Speaker.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is to the Premier. Laurentian University has made the decision to close its

Barrie campus, in large measure because it was turned down by the government in its bid to expand to an independent campus, and in part because it was being forced by the government to restrict where and how it educated its student body. Ultimately, it all comes back to funding. Without transitional dollars, hundreds of students will be displaced from the Barrie campus of Laurentian before they finish their degrees.

Speaker, will the Premier do the right thing? Will she and her government provide transitional funding for these students to remain in Barrie to finish their degrees?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think it's important to note on this issue that our government has been committed to trying to figure out how to make sure that students who are in Simcoe county do have good access to post-secondary education.

In fact, we worked extensively with Georgian College, with Laurentian and with Lakehead, who all have a presence in Barrie, to figure out how we can expand that access to high-quality, degree-level education in Barrie and Orillia and other communities in Simcoe county. In fact, we went so far as to have John Gerretsen work with them all last summer.

However, as the member has noted, Laurentian has decided to close its campus in Barrie, and they are working with—

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Again to the Premier: Students thought they were entering a contractual relationship when they signed into their university programs in Barrie. One of the terms was rightly assumed to be, "The school will be here while I'm finishing my degree." Now it won't be for so many of them. Speaker, why can't students at Laurentian in Barrie finish their degrees the way they started: in Barrie?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Speaker, I want to assure you that we have been working with Laurentian and working with students who, understandably, want to complete their degrees. Of the 220 students that have been affected, 105 have already chosen to continue their degree on the Sudbury campus of Laurentian. I understand that half of them have actually already started classes recently or will very soon.

But the students will have a range of options: As I've noted, some of them will be completing their degrees at the Sudbury campus; some of the students will be able to complete a three-year bachelor of arts degree in Barrie, at the Georgian-Lakehead campus; and some of them are opting to transfer to another university with a letter of permission from the faculty to take courses at another university.

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. In 2008, the Equal Pay Coalition released detailed recommendations on how to eliminate the gender wage gap by

2025. Eight years later, the gap remains stuck at around 30%, and Ontarians have yet to see specific, concrete actions to close the gap from the Premier or her government.

How can Ontarians have confidence in the Premier's commitment to eliminate the gender wage gap when her 2016 budget did not include any of the key strategies recognized as essential to achieve equal pay, such as investments in child care, and the Liberal government has consistently failed to enforce its own pay equity and employment standards laws?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank my critic for this very important question and for asking it today, on Equal Pay Day.

As the critic knows, it's in my mandate letter as well as the Minister of Labour's mandate letter to develop a wage gap strategy to ensure that we close that gap.

We want women to achieve their full economic potential. We want fairness. We want equitable treatment in workforces. Closing that gap is important to families as well, not just to women themselves.

We appointed a steering committee last year to lead the development of that wage gap strategy, and the minister and I met with the panel just this morning. A number of consultations were held throughout the province, and a summary of what was heard is made public on the Ministry of Labour's website.

We know there's more to do, Speaker. The Minister of Labour and I are deeply committed to addressing this issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Women in Ontario have waited too long for the Premier to make the changes that are necessary to close the gap. The Premier has ignored the actions that can be taken right now, like child care funding and enforcing labour laws—actions that do not require the report of the gender wage gap steering committee. And despite the gender lens mandate that was given to the minister responsible for women's issues, it is clear that no effort was made to apply a gender and equity lens to the 2016 budget.

Once the final report of the gender wage gap steering committee is received in May, will the Premier make the report public and will she move immediately to implement the recommendations? Or will Ontarians have to wait another eight years or longer to see any concrete action?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for the question.

I want to thank the steering committee for the tremendous work they've done on behalf of this House, travelling throughout the province of Ontario, talking to people, getting advice from those people, getting ideas as to how we can close the gender wage gap. These are our mothers, our granddaughters, our sisters, our aunts. There's nobody in this House who agrees that a gender wage gap should still exist in 2016.

These people are bringing forward their ideas. There's a process that's been put in place. I want to thank everybody that's taken part in this process to date: 530 people came forward; almost 1,500 people sent in their ideas.

A report was received today; the recommendations will follow very shortly; the implementation phase comes after that. I look forward to the support of all members of the House in the implementation phase.

PAY EQUITY

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Today is Equal Pay Day, a day to raise awareness of the earnings gap between men and women in Ontario. Members of this House may not know, but the day is calculated each year to mark the extra time it takes a woman to earn as much as a man.

Men in Ontario earned an average of \$50,000 while it took women until April 20 the following year to earn the same amount.

Based on the most recent Statistics Canada data, Ontario's gender wage gap ranges from 14% to 32%. The Royal Bank of Canada estimated that personal incomes would be \$168 billion higher each year if women in Canada had the same labour market opportunities as men.

More must be done in the province of Ontario to level the playing field. Speaker, through you to the minister: How is Ontario helping to end the gender wage gap?

1140

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to thank the honourable member for that important question following up on the other one.

Many people have talked about this issue over the years. This government is doing something about it. What we've done is, we've got people from around this province who have an expertise in this issue. They've gone around this province. They've spoken to people. They've consulted with experts in the field. They're bringing us back their best advice.

It's unacceptable that women still don't get paid as well, or have the same opportunities, as men in our society. We, as a group, need to change that by demolishing the barriers that have held us back from progress in the past.

Others have talked about it in the past. This is a government that's acting on it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I would like to thank the minister for his answer.

I understand that the gender wage gap is a complex issue caused by many factors. We know that all women across the economic spectrum are affected by the wage gap, but the gap is more pronounced for women who are minorities, aboriginal, newcomers or living with disabilities. I also know that other factors intersect with gender to compound the wage gap. This is something I heard that the steering committee no doubt addresses, but more must be done.

Can the minister please share steps the government has taken to ensure equality in the workplace for women?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: The minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I agree with the member and I agree with the opposition that there's much more work to do. But let's not lose sight of what we have done and what we're continuing to do, including significant investments in child care, continuing to implement full-day kindergarten, and helping low-income women learn new skills, change careers and secure better-paying jobs through the Women in Skilled Trades and Information Technology Training program. The Women's Directorate funds programs for women who have experienced abuse, or who are at risk, to develop new skills and have those opportunities to find employment and achieve that economic security.

These are just a few of the many programs that our government invests in. I'm very proud of these investments, as we continue to take meaningful steps towards equality for women.

CLIMATE CHANGE

CHANGEMENT CLIMATIQUE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is to the Premier.

Since the Premier failed to answer my question yesterday, I think we can assume that she did in fact write the Liberals' cap-and-trade bill at her kitchen table over the weekend. Unfortunately, the result has been a shoddy piece of legislation that the government is now rewriting on the fly.

To hide the mess she has created with this bill, the Premier has now ordered her members to stop government lawyers and officials from answering serious questions in committee.

So I have to ask, Speaker: Does the Premier think it's appropriate to muzzle government lawyers and officials when elected representatives ask tough questions about the cap-and-trade scheme?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: First of all, we have had four discussion papers on cap-and-trade and carbon pricing over the last 10 years.

Second, in the last year, we've spent an entire year consulting on what approach to take. The broad consensus from industry—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We've been a member of the Western Climate Initiative for a decade and worked on designing this with experts from across North America. In our one-year consultation, which was purely on whether we would use a carbon tax or a cap-and-trade system, we listened—

Mr. John Yakabuski: No more Twitter for you, Glen, if that code of conduct passes.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All right, I've a good memory. The member from Renfrew, the member from Stormont and the member from Huron—Bruce—who asked the question—come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The strong consensus from experts, from the business environmental community, was to go with the cap-and-trade system, and that it not be revenue-neutral, that there was money to invest in the transformation of industry.

But the member has been talking over me, as she did—20-minute breaks, three times every committee, filibustering and destroying the entire committee process.

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

Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: You know what, Speaker? No matter how they spin this, this—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Lisa, could you take some Kleenex to Glen for committee?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're not helping. I'm trying to get them to be quiet.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, sorry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's two for you. Finish, please.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: No matter how they spin this, this government owns some of the worst legislation ever to hit this floor. Cap-and-trade is no different.

Again, back to the Premier: The environment minister admitted yesterday that the Liberals' cap-and-trade bill is "one of the most complex pieces of legislation ever introduced into the Legislature." A part of the complexity is the result of poor drafting. The Liberals have more than 70 amendments to their own bill, and now they're attempting to strong-arm committee members into rubber-stamping each of their changes. They are now even muzzling government lawyers and officials in committee to prevent these people from speaking the truth about the cap-and-trade system that they've devised. These tactics are not acceptable.

Will the Premier for once do the right thing, withdraw 172—Bill 172, to be specific—and begin developing a revenue-neutral plan?

L'hon. Glen R. Murray: Je pense que c'est un grand défi pour le parti de l'autre côté, parce que pour la majorité des amendements, c'est la traduction en français du mot « être » ou du mot « avoir ». Ce n'est pas compliqué.

It's not complicated. These are lawyer, technical amendments that come with every bill. Why doesn't the opposition agree to quickly pass all of the legal, technical and translation matters and we'd be down to a couple of matters? Because they're trying to obstruct the bill and they've said that.

I want to thank the member for Toronto—Danforth—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I tried. The member from Huron—Bruce, second time.

Finish, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member for Toronto—Danforth and the third party, who have been incredibly constructive, have worked to improve this legislation and have been extremely facilitative.

The member for Huron—Bruce and her party have done nothing but delay, call breaks and prevent other members from actually discussing the bill.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Last Friday, parents, along with opposition MPPs, held protests across the province against the government's decision to remove children five and over from essential autism therapy. While most Liberal MPPs refused to make contact with parents and defend themselves, some made factually incorrect statements, claiming the creation of 16,000 new IBI spaces. When it comes to our most vulnerable kids, you would think that the government members would at least understand the devastating impacts of their decisions.

The minister is about to get up and claim that, in the name of science, she had to remove children five and over from the list. That's simply not true. Can the minister tell me on what page the clinical expert committee recommends kicking children with ASD over five off the list?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm very proud of the changes we're making to the autism service program in the name of children in this province. I'm also very proud of all of the MPPs on this side of the House.

If others on the other side of the House actually met with their constituents and actually received people in their offices on Friday—I did the same thing. I continued to talk to families about the changes to this program. It's very important that we have those conversations so that the facts are clear and so that the new investment of \$333 million—it's understood how that will be used and it is understood that there will be 16,000 new therapy spaces for children going forward.

It's very important to note that we are not removing children from services; we're moving them from wait-lists and putting them into immediate service. It's very important that kids get continuity of service.

1150

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Since the minister did not answer my question, I guess that the report did not say what she's claiming that it does. If the report doesn't recommend removing children five and over with ASD from the list, then this must be about money. Children with ASD should not be paying the price for this government's failure to invest properly in—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Finish, please.

Miss Monique Taylor: This government has already failed children with autism, forcing them to wait years on

a list, and is now telling them that they will never get access to that therapy just so that this government could make a good-news PR announcement about reducing the wait-list. That's shameful.

This is leaving lives hanging in the balance. Speaker, will the minister do the right thing and immediately reverse her decision to remove children five and over with ASD from the list of essential therapy?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Yes, of course I've read the clinical expert committee. Anyone who's read it will understand that their advice is that there are better outcomes to be achieved for children in those early developmental windows. We're acknowledging that. But at the same time, Speaker—

Miss Monique Taylor: Right, but it doesn't say they can't get it after five.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton Mountain asked the question. Please come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: As I said before, we are taking children off wait-lists. I agree: Those wait-lists are unacceptable. I will not, as the Minister of Children and Youth Services, stand here and let wait-lists grow to five years by 2018. More importantly, we need to make sure that the services the children get under the new enhanced program will be longer in duration, will be as intense as needed, and will be very individualized to what the child needs.

This is based on clinicians' expertise and advice, Speaker. That's how the Autism Ontario program works. We'll continue to support children with autism in this province.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Chris Ballard: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Minister, spring is in the air and Ontarians from all across the province are looking forward to getting seasonal Ontario fruits and vegetables from their local farmers' markets and grocery stores. In Newmarket and Aurora, shoppers have two great farmers' markets to attend: one in Newmarket and one in Aurora.

The Local Food Fund successfully supported Ontario producers, processors and organizations with innovative projects that increase supply and awareness of food grown, made and harvested in our great province. But the Local Food Fund ended this March.

Local food organizations and businesses in my riding and in the nearby Holland Marsh are concerned that government has abandoned its commitment to support local food. Can the minister please tell the House how the government is supporting local food without the Local Food Fund?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for that great question.

First of all, let me assure this House that we remain resolute in our support of local food. In fact, tomorrow morning, I will take part in a consultation with organizations like Food and Beverage Ontario, the Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance and Metro to discuss enhancing local food access.

Since our government took office in 2003, we have invested more than \$170 million to support sales of Ontario foods. That includes the Local Food Fund, which we launched in 2013 with a three-year commitment. We've plowed on on this and have had a successful harvest over the last three years. Building on the success of the Local Food Fund, we're partnering with the Greenbelt Fund to continue delivering local food programming for all of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Chris Ballard: Thanks to the minister for that answer.

My question again is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I'm truly glad to hear that our government continues to support local food. As the minister knows, I regularly meet with farmers in the Holland Marsh area to get an on-the-ground report about how they're doing. Through the ups and downs of the business, they appreciate our government's commitment to promote Ontario-grown fruits, vegetables, grains, livestock, poultry and more. I'm sure they will also appreciate that the province is still funding local food programming through the Greenbelt Fund.

But the Local Food Fund was open to organizations across the province. Can the minister expand on the government's investment in the Greenbelt Fund and clarify whether businesses and organizations across Ontario will have access?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member for his great supplementary and his keen interest in Ontario's food sector.

We are investing \$6 million over the next three years in (1) the Greenbelt Fund, to support marketing activities to celebrate local food champions, and (2) the local food investment fund, for projects which will improve food literacy, enhance access to locally grown foods, and encourage the use of local foods in the broader public sector.

Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker: The local food investment fund is open to all applicants across this great province. Whether you're in Thunder Bay or Essex or, as I was yesterday, in the town of Simcoe and the community of Delhi, you will have access to our local food programming.

Here's food for thought: Supporting local food is a great way to grow the economy and great jobs in communities big and small. That's why our government stands firmly behind our commitment to local—

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

New question.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, who is making his way back to his seat, I see.

The Current River generating station in Thunder Bay has been in operation for almost 30 years. Recent changes to legislation have raised questions about this small-scale hydro facility's ability to operate into the future. The proponent in this case, a Métis citizen, has been writing to the provincial government for two years, seeking consultation on the potential impacts of Ontario government policies, with no response.

Minister, I think you will agree that two years is an extremely long time to wait to receive an answer on whether the provincial government will choose to consult on a project or not.

So I ask, through the Speaker, will the minister commit to consult with the Métis Nation of Ontario on this project, as has been requested of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and the Ministry of the Environment, in accordance with the constitutional rights of the Métis Nation of Ontario?

And will the minister commit that the Ontario government will not make any decisions or take any action on these files prior to consultation, and commit to abide by—

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

Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, I am unaware of the specific situation that the member speaks of, but I'm happy to speak with the member afterwards, get the details of the parties involved, and look into the matter and report back to you as soon as possible.

But we do have a very healthy relationship with the Métis Nation of Ontario which we're very proud of. We work together with the Métis Nation of Ontario in very constructive ways.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Whitby–Oshawa has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Education concerning Laurentian University in Barrie—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): May I finish, please?

This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

VISITORS

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier I mentioned some people here from MPAC. I forgot to mention Carla Nell, who is MPAC's new vice-president of municipal and stakeholder relations. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: A point of order, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce, for members of the Legislature, Mayor Walter Sendzik of St. Catharines, who is in the west members' gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Associate Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Speaker, today we were joined by members of the West Hill ESL Centre. Twenty-five members visited, along with Paula Lo, their instructor.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. David Zimmer: On a point of order, Speaker, I, too, would like to introduce Grand Chief Benedict from the Akwesasne First Nation. Welcome, Grand Chief.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I guess I opened a door. The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to welcome a constituent from my riding, Doug Inglis, to the Legislature today.

DEFERRED VOTES

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS
MODERNIZATION ACT, 2016LOI DE 2016 SUR LA MODERNISATION
DES ÉLECTIONS MUNICIPALES

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

Bill 181, An Act to amend the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 and to make complementary amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 181, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion for closure on the motion for second reading of Bill 181, An Act to amend the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 and to make complementary amendments to other Acts.

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

The division bells rang from 1200 to 1205.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On April 11, 2016, Mr. McMeekin moved second reading of Bill 181, An Act to amend the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 and to make complementary amendments to other Acts.

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

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

Ayes

Anderson, Granville
Baker, Yvan
Ballard, Chris
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike

Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Kiwala, Sophie
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Marie-France
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy

Murray, Glen R.
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Potts, Arthur
Qaadri, Shafiq
Rinaldi, Lou

Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dong, Han
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fraser, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoggarth, Ann
Hoskins, Eric

Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Martins, Cristina
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGarry, Kathryn
McMahon, Eleanor
McMeekin, Ted
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milczyn, Peter Z.
Moridi, Reza

Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Thibeault, Glenn
Vernile, Daiene
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

Gravelle, Michael
Gretzky, Lisa

Milczyn, Peter Z.
Miller, Paul

Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Brown, Patrick
Clark, Steve
Coe, Lorne
DiNovo, Cheri
Fedeli, Victor
Fife, Catherine
Forster, Cindy
French, Jennifer K.
Gretzky, Lisa

Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hatfield, Percy
Hillier, Randy
Horwath, Andrea
Hudak, Tim
Jones, Sylvia
MacLeod, Lisa
Mantha, Michael
Martow, Gila
McDonell, Jim
Miller, Paul
Munro, Julia
Natyshak, Taras

Nicholls, Rick
Sattler, Peggy
Scott, Laurie
Singh, Jagmeet
Smith, Todd
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanthof, John
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Brown, Patrick
Clark, Steve
Coe, Lorne
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie

Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim
Jones, Sylvia
MacLeod, Lisa
Martow, Gila
McDonell, Jim
Munro, Julia

Nicholls, Rick
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 69; the nays are 24.

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

Second reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I move that we send Bill 181 to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

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

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

The House recessed from 1213 to 1500.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 52; the nays are 41.

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

Mr. McMeekin has moved second reading of Bill 181, An Act to amend the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 and to make complementary amendments to other Acts.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1209 to 1210.

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

Ayes

Anderson, Granville
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Baker, Yvan
Ballard, Chris
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
DiNovo, Cheri
Dong, Han
Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Fraser, John
French, Jennifer K.

Hatfield, Percy
Hoggarth, Ann
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Kiwala, Sophie
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Marie-France
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Martins, Cristina
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGarry, Kathryn
McMahon, Eleanor
McMeekin, Ted
Meilleur, Madeleine

Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Oraziotti, David
Potts, Arthur
Qaadri, Shafiq
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Sattler, Peggy
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takhar, Harinder S.
Taylor, Monique
Thibeault, Glenn
Vanthof, John
Vernile, Daiene
Wong, Soo

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Lorne Coe: Speaker, I rise to speak on GO Transit expansion. As a daily user of GO Transit, I can tell you with certainty that Durham region needs infrastructure help. A recently released study showed very positive numbers if GO expands in Durham region. The study findings indicate it would generate \$1.1 billion in transit-orientated walkable urban development, up to 20,000 new permanent jobs and 6,000 new homes.

Durham region is growing at an unprecedented rate, but with the growth come infrastructure obstacles. Durham is lagging behind other areas of the GTA and has waited patiently and long enough for expanded all-day GO Transit services.

Our municipal partners, the region of Durham, business leaders, and colleges and universities are all on board. We all know that GO Transit extension is crucial, will end transportation woes for thousands of commuters and will mobilize private sector investment in our economy. Speaker, the time for action is now.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, today I am using my time to speak to an issue of grave importance in my

riding of London–Fanshawe. We have seen many articles, incidents and questions being brought forward in this House due to the lack of mental health funding and supports in this province. Community-based service providers in the child and youth mental health system do not have the resources to keep up with the need for care.

Yet, despite the rapidly growing and widely accepted increase in demand, child and youth mental health centres have not had base funding increases in over a decade. The reality is that lack of priority funding for mental health is creating a crisis in our communities. When I tabled Bill 95, my intention was to help stem the problem by asking this government to recognize the efforts of the all-party select committee on mental health and the extensive consultation they conducted across the province.

My community is in dire need and I am focused on protecting all vulnerable Ontarians suffering from mental illness and addictions by ensuring they have access to programs and services, regardless of where they live. Therefore, I am urging this government to call Bill 95 forward rather than let it languish in committee. It's time that we get serious about the challenges in mental health in this province and stop putting band-aid solutions on vital issues in our communities.

EARTHQUAKE IN ECUADOR

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I would like to start off by offering my condolences to the millions of friends and family members mourning the tragic deaths of loved ones at the hands of the devastating earthquake that took place in Ecuador this past weekend.

Earlier this morning, I attended a press conference at city hall with Mr. Nicolas Trujillo, ambassador of Ecuador in Canada, and city councillor Cesar Palacio, where I was able to extend my condolences to the people of Ecuador on behalf of our Premier, Kathleen Wynne, and the government of Ontario.

More than 3,500 people were injured in Saturday's 7.8-magnitude quake, which ripped apart buildings and roads and knocked out power along the Pacific coastline, and that number is rising. Ecuador's earthquake death toll rose to 413, including a Canadian woman and her 12-year-old son.

This is the greatest tragedy in Ecuador in the last 67 years and the strongest earthquake to hit Ecuador since 1979. While world events too often showcase human violence and cruelty, let us focus today on the solidarity, compassion and mutual assistance displayed in the aftermath of this tragedy.

There is a large population of Ecuadorian Canadians in Ontario. The Ecuadorian community in Toronto is the largest, with over 100,000 residents. Many of those reside in my riding of Davenport and have many friends and family in Ecuador. My office will be assisting with plans for upcoming fundraisers to help those who have lost so much as a result of this tragedy, as well as in connecting people that want make donations to the Red

Cross and the Ecuadorian embassy. We must stand by Ecuadorians as they build a more robust society which will serve as an example of hope and solidarity. I'm truly devastated by the tragic aftermath and pledge to work with organizations in my riding to assist Ecuador on its road to recovery, which we know will be long and difficult.

WATERLOO-WELLINGTON SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING FAIR

Mr. Michael Harris: The Waterloo-Wellington Science and Engineering Fair is an annual event that brings together students in grades 7 to 12 from my region. These are the best young scientific minds in our region.

Earlier this month, over 200 projects involving over 300 students from about 30 different schools gathered at Bingaman's in Kitchener. Over 120 judges from local schools, universities, colleges, businesses and industries volunteered their time to judge the projects and provide valuable feedback to the students.

The students gain so much more value than simply having their projects judged according to this national standard. Their time at the fair provides students with an opportunity to hone their presentation skills by demonstrating their projects to each other and the general public. Participation in the fair also allows equal time to take part in science-related educational activities.

I congratulate all student participants, as the competition is quite rigorous. However, one participant in particular did catch my attention: Ruth Meyer of Centennial Public School in Waterloo. Her project, The Impact of Modelled Signalling in Roundabouts, made me proud as an MPP, knowing that legislation we debate here at Queen's Park resonates with the youth in our ridings.

I would like to congratulate, of course, all of the winners as they represent our region at the Canada-Wide Science Fair in Montreal. I sincerely congratulate all participants and volunteers of the Waterloo-Wellington Science and Engineering Fair. I would also like to thank the community members who encourage the development of the scientific and technological talents of young people in our region.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Vanthof: Since being elected, I spend a lot of my time and my staff spends a lot of time fixing outrageous hydro bills. I'm glad to say that some of those really outrageous ones have gone. But what we're left with now is the heart-breaking job of telling people that, no, their hydro bill is actually accurate, but still outrageous. Now they hear that because the province is using less power because other people can't pay for their hydro, their hydro bills are going up. This morning, we heard from the Minister of Finance, and he seemed to imply that hydro bills were going down, and they used the average over Ontario.

Well, you should look at rural Ontario where we're paying the low-density service charges, where sometimes the service charges are higher than the actual power cost. People in rural Ontario, especially seniors and people living on fixed incomes, are in energy poverty. When other people say, "Oh, that can't be"—one time, I was here and the Minister of Energy said, "Oh, it's just going up by a cup of coffee." People are having to choose between what they eat and if they heat, or if they one day have to cut the cord to what we thought was a necessity of life in a developed country. People are going to have to start making those decisions. That's an incredible shame in a powerful province like Ontario.

EVENTS IN NEWMARKET–AURORA

Mr. Chris Ballard: In some communities, the first sign of spring is a robin hopping along or tulips poking through the snow, but in my wonderful riding of Newmarket–Aurora, the first sign of spring is the Newmarket and Aurora home shows.

My community team and I had the pleasure of attending the Aurora home show this past weekend at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex, organized by the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, and just two weeks ago we attended the 20th annual Newmarket home show at the Ray Twinney Recreation Complex, run by the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce. This year, over 5,500 people attended that show, making it the largest home show in York region.

Both the Newmarket and Aurora home shows offer visitors a one-stop shopping experience for home decor, renovations, real estate, financial services, health products and services, and more. Besides being a phenomenal way to start spring, these home shows are very important to the businesses within our community. For some of the small businesses and vendors, both in Aurora and Newmarket, I'm told they represent up to 50% or more of their annual sales, booked over a short weekend. Of course, the home shows are not just a place to buy products and services for your home and health; they're social gatherings where neighbours reconnect after a long, dark winter.

1510

I'd like to take some time to thank the organizers from the Aurora Chamber of Commerce and the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce for pulling these fantastic shows together.

BARBARA HORNER

Mr. Robert Bailey: I rise today to remember Barbara Horner, who passed away on April 12 at the age of 81.

A beloved mother, mother-in-law, grandmother and great-grandmother, Barb was also a former councillor and mayor of the village of Point Edward, as well as past warden of Lambton county.

Barbara Horner was first elected to the Point Edward council in 1977, and served the village for a total of 18

years. In her political career, Barb was a trendsetter. She was the first female councillor, deputy reeve and deputy mayor, which all contributed to her accomplishing her ultimate goal of becoming the first female mayor of Point Edward, from 1997 to 2000. In 1984, she was elected by her peers to become the first lady warden of Lambton county.

Another highlight of Barb's life was being the chairman of the board of Lambton College for four consecutive years. This opportunity included a four-week Asian tour to open a relationship with China to establish an academic partnership with Lambton College, which still exists today.

Barbara very much enjoyed her many years in politics. She often said that most politicians were pleasant, outgoing people who were a pleasure to work with. During her term as mayor in 2000, her council simultaneously negotiated the opening of the Point Edward casino and a first contract for OPP policing.

I'd like to express my condolences to the entire Horner family and the village of Point Edward for their loss.

CAMBRIDGE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Last month, the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce gave those in my community of Cambridge an opportunity to recognize the contribution of local businesses and individuals to the continued growth and success of our community.

The annual Business Excellence Awards ceremony took place on March 24. Winners of the Business Excellence Awards are businesses or individuals who have shown their commitment to positive business development, growth and diversity within their city.

Winners of this year's awards include:

—Business of the Year for one to 49 employees: Brick Works Academy;

—Business of the Year for over 50 employees: Farm Mutual Reinsurance Plan Inc.;

—Personal Business Achievement Award: Jen Germann Wright, whose daughter, Meg Wright, told me how proud she was of her mother;

—New Venture of the Year Award: FusionCast;

—the Keith Taylor Memorial Award to Lieutenant Colonel Ronald F. Gowing;

—the Young Entrepreneur of the Year—one of the more important ones for our young entrepreneurs: Stephanie Soulis from Little Mushroom Catering;

—the WOWCAMBRIDGE.COM Award to Shelbee Frasier, Valet Car Wash Inc.;

—the Environment Award–Excellence in Energy Conservation to Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada Inc.;

—the Chairs Award to Knapp Fasteners Inc.;

—the Lifetime Achievement Award: the Honourable Gary Goodyear; and finally,

—the Rotary Scholarship Award for Academic Excellence: Caitlin Beacock.

Thank you so much to all the winners for making sure that your businesses add immeasurably to our community.

JOSEPH BRANT HOSPITAL

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Last year, I was joined by my colleagues the Minister of Health and the MPP for Halton to celebrate the ground-breaking for the expansion and modernization of Joseph Brant Hospital in my riding of Burlington.

As part of a \$370-million investment by the province, Joseph Brant is making significant renovations to give patients faster access to the right care. They're also constructing a seven-storey patient tower. Based on best practices and evidence from other leading hospitals, this tower will contain new patient rooms, a new emergency department and state-of-the-art operating rooms.

I recently had the pleasure of taking a guided tour of these rooms at a mock-up facility arranged by the hospital to showcase the kind of patient experience that we will achieve in our new community hospital. I was amazed to experience state-of-the-art design, created to promote patient- and family-centred care. Not only are these rooms designed to reduce the spread of infection; they are also designed for the future, with the ability to adapt to new technology down the road. Residents are invited to tour these mock-up rooms at a public open house tomorrow from 5 to 7 p.m.

Burlington is fortunate to have a community hospital—one that not only serves the people who live in my riding, but one that has been built with pride by that same community. As my constituency office is located just down the street from this growing hospital, it has been a wonderful experience to see the progress each and every day. Together with the generous citizen donors of Burlington and the city of Burlington, our government is delivering on our promise to provide patients with faster access to the care they need close to home. I would like to thank everyone who is making it a reality.

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

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in her office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following is the title of the bill to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts / Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EQUAL PAY DAY

JOURNÉE DE L'ÉQUITÉ SALARIALE

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I rise in the Legislature today to recognize April 19 as Equal Pay Day in Ontario. In observance of the day, Speaker, I'm happy to share time on the floor today with my colleague the Honourable Tracy MacCharles, who is the minister responsible for women's issues.

Equal Pay Day is a day that's calculated each year in countries around the world to mark the extra time it takes a woman to earn as much money as a man. The truth is that in Ontario, we provide very high-quality education to both our girls and our boys—then we do not let women achieve equal success in the workplace. We need to change that.

I want to acknowledge the advocates, the community leaders and those who work each and every day in this province to end gender wage discrimination. Since I rose last year, Speaker, we've put a lot of work in towards closing the gender wage gap here in the province. I'm pleased to tell the House that today the Ministry of Labour posted online a summary of our public and stakeholder consultations that took place over the last fall and the winter.

Our Gender Wage Gap Strategy Steering Committee and the staff that support it have solicited ideas and views from the public in town hall meetings right across this great province. They've held group and one-to-one meetings with 700 stakeholders and key parties all over this province. Our steering committee has also had over 1,400 responses to an online survey, and we've consulted broadly internally within the provincial government.

Closing the gap is going to require effort from government, from business, from labour and from others in our society. As well, the committee and the staff have conducted detailed research into how the gender wage gap is being addressed in other jurisdictions around the globe. We've had a busy year, Mr. Speaker, but the work continues.

The steering committee of which I spoke—which Minister MacCharles and I met with earlier today—is busy distilling and analysing all it has heard into a very firm and concrete set of recommendations on how we should close the gender wage gap in the province of Ontario. For each of those recommendations, we'll develop a strategy that is going to close the gap.

Today what I want to do is to recognize the work of two very outstanding Ontarians who were the external advisers on the steering committee. Linda Davis is the past president of the Business and Professional Women's Clubs of Ontario, of which she is currently an executive board member, as well as the board's Equal Pay Coalition representative. Dr. Parbudyal Singh is a professor of human resource management at York University right here in Toronto. Dr. Singh's research covers emerging

issues in human resource management, compensation practices, and labour relations.

Ms. Davis and Dr. Singh joined Ontario's Pay Equity Commissioner, Emanuela Heyninck, and my ministry's executive lead, Nancy Austin, to complete the committee. I and the whole House look forward to receiving the final report of this group, and the recommendations attached to it, later this year.

1520

Speaker, all of this began in the Premier's mandate letter to me. The Premier asked that I work with Minister MacCharles to lead the development of a wage gap strategy that will close the gap between men and women in the context of the 21st-century modern economy. It's an important task, and it's one that Minister MacCharles and I have been very, very pleased to take on together.

Today we recognize the critical role that women play in our economy, while reflecting on the sombre reality that women continue to earn less on average than men do right here in Ontario. Equal Pay Day is a reminder that we must dedicate ourselves to ending this discrimination once and for all, and ensuring that the important contributions that women make in our economy and to the province of Ontario are both fully valued and recognized.

We are making progress, but as long as there's a wage gap, we have so much more to do. Our goal has to be an Ontario where men and women have equal opportunity to achieve their full potential within a modern workplace, and thus contribute their maximum potential to Ontario's economic growth. Closing the gender wage gap is simply the right thing to do. It's a necessary part of this goal.

I thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to be able to present today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I recognize the Minister of Children and Youth Services, and responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's my pleasure to rise to recognize April 19 as Equal Pay Day and to share the floor with my colleague the Honourable Kevin Flynn, the Minister of Labour.

It is sobering that in this day and age we still need to bring attention to the fact that women on average earn less than men throughout their working lives. Nearly half of Ontario's workforce is female, yet despite increased participation in the labour force, higher levels of education and increased skills, women still face significant barriers and disadvantages in employment compared to men.

Les femmes constituent près de la moitié de la main-d'œuvre ontarienne. Cependant, malgré une participation accrue dans la population active, des niveaux d'éducation supérieurs et de meilleures compétences, les femmes se heurtent encore à des obstacles et à des désavantages importants dans le domaine de l'emploi, par rapport aux hommes.

According to the available data, Speaker, Ontario's gender wage gap between men and women ranges from between 12% to 31.5%. Significantly, this gap actually widens for groups such as indigenous women, newcomer

women and women with disabilities. This is not acceptable. We must take action to close the gender wage gap once and for all.

When women do not have access to the same opportunities as men, we all lose. The gender wage gap means that there are productivity losses to the entire economy, and Ontario's families have less disposable income.

The facts are there, but what are we doing about it? In 2014, the Premier asked my colleague the Minister of Labour and myself to lead the development of a wage gap strategy. A steering committee was formed. They were brought together to consult with diverse groups from across the province to give us their best advice on how to close the wage gap. The committee's recommendations will be presented a little bit later this year, and I look forward to hearing their advice on the best way to take concrete action to close the gap and help women reach their full potential.

Speaker, Ontario's Pay Equity Act has been viewed as one of the most progressive pay equity statutes in the world. Ontario is the first province to recognize Equal Pay Day so that we can acknowledge the vital role of women in the economy. We have been working vigorously to support the advancement of women in the labour market. However, the fact that the wage gap still exists points to the need to do more.

As I mentioned earlier, women make up half of the Ontario workforce. They also represent more than half of our post-secondary grads. Yet women are still under-represented in many areas in the private sector, and that's why we have to take action to increase the representation of women on corporate boards and in senior management positions.

Increasing the number of women on boards and in senior positions is good for the economy, good for business and critical for gender diversity in corporate Ontario. Research actually shows that gender diversity in corporate leadership is linked to improved governance and stronger performance in both financial and non-financial measures.

We've taken bold action to respond to the alarming statistic that only 20.8% of board members on the top 60 companies listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange/Standard and Poor's index are women. Ontario was the first Canadian jurisdiction to implement the "comply or explain" regulation, in December 2014, which requires companies listed on TSE to report publicly on their approaches to increasing the number of women on their boards and in executive positions. Other Canadian jurisdictions have followed suit.

There have been some early successes. A report by the Canadian Securities Administrators reveals that 15% of all corporations surveyed added one or more women to their board in the prior year. However, 51% of corporations surveyed did not have any women on their boards; and in the mining, oil and gas, and technology industries, 60% didn't have any women at all on their board.

Further bold action is, indeed, required to improve the representation of women in corporate leadership. In the

2015 fall economic statement, the Ontario government announced that I will be co-chairing, with the Minister of Finance, a steering committee that will work to improve the representation of women on boards and in senior executive positions. We're finalizing those details and establishing the committee. We've also hired expert consultants to develop a report that will assess how corporations have responded to the "comply or explain" regulation and provide recommendations to the government and business on how to further promote women in leadership.

Speaker, last year I led an engagement session with corporate executives to learn more on how to promote women in the mining industry, both on the front lines and in leadership positions.

To level the playing field for women in the workplace, our government has increased wages by up to \$2 an hour plus benefits for early childhood educators and other child care professions in licensed child care settings. We also granted an increase of up to \$20 per day for home child care providers working with licensed home child care agencies this year. We've also set a new base rate for personal support workers, starting at \$16.50 an hour, up from \$14 hourly. We will increase this total hourly wage by up to \$4 over the next three years. And we announced \$120 million over three years in new funding dedicated to building 4,000 safe, high-quality, new licensed child care spaces in schools across the province. We've already allocated more than \$80 million of this funding, resulting in 2,901 new licensed child care spaces coming to communities across Ontario.

That's not all. Through the Ontario Women's Directorate, we've been working hard in progressive ways to help low-income women gain new skills.

Ce n'est pas tout. Par l'entremise de la Direction générale de la condition féminine de l'Ontario, nous travaillons dur et de façon progressiste afin d'aider les femmes à faible revenu à acquérir de nouvelles compétences.

The Women in Skilled Trades and Information Technology Training Program gives low-income women training to get better-paying jobs. It provides provincially certified training plus apprenticeships in the skilled trades, and certification and work placements in information technology. Our microlending program for women in Ontario helps women grow and build their own business. The Employment Training for Abused/At-Risk Women Program helps women who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing domestic violence regain self-confidence and safety, learn employable skills and find jobs or better-paying work. Thousands of women have benefitted from these programs, Speaker, and I'm immensely proud of each and every one of them.

A key part of building women up is encouraging them to consider careers in non-traditional sectors that will provide opportunity and pay well. That's why I'm delighted that every year, 40% of university grads in the important STEM sector—science, technology, engineering and math—are women.

Progress like this is absolutely essential to closing the wage gap and building a fair and prosperous Ontario.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise and speak to the issue of the gender wage gap on behalf of our leader, Patrick Brown, and my PC caucus colleagues. I'll be sharing my time with my colleague from Wellington-Halton Hills.

1530

When I spoke in recognition of International Women's Day, I referenced the World Economic Forum's report saying it would take until 2133 to achieve global gender parity, which is far too long. The gender wage gap is a complex issue that is contributed to by several factors, including workplace discrimination, unequal gender representation in the workplace, and a higher proportion of caregiver responsibilities falling to women. This issue is especially evident for women who are minorities, indigenous or living with disabilities.

Social service providers in child care, welfare and development services are predominantly female-dominated jobs. The proxy pay equity obligations are a heavy financial burden and are creating a wage gap between agencies. The government is not leading on this issue, as it has stopped paying these agencies the base funding needed to match obligated increases under pay equity. I'll give you examples: I'm sure we've all had meetings with Community Living and Horizon groups in our ridings, and they are amongst those that have an outstanding liability across the field.

Several reports have also highlighted the inequality of the average working woman in Ontario making approximately 70% of every dollar a man makes. As incomes rise, the disparity grows. Even among the best-paid 10% of women, their earnings are 37% less than top-earning men. In every occupational category, even female-dominated fields such as health care, the average annual earnings of women are less than men's pay.

As Ontario's health care system has suffered a cut of \$815 million from physician services, a \$50 million cut to the physiotherapy and a cut of 50 medical residency positions, this not only negatively impacts the health of Ontarians, but stifles the economic prosperity and stability for women who choose careers in health.

Promoting awareness of the gender wage gap, increasing access to education for women and girls, and empowering them to seek meaningful careers in any field are important steps that we all must take.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Wellington-Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Speaker, our Ontario PC caucus—and I would hope all members of this House—supports the principles of equity and fairness for all employees. Everyone deserves equal pay for equal work, regardless of their gender, race, or ethnicity. And no one—I repeat, no one—should earn less for doing the same job simply because they're a woman.

The employers I know and that I talk to would also agree with these principles. They want to treat their

employees fairly and want to pay them the wages and salaries that they've earned and that they deserve.

Women are educated. Women are dedicated. Women are talented. They now make up a majority of our university graduates. There is simply no excuse for the historical wage gap to persist.

We've been making progress. Governments of all political stripes have made a concerted effort to close the wage gap. In fact, in the last provincial election, a record 38 women were elected to this House as members of provincial Parliament, representing more than a third of all MPPs. That is progress on gender equality.

Our Ontario PC caucus is strengthened by outstanding female MPPs. The member for York-Simcoe, the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, the member for Nepean-Carleton, our deputy leader and member for Dufferin-Caledon, the member for Huron-Bruce, and the member for Thornhill are all brilliant, tireless, caring and effective MPPs. They are all leaders who do an outstanding job representing their constituents here at Queen's Park.

I also want to recognize the exceptional job that my friend Elizabeth Witmer does as chair of the WSIB. She was also a superb MPP during her time here, and she is the longest-serving MPP ever. It wasn't hard for me to support her during her run for leadership of our party in 2002, and she would have been an excellent Premier.

We've been making progress in other areas as well. According to the government of Ontario, the gender wage gap has slowly been narrowing over the past half century. Laws such as the 1987 Pay Equity Act have helped, but clearly there are still examples of sexism in the workplace and we still need to change attitudes.

The Ministry of Labour cites Statistics Canada data estimating that Ontario's gender wage gap ranges from 12% to 31.5%. Last fall, the Ministry of Labour launched the Gender Wage Gap Strategy Steering Committee to consult with Ontarians on how to close the wage gap. Those consultations recently ended and we look forward to seeing their results.

We need tangible and concrete steps to move forward to create a more equal society. We know that small business is struggling and can't deal with any more regulations, but we as members of provincial Parliament all play a leadership role in our communities. We have a responsibility to stand up and say that gender bias, in any form, is not acceptable. All women—our mothers, our wives and our daughters—deserve equal pay for equal work and shouldn't be asked to accept anything less.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: On behalf of my colleagues in the NDP caucus and NDP leader Andrea Horwath, I rise today, as the women's issues critic, to respond to the minister's statement on Equal Pay Day.

Ontarians who haven't heard of Equal Pay Day before could be forgiven for thinking that celebration is in order, for believing that April 19 must somehow mark the day that equal pay for men and women in this province has finally been achieved. Unfortunately, nothing could be further from the truth. Instead, Equal Pay Day tells us, on

average, how far into the next year a woman has to work in order to earn the same salary a man earned the year before. In other words, it takes almost 16 months for a woman to earn what men earned in 12—to get out of the red, so to speak, as signified by my red scarf today.

For immigrant women, indigenous women and women with disabilities, Equal Pay Day comes much, much later—closer to the summer than to the spring. For all of us, women and men, the day reminds us of how far we still have to go to close the gender wage gap, and unfortunately how little we have accomplished, not only since 2013 when the day was first observed in Ontario, but over the decades since the gap was first quantified.

While Equal Pay Day is common in jurisdictions around the world, it is because of the advocacy of the Equal Pay Coalition, and in particular the efforts of my NDP colleague the member for Parkdale-High Park, that we now recognize Equal Pay Day in Ontario. It provides an important means of raising awareness of the reality that women in this province continue to earn about 30% less than men. As we learned yesterday in a new report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the gap may be narrower or wider, but it exists across all occupations and all industries, regardless of age, income or level of education, whether in the public sector or the private sector.

New Democrats welcome the tabling of the Gender Wage Gap Strategy Steering Committee consultation summary today. Certainly, Ontario women have been waiting a very long time for government leadership to close the earnings gap, since the late 1980s when pay equity was hailed as the cornerstone of government gender wage gap strategies. As we have learned since then, however, equal pay legislation alone will not close the gap, especially when it is not enforced and especially when it is not adequately funded.

These issues were raised frequently during the government's Closing the Gender Wage Gap consultations, as noted in the summary report posted today. The report observes, "Some people said that the laws are not well enforced, are complex and difficult to access. Many suggested that the laws should be monitored and implemented in a proactive manner by government, instead of relying on an individual's complaint before an investigation is started." It also states, "We heard that there is a need for effective enforcement, proactive monitoring for compliance, support for those making complaints (especially for non-unionized workers), and amendments to the proxy provisions of pay equity...."

Another theme that was highlighted in the summary report is the recognition of child care as an essential strategy to eliminate the gap. The report states, "Child care was the number one issue everywhere." It concludes, "Almost everyone mentioned the need to provide high-quality, affordable and accessible child care as a priority issue to help working women and their families close the gender wage gap."

Consultation participants strongly supported a public system of early childhood education and care that is uni-

versal, high-quality and comprehensive, and for public funding to ensure both adequate wages and affordable fees. Yet the 2016 Ontario budget includes no new money for child care funding and no new investments to help reduce fees, despite the fact that for the second year in a row, Ontario reported the highest and least affordable child care fees in Canada, with long waiting lists for subsidies in many communities.

A recent report on fees across Canada found that the seven most expensive cities for child care are all in Ontario. This calls into question whether a gender lens was actually applied in the development of the 2016 budget, and it also raises concerns about how the minister responsible for women's issues is implementing that aspect of her mandate.

1540

I want to conclude with another issue that came up during the consultation, and that was the need to support women experiencing violence to maintain their employment. This can be done through initiatives like my private member's bill, Bill 177, to provide up to 10 days of paid leave for domestic violence or sexual violence. I hope that this will provide a catalyst for the government to move forward with my bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements. Therefore, it is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Ms. Laurie Scott: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas demonstration schools in Ontario provide incredible necessary support for children with special education needs;

"Whereas the current review by the government of Ontario of demonstration schools and other special education programs has placed a freeze on student intake and the hiring of teaching staff;

"Whereas children in need of specialized education and their parents require access to demonstration schools and other essential support services;

"Whereas freezing student intake is unacceptable as it leaves the most vulnerable students behind; and

"Whereas this situation could result in the closure of many specialized education programs, depriving children with special needs of their best opportunity to learn;

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

"To immediately reinstate funding streams for demonstration schools and other specialized education services for the duration of the review and to commit to ensuring every student in need is allowed the chance to receive an education and achieve their potential."

I pass this to page Deanna and affix my signature.

GUIDE AND SERVICE ANIMALS

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to read this petition for the first time in the House today.

"Expand AODA Service Animal Protection.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the expansion of coverage for guide and service animals under the AODA represents a huge step in the inclusion and dignity of all people, there are still gaps in the protection provided by current legislation and policy; and

"Whereas the AODA legislation fails to consider the protection and accommodation of:

"—dogs and animals in active training to become certified guide/service dogs/animals;

"—service dogs and animals who are trained with special skills related to non-disability identified illnesses, such as detecting oncoming seizures;

"—dogs specifically trained to offer specific emotional support to psychiatric consumer/survivors with diagnosis such as PTSD; and

"Whereas the Blind Persons' Rights Act, 1990 empowers the Attorney General to provide ID cards for guide dogs, which outline the current legal protection; and

"Whereas the AODA requires service animals to be accompanied by a physician's letter; and

"Whereas physicians' letters are inconsistent in content and style, resulting in their being denied, adding further confusion and indignity to the person presenting them;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to introduce legislation expanding the AODA's definition of a protected service animal, and to empower the office of the Attorney General to provide ID cards for all protected guide and service animals/dogs."

It's my pleasure to affix my signature and give this to page MacFarlane. That's a good Scottish name.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital is challenged to support the growing needs of the community within its existing space as it was built for a mere 7,000" emergency room "visits and experiences in excess of 33,000 visits annually; and

"Whereas the government-implemented Places to Grow Act forecasts massive population growth in New Tecumseth, which along with the aging population will only intensify the need for the redevelopment of the hospital; and

"Whereas all other hospital emergency facilities are more than 45 minutes away with no public transit available between those communities; and

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital deserves equitable servicing comparable to other ... hospitals;

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

“That the Kathleen Wynne Liberal government immediately provide the necessary funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital for the redevelopment of their emergency department, operating rooms, diagnostic imaging and laboratory to ensure that they can continue to provide stable and ongoing service to residents in our area.”

I agree with the petition and I will sign it.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition that continues to flow into my office on a regular basis. It reads:

“Don’t Balance the Budget on the Backs of Children with ASD.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government recently announced plans to reform the way autism services are delivered in the province, which leaves children over the age of five with no access to intensive behavioural intervention (IBI); and

“Whereas in 2003, former Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty removed the previous age cap on IBI therapy, stating that Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six; and

“Whereas applied behaviour analysis (ABA) and intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) are the only recognized evidence-based practices known to treat autism spectrum disorder (ASD); and

“Whereas the combined number of children waiting for ABA and IBI therapies in Ontario is approximately 16,158; and

“Whereas wait-lists for services have become overwhelmingly long due to the chronic underfunding by this Liberal government;

“Whereas some families are being forced to re-mortgage houses or move to other provinces while other families have no option but to go without essential therapy; and

“Whereas the Premier and her government should not be balancing the budget on the backs of kids with ASD and their families;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario to immediately ensure that all children currently on the waiting list for IBI therapy are grandfathered into the new program so they do not become a lost generation.”

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

CHILD CARE

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

“Whereas many parents and caregivers are being charged non-refundable fees to place their children on wait-lists for daycare centres;

“Whereas non-refundable daycare wait-list fees can range from tens to hundreds of dollars;

“Whereas due to the scarcity of quality daycare spaces, many parents and caregivers are forced to place their children on multiple wait-lists;

“Whereas non-refundable daycare wait-list fees impose a significant financial burden on parents and caregivers for the mere opportunity to access quality child care;

“Whereas daycare wait-lists are often administered in a non-transparent manner which creates the risk that they will be administered in an unfair and/or discriminatory manner;

“Whereas parents and caregivers in Ontario already face significant barriers accessing daycare due to high costs and limited numbers of daycare spaces ...

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

“That all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognize that we have a responsibility to take action now, and support a requirement for transparent administration of daycare wait-lists and a ban on non-refundable daycare wait-list fees.”

I agree with this petition. I’m affixing my name to it and handing it over to Aarbhi.

ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

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

“Whereas, suddenly and without any consultation, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport has suspended the Ontario Trillium Foundation’s \$25-million capital grants program; and

“Whereas this sudden decision will have a devastating effect on volunteer groups, non-profits and charitable organizations for whom Trillium funding is essential in maintaining facilities and enhancing their work to make communities across Ontario better places to call home; and

“Whereas Trillium is one of the few sources of capital funds for these groups and the suspension of this program will force them to do more fundraising for capital needs, placing a greater burden on the volunteers while reducing their capacity to improve lives in the communities they serve;

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

“To recognize the Ontario Trillium Foundation’s capital program is a lifeline for volunteer groups, particularly in rural and northern communities, and to immediately reinstate it’s \$25-million budget.”

I’ll affix my signature and send it to the table with page Madeline. I agree with the petition 100%.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Percy Hatfield: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the day of mourning is a day to remember and honour those who have been killed, injured or who suffered illness as a result of work-related incidents and to honour their families. It also serves as a day to protect the living by strengthening our commitment to health and safety in all workplaces in Ontario for the common goal of preventing further deaths and injuries from occurring in the workplace;

“Whereas a workers day of mourning is recognized in more than 100 countries around the world;

“Whereas 1,000 Canadian workers are killed on the job each year and hundreds of thousands more are injured or permanently disabled;

“Whereas it is expected that more than 90% of workplace deaths are preventable and raised awareness of this fact is necessary. Every worker is entitled to a safe work environment, free of preventable accidents, and that we, as a province, are committed to reaching such a goal;

“Whereas our MUSH sector (municipal, universities, schools and hospitals) as leaders in their communities are not doing enough to recognize and raise awareness of the seriousness of workplace injury and death;

1550

“Whereas the flag symbolizes us as a province, and the lowered flag is a powerful symbol of our shared loss and respect, brings focus to the issues and symbolizes we are united on this front as a province at all levels, not divided;

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

“To support the workers of Ontario with swift passage of Bill 180, Workers Day of Mourning Act, 2016, that would require all publicly funded provincial and municipal buildings to lower their Canadian and Ontario flags on April 28 each year.”

I agree. I give this to page Diluk to bring up to the desk.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Laurie Scott: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

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

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that

protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

I agree, and I affix my signature and pass it to page Lauren.

WAY-FINDING SIGNS

Mr. Michael Mantha: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the MTO currently does not allow established trail way-finding signs on MTO highways, and way-finding signs are helpful in guiding cyclists in northern Ontario where we often have no other options than using MTO roads;

“Whereas cycling tourism has become a significant part of Manitoulin’s tourist economy, with an established network of cycling routes, many of which cannot be done without travelling on portions of MTO highways;

“Whereas Manitoulin’s economic development hinges on making tourists feel welcome and safe;

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

“To allow way-finding signs on MTO roads in northern Ontario and to immediately allow a pilot project of way-finding signs on MTO road sections of cycling routes found in MICA’s Manitoulin Island and LaCloche Mountains Cycling Routes and Road Map.”

I agree with this petition and present it to page Madeline to bring it down to the Clerk’s table.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Jim Wilson: “Whereas our present land leases with Parkbridge Lifestyle Communities Inc. are covered by the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 (RTA); however, they are exempted from the protection of rent controls under the act. Being part 1, section 6, subsection 2, and,

“Whereas the landlord has the option to increase the monthly land rental by \$50.00 above the existing rent, to a new purchaser, when a home is sold;

“Whereas ‘Park Place’ is a community of permanent homes located on leased lands whose residents are retired and living on fixed incomes. Continued rental increases beyond the guidelines of the RTA, is unsustainable to retired residents on fixed incomes;

“Therefore, we the undersigned residents of ‘Park Place,’ petition the Legislature to change the RTA to include rent controls for retirement type communities located on leased lands and, to delete the option given to landlords to increase land rental rates upon sale of a home in such communities. The foregoing would enable retirees to remain in their homes and enjoy their hard-earned retirement years.”

I’m happy to sign that petition.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: “Hydro One Not for Sale! Say No to Privatization.

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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 sign this petition and give it to Diluk for delivery.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas Ontario’s growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

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

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

It’s signed by hundreds of my constituents, and I’ve also affixed my signature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The time for petitions has now ended.

VISITOR

Mr. Wayne Gates: I would like to welcome to Queen’s Park this afternoon Mr. John Thompson, a dentist from my riding of Niagara Falls. Thanks very much for coming, and I hope you enjoyed the afternoon.

OPPOSITION DAY

ELECTORAL REFORM

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I move the following motion:

Whereas any efforts at major electoral reform must be conducted in a fair, transparent and non-partisan manner in the interest of protecting the democratic process; and

Whereas Ontario has traditionally used an independent, consensus-based approach overseen by the Chief Electoral Officer as the basis for any legislative changes to the electoral process; and

Whereas any panels, bodies or committees historically tasked with electoral reform have maintained an equal number of representatives from Ontario’s major political parties and representatives from civil society in the interest of fairness and democracy,

Therefore, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should immediately establish the Ontario Advisory Panel on Political Finance Reform and Electoral Participation—the panel—to develop recommendations regarding rules governing the financing of political parties, electoral participation and third-party advertising; and

That the panel shall consist of an equal number of representatives from each political party that earned at least 3% of the popular vote in the 2014 Ontario general election; and

That the panel shall include a collection of members representing civil society, including labour, business, non-governmental organizations and academia that, in aggregate, equal the total number of political party members on the panel; and

That the chair of the panel shall be an independent, non-elected person selected from a list of candidates prepared by the Chief Electoral Officer, and appointed by consensus of the House leaders; in the absence of consensus, the appointment shall be made solely by the Chief Electoral Officer; and

That the panel shall have the authority to conduct public hearings throughout the province, undertake research and generally have such powers and duties as are required to develop recommendations on the new rules governing political party financing, electoral participation and third-party advertising, the basis of which may inform any new legislation; and

That the Chief Electoral Officer shall serve as secretary to the panel and Elections Ontario shall provide administrative and budget support; and

That the Chief Electoral Officer shall table the panel’s final report with the assembly no later than September 30, 2016. In the event that the Legislature is not sitting, the report shall be submitted to the Speaker, who shall lay the report before the assembly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day motion number 3.

Back to Ms. Horwath. I recognize you now.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you very much. I recognized you, too. I’m only kidding.

It’s my pleasure to rise and debate this motion today because it’s an extremely important day here in Ontario.

For the first time that I can remember, earlier today, I stood with the leader of the official opposition, as well as the leader of the Green Party of Ontario. Together, the

three of us called on the Premier to support an independent, transparent and, above all, fair process for reforming how elections and political parties are funded in this province.

1600

Speaker, we did this because, fundamentally, we believe that the people of Ontario deserve to know that their voice matters, that Ontarians should have total faith in their political system, and that having the ear of the government isn't dependent on how deep your pockets are. There is no question that we must reform the laws that govern our democracy and ensure that politics and government in Ontario isn't under the influence of big money. But how we get there is just as important. Process matters. What Ontarians deserve is a process that's above question, a process that actually builds faith in our democracy, because after weeks of front pages filled with allegations that it's only the big donors who get access to this government, Ontarians' faith has been shaken.

But fixing our system cannot be left in the hands of any single political party or any group of parties, especially not the Liberal Party and the Liberal Party alone. Because after watching Liberal scandal after Liberal scandal, from Ornge to eHealth, the gas plants to the Sudbury bribery scandal, and now a ministerial fundraising scandal—after decades of scandal—Ontarians have grown cynical with politics in our province. Their faith has been shaken.

But there is still hope. We have an opportunity to restore trust in their democratic process, in this Legislature, and, yes, in us as leaders of this province. There is now a growing consensus that it's time to get the influence of big money out of politics and out of government, and particularly out of government decision-making here in the province of Ontario. In fact, that is the issue that has driven us to the point that we are at now, particularly when it comes to the Liberals and the Liberal cabinet and their habits that, if they do not skirt the law, certainly are problematic in terms of how people perceive what the Liberals have been doing when it comes to fundraising.

We have an opportunity to get it done, Speaker. We have an opportunity now to get it done for—and, more importantly, by—Ontarians.

As Canada's Supreme Court noted in a 2004 ruling, "Electoral fairness is key. Where Canadians perceive elections to be unfair, voter apathy follows shortly thereafter."

We have a choice today, Speaker. We can create a process that takes the politics out, or we can have the Liberal system which puts all the power in the backrooms of the Premier's office. We can create a process that's open, transparent, independent, nimble and fast-moving. We can have recommendations before this House by the end of September, but create rules that have the potential to last beyond the next election cycle.

Reforming how we finance our democratic process in a way that Ontarians can trust is fair can be done through the establishment of an Ontario Advisory Panel on Political Finance Reform and Electoral Participation. An in-

dependent panel bringing together political parties, including the Green Party, as well as the public and members of civil society like labour, business, NGOs and academics—that kind of independent panel could be chaired by a neutral party outside of this Legislature and the process steered by Ontario's Chief Electoral Officer, as was outlined in the motion. Once assembled—and that can be done very quickly—the panel would immediately begin to hold hearings, commission research, and develop recommendations for getting the influence of big money out of Ontario politics. They would make those recommendations, as I said, to the Legislature on or before September 30, 2016, leaving plenty of time for legislation to be drafted and passed before the end of the year.

That means no delay, Speaker. So notwithstanding how much the Liberals and the Premier, her cabinet members and her MPPs like to pretend that we're talking about a long-drawn-out process, in fact, we're talking about a consultation period at the front end by which then legislation is drafted. In other words, we're doing it in the proper order so that people actually get the input, they get to shape what the actual legislation looks like, instead of what the Premier wants, which is to write it up herself and then take it to consultation, which, frankly, is putting the cart before the horse. If we're going to have new rules established, they have to be done in such a way as to ensure that there is faith and trust in what comes out at the end of the process. If the process is one that is simply driven by the majority Liberals in this House, then it is not a process that will have widespread acceptance and widespread trust from the public.

That's what the crux of this issue is: Does the Premier want to be undemocratic in terms of electoral reform or does she want to do what the Supreme Court frankly thinks we should be doing, and that is making sure that we are building up people's trust in democracy, building up people's belief in or value in our government and our government systems? Are we going to do what Kathleen Wynne wants to do, which I believe will lead to more cynicism, as the Supreme Court suggested.

Anyway, what I'm saying is that the ground rules for the process that we've laid out in the motion are ground rules that create an open and transparent process and, most importantly, a process that Ontarians have faith in or can have faith in.

As I said, it's starkly in contrast to what the Liberals are wanting to do, which puts all of the power squarely in the Premier's office. She began by sketching out the legislation at home at her dining room table. She wants to draft the legislation in the Liberal backrooms and then send it to a standing committee where the Liberals have a majority and can vote down anything the Premier doesn't like. That is not the proper way to make amendments of this nature. It is not the proper way to address key changes to the way our elections are financed and operated.

It is absolutely inappropriate for her to take this position. Frankly, I am shocked, and I know many people

I've talked to in the last number of days are extremely disappointed and, frankly, dumbfounded by why this Premier, who claims to be so open and transparent, is shutting Ontarians out of a proper process for changing their democracy. It is very, very surprising.

The Premier says that there's a widespread consensus already, but, to date, I've seen no evidence of her attending any public meetings on the issue or any consultation with NGOs, business leaders or labour leaders. She hasn't consulted with Ontarians or the non-partisan experts who could add some advice and insight into this issue. By the time she met with myself and the leader of the official opposition, she had already written her plan at home on the weekend. We were astounded in a press conference after that meeting that she admitted to having it all worked out already by herself on the back of a napkin at her kitchen table. How ridiculous is that? And this is the kind of process we're expecting people to trust, where the Premier writes up what she thinks is the right thing on the back of a napkin at her dining room table?

Really, if there's one thing that shows why this needs to be a non-partisan activity, it's precisely because of the way this Premier has handled it already, which is very badly and undemocratically. This unilateral approach is not just an affront to our democratic process; it is also out of line with our political traditions here.

In the 1970s, political leaders across North America were faced with reform of election laws. Here in Ontario, Bill Davis was facing serious questions about fundraising ethics. In fact, this government needs to take a page out of Mr. Davis's book when it comes to ethics. However, I digress. Here in Ontario, he was facing those issues, the Premier of the day, and he could have made changes by majority rule. He could have made changes around the margins in a way that might have been able to benefit his own political party, the Progressive Conservatives of the day. Instead, that Premier showed his respect for democracy and his respect for Ontarians and showed the humility that is required of a person with so much power as the Premier of the province. That's what happened.

What he did was refer the issue to the Camp commission, a tripartisan commission. He said at the time—and I want Liberals to hear this, Speaker. This is the Premier of the day, who showed ethics, who showed an understanding of his true role: "I would want to maintain a political system in which the various parties can function and campaign ... in an atmosphere above and beyond public doubt, suspicion and cynicism."

1610

In response, the Camp commission recommended a permanent election finances commission made up of nominees from the three political parties, a non-partisan member of the Law Society of Upper Canada, the Chief Electoral Officer and a chair appointed by the Lieutenant Governor. In short, it was a non-partisan commission, very similar to the one we are currently proposing and that is supported by the PC caucus and leader, as well as by the leader of the Green Party of Ontario. For nearly 30 years, that non-partisan commission ensured that no one

party could rewrite election rules for their own partisan benefit. Sure, rules changed, but when they did, there was consensus and an agreement that they were fair to all parties.

For example, in 1986, Ontario introduced campaign spending limits. But, as noted by academics, the new rules "had been exhaustively considered by an ad hoc committee of party leaders, in the proceedings of which the commission" on election finances "was invited to attend." In other words, there was a consensus between the political parties and the commission, which included its non-partisan members.

Then, in 1998, it all changed here in Ontario, when Mike Harris unilaterally scrapped the election fairness commission without any consultation, without any discussion. At the time, the Liberal leader said that there are "simple rules of fairness.... You can't change the rules of the game without the consent of all the players involved."

What's happened, Speaker? That was the leader of the Liberal Party back in 1998. That makes sense to me. I think it makes sense to most people—well, at least on this side of the House, and I would say it would make sense to most Ontarians. The MPP for St. Catharines at the time called it an "anti-democratic strategy, hatched in the back rooms of the Premier's office." That kind of sounds like new rules hatched up on a dining room table, don't you think, Speaker?

John Gerretsen, the MPP for Kingston and the Islands, called these changes "a tragedy"—a tragedy. He said, "If there is one thing that we owe to future generations, it's certainly the fact that our electoral system, the manner in which we elect governments every four or five years, is done in a fair and open and straightforward manner. What's happening here"—and let's recall that this is what a Liberal person, who went on to be a major cabinet minister in the McGuinty government, said about Mike Harris's decision not to have an open and democratic process any longer: "What's happening here," Mr. Gerretsen said, "is that the governing party that happens to be in power at any one time is going to have a distinct advantage above the normal advantages of incumbency. That simply isn't fair, and I hope the people of Ontario will speak out about this."

The Toronto Star editorial board weighed in, saying that:

"Traditionally, the rules governing elections—the ceiling on expenditures, the length of the campaign, and so on—have been changed only when there has been a consensus among the three parties in the Legislature.

"Otherwise, the government of the day could use its majority to push through any new rules that would be to its advantage."

Speaker, that's exactly what we're talking about right now.

As the Hamilton Spectator noted, "The government broke tradition yesterday by tabling proposed legislation affecting the Election Finances Act without first getting all-party consent."

And Maclean's wrote back then, "For 25 years, election financing bills in Ontario have been tabled with all-party consensus. But Ontario Premier Mike Harris tossed aside that tradition."

There's an interesting process playing out today in Manitoba, which shows that even when reforms are good, when there isn't a good process, it's people that end up losing. Starting in 2000, Manitoba banned corporate and union donations and ensured that only individuals could donate to political parties. They unilaterally created a system of public support, but without a robust process to make it a long-term solution. Now what we're seeing is the PC Party in that province making it a campaign promise to eliminate any public financing.

The rules that govern our democracy should be built to last. That is the point. The way you build them to last—and I'm glad the member for St. Catharines is here with us, because he could actually reiterate his own comments, his own words, from back in 1998. The rules should be built to last and not subject to the political whims of any party, either in government, opposition or on the campaign trail.

It's also worth looking at Ottawa. The Premier likes to talk about modelling changes here on the federal rules. The question is, which rules? The ones that Jean Chrétien passed in 2003, which were then thrown overboard by Stephen Harper in 2006? Or the rules that Harper changed again, without any consultation, ramming them through with their majority in 2011? Or does the Premier want to wait to see what Justin Trudeau does with his legislative majority?

Simply put, Ottawa doesn't provide a simple example of what to model the rules on, because in just over 10 years, we've seen four sets of rules. For over a decade, Liberals and Conservatives have been playing tit for tat with campaign finance laws, each trying to stack the deck against the other. That is not the best way to move forward. That is not the way to change the way our democracy works. Jean Chrétien opened the door to changing the rules on his own, and Stephen Harper was only too happy to follow right along. The lesson is that once one party starts changing the rules to suit their own political interest, it becomes a very slippery slope.

The Premier is creating a very real precedent here in Ontario. She's creating the precedent that any party with a legislative majority gets to change the rules for democratic fairness however they see fit, where they don't have to consult experts, where they don't have to look at best practices across Canada or around the world, where they don't need to engage civil society, and they no longer need a consensus from other political parties. Most disturbing of all, they are establishing a precedent for changing election rules that doesn't have any buy-in from Ontarians. The Liberal government is telling Ontarians that the rules governing democratic elections can change without any public stamp of approval.

Now, the Premier actually has a choice. She can follow in the footsteps of Mike Harris, or she can follow in the tradition of nearly 30 years of stability in this

province. As I said earlier, in 1998, the Toronto Star wrote that Mike Harris was opening the door to allowing "the government of the day [to] use its majority to push through any new rules that would be to its advantage." That's exactly what we're looking at right now. That's exactly what the Premier of this province, Kathleen Wynne, someone whom people expected much better of—I say to you, Speaker, when I talk to folks, they are shocked, they are dismayed and they feel betrayed by this Premier. They're disappointed to the nth degree in the behaviour of Kathleen Wynne. That's what's happening here in Ontario.

The government of the day—this Premier, this Liberal Premier—is using her majority to push through the rules that they want, and they will have a veto over rules that they don't want. Or they can actually do it the right way and open things up, because Ontarians deserve a process that is not driven by one political party and by one leader. When it comes to something as important as how we elect a government, we need to involve civil society, NGOs, business, labour, academics and, most importantly, the people of Ontario. A democracy is built on people. If we want people to engage in our democracy, to vote, to feel that the government is looking out for their best interests, they have to believe that the system is fair. That's what they have to believe. People have a right to know that election rules are not being rigged.

It is the case that that is what this government prefers: to do it all on their own, to do it all in the back rooms, and then to shop out to the public what they've already decided that they want to do. That is not the proper process. Let's reject a system where one party sets the rules for a whole democracy. Let's open this process up, make it fair, make it transparent, and make sure we get it right. Not for you, as the opposition, and not for them, as the governing party, and not for us, as the opposition, and not for Mr. Schreiner from the Green Party, but for Ontarians, because that's what Ontarians deserve. Let's get it right for them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I am pleased to rise today and speak to the opposition motion.

While all three parties worked on these rules and abided by them over the years, I think that all of us here in the Legislature, from all parties, agree that change is needed when it comes to fundraising rules in Ontario. That's why our government has acted quickly and efficiently to move forward with reforming political donations.

1620

There is a process in place; we're using it. It's democratic. It's democracy at work. It's open and transparent. But what the opposition is proposing would disrupt the process and disrupt the progress we're making and slow things down. It would actually stall things. Other provinces and the federal government have already made changes; Ontario needs to do the same, and it's clear we must do it now.

Our government has laid out a course of action that is transparent and inclusive, one that includes all political parties and gives them all an opportunity to have their say, and yet it does things expeditiously, which is what the people out there have told us they want. It is a credible process that includes the engagement and input of the public and the opposition parties. We want to hear from them. We want them to be a part of the process. These are the rules for all of us.

This is why we're proposing sending the draft legislation to committee after first reading. By taking this additional step, it will allow for consultation immediately while the Legislature is still sitting. Continuing to press forward, this step would also allow for further consultation during the summer months. Our government has set out a clear timeline that could result in the bill being amended over the summer and passed by January 2017. I think that's great, and lots of time for consultations to occur.

The opposition motion would delay the entire process. This is not the time to play politics. We need to work together to implement these changes in a timely manner. All parties agree that we need to ban corporate and union donations, all parties agree that we need to reform the rules on third-party advertising, and all parties agree that we need to put controls on by-election donations. Our government's legislation does just this, but the opposition continues to argue against it. I think they're stalling, holding fundraisers according to the old rules while we're already taking some steps to move forward with some voluntary rules so that we can start abiding by some of the things proposed.

We're proposing concrete action to change political donations by introducing reforms in seven key areas:

- We're going to change third-party advertising rules, and a major part of that is constraining maximum spending limits during elections.

- We're banning corporate and union donations.

- We're reducing maximum donations to a figure that reflects what is allowed at the federal level.

- We're putting constraints on loans and loan guarantees.

- We're going to reform by-election donation rules.

- We'll reduce spending limits in election periods and introduce limits for the time between elections.

- We'll introduce leadership and campaign spending limits and donation rules.

Our government is committed to doing all of these things, and we're certainly open to adding more, which is exactly why we plan to hold summer consultations: so we can hear from the public, the private sector and our colleagues throughout the Legislature. All three parties would have the chance to invite organizations and individuals of their own choosing to appear during consultations. I think this sounds like a fairly democratic way to move forward. It's an opportunity for all of us to take part in a fair and democratic process to improve and reform political fundraising in Ontario. It's a solid plan.

I know that the Premier has worked hard on this. She doesn't have the luxury, as some people do, to work

between a 9-to-5 kind of commitment. The Premier works all the time. She works here; she works in her car; she works at home; she works in her office.

Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? I feel I have to say something about this—about the comments that I'm hearing in this House about people working at kitchen tables. I don't know exactly where the Premier worked on these proposals, but I have to say that I am offended by the suggestion that there is something wrong with working after hours or even working at the kitchen table. In my household, some of the most important decisions in our family occurred at the kitchen table. My kids work on their homework at the kitchen table, I came up with some important things that I wanted to do when it came to changing my life at the kitchen table, and it's where negotiations happen with our family—at the kitchen table. So I am actually offended by the idea that for some reason the kitchen table has no place in decision-making when it comes to Ontarians. I tend to disagree with that.

Interjections.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you.

So far, neither of the opposition leaders has opposed the changes that we are proposing, but they—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Sometimes, when nothing is said, it is more and has greater effect. Consider yourself being referenced. Let's show some respect to our member as she continues along with the debate.

To the member from Halton, please continue.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These rules affect all of us. We need to set political partisanship aside and work together toward a common goal.

Our government is working hard to do the right thing. We're trying to expedite legislation that is transparent and credible. We're committed to changing political donations in Ontario, but the opposition seems committed to delaying the process. I hope that we can see past our political differences and work together on this.

Our government remains steadfast in its efforts to reform fundraising. We're committed to ensuring a process that is open, transparent and fair, and we want to include the opposition parties every step of the way. These are reforms that affect each and every person in this Legislature and that affect all parties.

I'm hopeful and optimistic that we can work with the opposition parties to get this done. Let's change the rules. Let's do it together.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Patrick Brown: I'm happy to rise today in support of the NDP opposition day motion.

As I mentioned this morning, the fact that three leaders from different political stripes all joined together in a sign of unity shows the importance of this issue. Unfortunately, there was one party not represented. There was one party that chose to ignore the input from others. It has become clear that this Liberal government is afraid

of an open and transparent process to develop the rules surrounding political financing reforms. The Liberal Party wants to run the process, have it run by the Premier's office, run by the Liberal Party.

This is a disappointing departure from history, a departure from previous precedent. Bill Davis, the great Progressive Conservative Premier, worked with all parties, worked with all members of the House in a non-partisan way. When we had similar changes in Ottawa in the federal government, there was a commission set up by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. Afterwards, with the Federal Accountability Act, it was in a minority Parliament in which all parties could have their say. No one could simply control and ramrod decisions with their majority. Those are the traditions of developing the rules by which our democracy operates. Sadly, the Liberal government wants to choose a different path.

We all agree that the Premier's meeting with the party leaders last week was nothing more than a PR stunt. She wasn't open to any suggestions or discussion. Instead, Mr. Speaker, this legislation will be drafted behind closed doors, with no consideration of the views of the opposition or the general public.

Mr. Speaker, the Ontario PC caucus believes that major electoral reform should not be left solely in the hands of one of Ontario's political parties. While we support the principles behind the NDP motion, we believe that the scope could be even broader. That's why, a few weeks ago, we proposed a select committee that included the Integrity Commissioner and the Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

I would note that the timelines could be even more expeditious. The Liberals tried to use as an excuse, "Well, it couldn't be done as fast." That is counter to fact, that is counter to reality, because you could have had a UC a week ago. You could have had a UC two weeks ago. Whether it is the advisory panel put forward by the NDP or our select committee, you could have had that up and running. You could have been discussing this in a substantial way. This has nothing to do with time limits. This only has to do with the Liberal Party and the Premier's office wanting to dictate exactly what the rules of our election financing will be.

1630

The solution must involve all three parties—including the Green Party, so four parties equally—as well as the legislative officers who police the conduct of members and their staff. In addition, the public needs to have the ability to have its say on this topic.

The Liberal government has lost credibility on this issue. They cannot be trusted to develop a solution. After all, the reason we're discussing this is the incredible work that the press gallery did exposing how the Liberal Party had blurred the lines between the role of government and the role of the Liberal Party's fundraising. This is because of the Liberal donation scandal; that's the only reason they want to talk about it. When we had private members' bills put forward from our caucus in 2014 and 2015 dealing with this, they voted them down. They had

no interest. The only reason they're talking about it today is because they got caught.

I would say that there is a lot of commonality in the NDP proposal for an advisory panel and our proposal for a select committee. I think their proposal has a lot of merit and is heading in the right direction, but let me take this opportunity to add what we would additionally like to have looked at.

It's important that we have this conversation around fundraising, around our election finance rules. We need to address the unfortunate reality that ministers in the Liberal government have fundraising targets. The Premier has admitted to that fact. It leaves the impression, it leaves the appearance, that we have a pay-to-play system in Ontario. This is why we need to actually have the Conflict of Interest Commissioner on the select committee, because this directly relates to the appearance of conflict of interest that everyone in Ontario now sees. Everyone has read these newspaper articles. Everyone has seen these television stories highlighting how the line of what's appropriate appears to have been crossed.

I don't know why the Premier and the Liberal Party are going to such steps, using their majority not to have the Conflict of Interest Commissioner involved in this process and on the committee.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What have they got to hide?

Mr. Patrick Brown: What are they hiding?

What's more, under the current rules, there is a complete, giant—more than a loophole; you could drive a Brink's truck through it. There are loopholes on lobbying rules. I don't know why they wouldn't want to have that as part of the conversation.

Under the current rules, a former senior adviser to a Liberal minister could go to work for a company in the same sector as their respective ministry. Their company could then donate to the Ontario Liberal Party and subsequently win government contracts. That kind of direct lobbying from the people who have an inside track with ministers just doesn't pass the smell test.

I raised an example in question period where there was an individual who worked for the Minister of Energy who then had a record of working for companies seeking contracts, and donated in his lifespan 194 times. How is that allowed?

Given that the government refuses to make public details of the billions in public dollars that they give away in grants, the Wynne Liberals continue to prove that this government is anything but open, anything but transparent. The rules need to change. If they don't want to discuss lobbying, if they don't want to discuss conflict of interest, once again, it begs the question: Why? What is this government attempting to hide?

The Ontario PC proposal for a select committee would include the Chief Electoral Officer as well as the Integrity Commissioner and the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. As part of the special committee, these two legislative officers would provide advice on how to strengthen lobbying and conflict-of-interest guidelines. They should welcome that. They shouldn't fight it; they shouldn't use their majority to block this.

We also believe that nothing this Premier can promise about political finance reform is going to change the fact that how this government has given out contracts and grants should be subject to a full investigation. The fact that the Liberal government brought in new rules to govern Ornge did not stop the OPP from investigating this shady business deal. The fact that the Liberal government brought in new rules for saving emails didn't stop the OPP from investigating the gas plants scandal and the laying of charges against top senior Liberal staffers. If the Premier and her ministers have nothing to hide, they would welcome a public inquiry.

Within the first three days of demandinquiry.ca, 10,000 citizens in Ontario signed the petition. For the sake of restoring the public's trust in the government, the Premier should do the right thing, cut her losses and call an inquiry.

To close, I believe that this opposition day motion is a positive step. I urge Liberal members to support this motion. Integrity is the foundation of the trust with the people of Ontario, and the people of Ontario have lost trust in this government. I urge Liberal members to show the people of Ontario that this government is looking out for their best interests, not the Liberal Party's best interests, not the Liberal Party's political survival. I would plead with Liberal MPPs here today: For the sake of Ontario's democracy, do the right thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's my pleasure to rise and speak very briefly to this oppo day motion. One party should not be able to control an issue of this magnitude. We've been calling on the government for a couple of weeks now to start with a panel. This is a government that has panels to review panels.

Just today, we heard about Equal Pay Day. There was a panel in 2008. No recommendations were acted on. Then we hired another panel to look at the panel. But in a case such as this, where we're talking about democracy across this province, we in fact should have a panel of experts. We should have the people there who can make the right decisions as we move forward.

I heard members in the last few minutes talk about how we want this to be open and transparent; that we want everybody to be part of this process. I can tell you that during the majority government in the last two years that I've been here, I've sat on a lot of committees and I've chaired a lot of committees where both the PCs and the NDP have brought forward great recommendations. In the finance committee—I think it was last week or two weeks ago—there were 11 recommendations to improve the lives of people with disabilities by doing a small tweak which would have had documents formatted in a manner where they could actually use a document reader. The members of that side of the House voted down every one of those recommendations.

So if you think that there's some trust over here that you're going to consult with us on this issue and then we're all going to go to committee and we're going to put

forward some really good amendments that are going to work for the people of this province, well, I don't think there is any trust, because if you can't even vote for issues that would affect a million people in this province, how can we trust, as 50 members of this Legislature, that you're going to really have a look at our amendments and push through any of them?

The government really needs to take a look at this. They need to look at the broader public and they need to think about what democracy really is. I'll leave my words at that because we have other members who want to speak, but I'm glad I've had the opportunity to have my say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'm so delighted to rise this afternoon to speak to the opposition day motion brought forward by the MPP for Hamilton Centre. At the heart of it is a request for an Ontario advisory panel on political finance reform.

I think it has been said before, but it's worth saying again, that we can all agree—that all three parties agree—on the actions that need to be taken to update Ontario's fundraising rules. We're all in agreement with that. For instance, we all agree that we need to ban corporate and union donations. Here's the interesting thing, Mr. Speaker: I've heard many members of the opposition speak for at least half an hour put together; I did not hear one of them stand up and say they're opposed to reform of third-party advertising rules or including constraining maximum spending limits for election periods. If they were opposed to it, this is a good time to have stood up and said, "These are the proposals that your government is putting forward, and we don't agree." But I did not hear that. Not once did I hear them question or disagree with that proposal.

1640

Let me give you another example of our proposal: a ban on corporate and union donations. Did I hear the member from Hamilton Centre once say that she's opposed to our proposal on banning corporate and union donations? No. Did I hear the Leader of the Opposition once say he was against it? No.

Let me take another example: reduction of maximum donations to a figure that is in the range of what is permitted federally. Did I hear any opposition? They had their chance to talk about what they don't like in our proposals, but they squandered that opportunity. Or perhaps, they actually like what we are putting forward.

Let me give you another example. We're proposing constraints on loans, loan guarantees to parties and candidates, including leadership candidates. Did I hear a word against this proposal of ours? Not one word. They had the opportunity for the past half an hour to speak up against any of these proposals, but I did not hear a single word that opposes this. I don't understand what their concern is when they keep saying we won't listen to them in committee. I haven't really heard them come up and say, "You know what? We're opposed to this idea and we have a better idea."

Let me give you another example: We are proposing reform of by-election donation rules. If you're opposed to that, speak up now. I look forward to hearing the rest of you speak. I know some of you still have an opportunity. I look forward to hearing any one of you stand up and say the seven key areas of reform that we are proposing that you are opposed to. I want to hear that, because if I hear that, then perhaps we have a conversation to see what your idea is. I haven't heard you guys once, just once, critique the proposal in front of you.

Since the opposition appears to be in agreement with our proposal for reform, the only other thing that they have been able to hang their hat on is the democratic process. That's a really, really curious thing to say, because what they are essentially suggesting is that the current legislative process that we have in Ontario's Legislature is not democratic. Is the NDP saying that the Environmental Bill of Rights that they brought in using the current legislative process when they were in government was not a democratic way of doing things? Is the NDP saying that the Employment Equity Act that they brought in using Ontario's legislative process was not democratic when they were in government? Are the Tories saying that the Community Safety Act that they brought in using this very legislative process was not democratic when they used this process?

It's a very curious thing to say that somehow Ontario's legislative process is not democratic. Might I remind the House that this democratic process has been refined over 149 years? This is not about the democratic process. This is about delaying reform. This is about saying they want reform but delaying reform with only one reason, so they can squeeze in a few more fundraisers, business as usual; so that they can smuggle in Rachel Notley just one more time.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order. Order, please.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Obviously I've touched a nerve. This is not about the democratic process. This is about somehow squeezing in fundraising as usual for a few more months, to somehow smuggle in Rachel Notley just one more time for another \$10,000-a-plate dinner. That's what this is about. This is not about democratic reform at all. This is about grandstanding and paying lip service to the idea that we need reform, and then doing their best through the back door to delay reform. That is a shame.

The other thing that I do want to address is that it's really, really curious that the only criticism that the opposition could come up with about our proposal is that somehow the Premier of Ontario did her homework before she came to a meeting. If that is the only criticism you can come up with—that somebody did their homework before they came to a meeting—that is very disappointing. If anything, they should have expected the Premier to have done her homework, which she did.

What is really disappointing is that it appears that both leaders of the opposition came to the table with no

homework done and no ideas. I haven't heard a single idea from them, so far, that is in any way substantially different from what we are proposing.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say—

Interjection: Where's your napkin? Show us the napkin. Show us your napkin.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I don't know what you guys have against napkins, but I'm just going to leave it at that. Napkins have their uses.

Let me just recap, Mr. Speaker. The opposition has not been able to find any way to substantially criticize the proposal that we have put forward. Second, the whole notion—this idea of the lack of democratic process—isn't about democracy; it is simply about delaying reform.

What's really interesting, and I think what is really annoying for most Ontarians—and Ontarians see through this. If the NDP thinks that Ontarians don't see through their doublespeak, if the NDP thinks that Ontarians don't see through the fact that on the one hand they say, "We want reform," but on the other hand, they're doing everything they can to delay and derail reform, just so that they can continue to fundraise—business as usual.

I want to remind the NDP that, barring something unforeseen, their cousins in Manitoba are going to lose the election today. That should be a cautionary tale to their Ontario cousins, that you cannot fool the public.

If you are serious about reform, then join us, work with us. We have proposed a very robust process. In fact, we've gone through the extra step of saying that we will bring the bill to committee after first reading. We have committed to the fact that we will have a robust consultative process that will include all of the required stakeholders.

All I have to say in summary is, it is a shame that the opposition, on the one hand, goes on saying that we need to reform fundraising, but on the other hand is doing its very best to delay, in their own partisan interests.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say one more thing. The opposition has spoken about fundraising scandals, but the only scandal is the refusal of both opposition parties to say that they will not hold any more private fundraisers. That is the real scandal. That is another example of the fact that while they're paying lip service to the need for fundraising reform, the reality is, they don't want it; they will delay it because they want to do fundraising as usual for as long as they can.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

Before I move on, there has been a fair amount of banter going back and forth, to the point where it was getting a little bit loud. So I would offer the member, if she believes and feels that she may have said something unparliamentary—I'll give you the opportunity to withdraw.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the motion, on behalf of my residents of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

We are blessed in this country to enjoy the freedoms and rights we have today. The people who came before us fought to put forth the important principles of free, open and fair elections, and it is my duty to the residents of my riding, our province and our country to ensure that Ontario upholds these basic principles.

I support the principles laid out in this motion, but only a select committee can really look into and fix the problems of this government. The notion that we should leave all the final decisions on how we should structure the rules governing free and fair elections to any one party that holds a majority is completely ludicrous. This is something that we would see in a Third World country, and something that the citizens of Ontario will not tolerate.

1650

The Premier brags about being the party to put in place third-party advertising rules, but let's be serious. These rules have served the Liberal Party very well and the elections commissioner has been calling for changes after each of the last three elections.

The current third-party spending is not allowed federally or in our other provinces. The Working Families Coalition outspends all three major parties in advertising in Ontario. Speaker, that's just not right. The commissioner reports that it is actually affecting elections. After the 2011 report was issued, the Premier stood and said, "Why would we make any changes? We have the best province in the world." Maybe she's right; we do have the best province in the world. But why would she very clearly signal that she had no intention of changing those rules?

The Premier and the former Premier have ignored the election commissioner's demands for controls. It is only now that they are attacked in media for fundraising irregularities that they are showing any interest in changing them. The Premier has been caught with her hand in the cookie jar. Now, she wants the members here to trust her changes. It has been said that a person's actions are an indicator of their future actions. This should make us very concerned about giving any power to this government to make changes in the legislation that governs future elections.

In fact, people in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry are demanding a public inquiry into the irregularities concerning Liberal fundraising and the granting of public money and public appointments. We need to clear the air as we've heard too many stories of public money being given out to government donors.

This government brags about bringing in legislation to protect government records, only to be the subject of an OPP investigation into the deletion of the same records surrounding the gas plant scandal. They have created an atmosphere of fear in this province when it comes to any agency that steps out of line.

I want to recount a story that I witnessed as the mayor of South Glengarry. I was invited to a small meeting of Liberal-minded farmers and was shocked when the minister scolded the group. The minister pointed at them and said, "You criticized our government's agricultural policy. Don't ever expect anything from our government again." That's the type of fear that this government is providing. You know—

Mr. John Yakabuski: A minister did that?

Mr. Jim McDonell: A minister did that. Not a current minister.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): A point of order. I recognize the Minister—

Hon. Jeff Leal: I hope the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry wasn't implying that it was this minister, and I think he needs to clarify that, because I take that as a real offence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the minister. I'll turn it back to the member.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Just to clear that up, this was when I was mayor of the township of South Glengarry, so it was not him.

This is not the behaviour that you would expect from a minister of the crown, but unfortunately, it's the behaviour that we see of this government. It may very well explain the damaging policies that rural Ontario has experienced over the years.

We agree with the principles of the motion. In addition, we're asking for the following:

- the creation of a special select committee with equal representation from all parties that will take input across the province;
- limit third-party special interest advertising;
- a complete phase-out of union and corporate donations;
- an end to ministerial fundraising targets; and
- a strengthening of lobbying restrictions.

The people of Ontario expect much more from their government. They've had the opportunity in the past: two private members' bills put forth by our party to limit third-party advertising. This government, both in 2014 and 2015, whipped their party to vote against them. Again, we do not see an interest in fixing a problem. They voted against them, but now they got caught. They got caught red-handed, and they refuse to give the details of billions of dollars of giveaways to corporations.

The people of Ontario need to see the air cleaned. They need to see what has gone on here and to have some confidence that this government has any interest in getting it right. I think if they truly were serious about getting these election rules right, they would not only support this resolution, but move on our recommendations and clear the air when it comes to the scandal around more government money given out for donations.

The people of Ontario have lost confidence in this government; they don't believe they have the integrity to move on this. I know they're promoting that the opposition has the chance to make amendments, but we all

know the truth: When we've tried to make amendments to government bills, they simply get voted down. That's what a majority government does. In Ottawa, when the government moved, it was a minority government, and in a minority government, the opposition does have the parity to put amendments in place.

So let's move ahead on this. Let's do the right thing and let's do the honourable thing, and let's get to the bottom of this problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. It's always a pleasure to stand in the House.

I have to say that I was listening closely, earlier, to the member from Halton, and she went on at great length about the value of the kitchen table. I fully expect there will be a new private member's bill coming in soon on a day of recognition for the value of the kitchen table in Ontario, because—you know, she missed the process. I have great respect for the member, who is a former journalist. But she missed the point. This isn't about scribbling something on a napkin at the kitchen table; this is a process.

If the Premier of Ontario says to the leaders of the other parties, "Come into my office. We're going to consult with you. I want to get your ideas, and then we'll go forward together on a non-partisan process to fix this problem," and instead, the leaders get there and, "Oh, thanks for coming. Listen, sorry to waste your time. I had a couple of free minutes on the weekend, and I scratched something out on a napkin at the kitchen table. This is how I'm going to do it. I'm not going to listen to you. This is my plan"—that is their process.

It doesn't matter where she did it, the process should be open, non-partisan and held up to scrutiny so people across Ontario will buy into it and accept it. That is a plan with integrity, not the plan that's in front of us today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You know, it has been interesting: Having served on a city council and as mayor, and working in organizations, there is a set of rules that have been in place, and they've changed often over the last several decades in different governments.

I think the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry really explained the misperception of the problem. To suggest that the Ontario Legislature has the rules of a Third World country shows he's someone who hasn't actually ever been and worked in one. We have a democracy that is the envy of the world, with a parliamentary system with checks and balances that are second to none. If you even compare our fundraising rules to those of the United States, we have more severe restrictions, higher accountability, more independent table officers, more regular election laws and less spending per capita on elections. Quite frankly, to the credit of all 107 members of this House, there has never actually been—certainly in my time here or in the decades before—anyone who hasn't followed those rules.

There is great ease in actually knowing where all our donations come from. We all have our standards. I've had one donation, which was an open, public event. I had about 800 people at it; it was at a moderate price. That's the way I do fundraising. I believe that those of us—

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I don't have a quota, by the way.

Those of us live in the middle of the law—it's what we have to do as elected officials. Elected officials—like police people—who draft and create laws have to live in the middle of the law; we have to be exemplary in it.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's interesting, Speaker, that the one party whose deputy leader actually used his constituency office for a federal campaign is lecturing us on morality; do you know what I mean? There is one member who has had trouble with the Integrity Commissioner, and it comes from that party. People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.

1700

The second point is, it is these spurious character assassinations here. The other thing the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry said is that some nameless person, apparently a minister, said something intimidating to a group of people. I don't know where he has his sources. Maybe this is in the same category as the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills, who has non-existent people giving artificial, untrue endorsements of their candidate—another party that, when it comes to truth and fiction, has not a lot to say and should have a humility in the House, given their antics and public transparency. If you're living in Carleton–Mississippi Mills, you must be just totally pleased with that quality of representation, where you feel it's okay and moral to make things up—make people up, make statements up, because the things that come out of your mouth—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of order. I recognize the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: If that isn't saying indirectly what he cannot say directly about the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, then I don't know what is, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask the minister to withdraw.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Did I use unparliamentary language, Mr. Speaker, or suggest any of that?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): No, just—I've asked you to withdraw, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I withdraw whatever the offending comment was, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, to me, that—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on a point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He does not get to withdraw and then make a commentary. He just simply withdraws. That's the rules of this House. He knows it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you for bringing that to my attention.

I will now turn it back over to the minister for further debate.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, to meet the standard, I withdraw, period.

Now, those kinds of behaviours are in check, which is why we have an Integrity Commissioner, because there are members—and I just gave you two examples—that behave outside the rules. I don't normally raise these things, except when people get on their high horse—like, their parties and their members are all perfect and the only bad people in the world are the people who are in government.

As far as the confidence of the people of Ontario, it's been expressed, in a number of elections, in this party, in this government, who are trusted to make a whole lot of decisions. It's interesting to me, because there are some very important issues here, like climate change, where we have to trust each other, and there is an object lesson in how you express that. The third party—highly cooperative; highly involved in intelligent discussion; true to their word that they see this as an important issue; behaving in a way to get things done. We are working well because there's some sincerity and there's some trust in the relationship between the members of the third party and the government party on this.

The other party, which claims they want more conversations, is walking out, causing 20-minute breaks two or three times an hour, and completely destroying the process of that committee. What assurance do we have that they wouldn't turn this other important issue into a three-ring circus? Because there are people in this House who do not follow rules, who break rules, who make things up, who use their assets and resources inappropriately—we have rules that we follow.

We are taking an extra step forward. On first reading, we are sending this out—not under some sort of Stalinist, Soviet system, not under a banana republic system, but under the laws and rules of one of the most democratic places in the world, and one of the most properly regulated, fairest and most honest Legislatures in the world, which I am enormously proud to be a member of.

My family came from Ukraine. My grandmother always said that she never had a chance to vote, and she never actually paid taxes because the governments were never there long enough to collect them. There wasn't even a proper judiciary. Many of us come from countries where our parents and grandparents suffered greatly so we could live in this great democracy. There is fair criticism, Mr. Speaker, but let us not demean our Parliament, its process, or members here by open-ended criticisms and suggestions that technical disagreements over how you can make a law better, which we all agree on, is somehow being done because there is some egregious state of corruption or unfairness, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of the order: the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Clearly, the minister is not speaking to the NDP motion here today. He's speaking to the committee hearings on Bill 172, which have nothing to do with the debate that is going on before this Legislature today—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. I've been listening carefully, and I know that the minister is doing his best to address it to the bill as well, the comments.

Please continue.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize. I was just being illustrative, in the way the opposition were, of circumstances that may lead one to be concerned about the fair process before committee. I will certainly stick to the bill, Mr. Speaker.

We're going out on first reading because that is an extraordinary event. It is unusual to do that. Then, of course, at second reading, we'll have to go through the whole committee process.

This is a fine debate. I give the third party credit for raising this issue, because they're proposing an alternative way of doing it, which is their job as the opposition. It should challenge the government to properly rationalize and defend the approach that we are taking, which is a different approach, and it is also a non-traditional approach.

Mr. Speaker, some of us, and I am one of them, believe that some of the problem with democracy is that we have seen the diminishment in Canada—if you read the work of Paul Thomas—of the role of members of Parliament as watchdogs and in collective governance, that we are overly partisan, and that the role of ministers to be watchdogs in government has been reduced and transferred to parliamentary officers and agencies.

In my politics, I am a traditional, small-c conservative parliamentarian, and there are colleagues of mine who actually believe—

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I listened carefully to each of the things you said, and I wanted to understand your point of view, so maybe you could just give me a couple of minutes and hear the alternative to your perspective before you disagree with it. I am fine with you disagreeing with it.

I read your motion carefully. I've given you credit that it's a good idea. I like the objectives of it. I'm sympathetic to its intent.

In this House, Mr. Speaker, if you actually believe in democracy, you don't shout down members of the House. You don't shout down members of the House. If you want a committee process, then maybe you could take five minutes of your day to listen to what I'm prepared to share with you, because I think your opinions are deserving of being heard. I also think ours are.

Mr. Speaker, here's what I think. I think that one of the challenges, beyond the need to reform finances—and it's at that turn of the wheel. It is that time to do that, and the Premier said that last June, that we had to, in this Parliament, reform fundraising. She said that very clearly. I was in meetings with her. She has had it in speeches. We had planned on doing it this fall, and I think if the Star hadn't gone on what my friend from Sarnia-Lambton pointed out was a bit of a media-driven campaign, we'd probably be having this conversation this fall. But that's life. Media advances it.

So here's my concern. I actually think that the behaviour of this institution—and I think I've conducted myself in that way in the number of private members' bills that I have had rolled up into government legislation, and in some of the work I've done in a non-partisan way with members of that, and I've said that to many of you. I really believe this place is too partisan. I really do. I think it's a huge problem. I think all of us, as MPPs, need to listen and not talk over everyone when they're talking, and actually try to work together. I actually think that a direct consultation by a healthy and representative committee of this House, especially in first reading—I think it's an incredibly positive precedent in the parliamentary tradition of this place that we just don't skip from first to second reading, and we actually use it as a mechanism on those things that are consequential.

I hope all three House leaders are listening to this, because I don't think I'm alone, not only in my party but in other parties, that other members would like to see more opportunities for engagement with the public and parliamentarians directly.

I also have learned, having been a councillor—we used to have these debates at city council. One mayor who was a predecessor of mine said, "Always take your councillors out there; provoke; facilitate other civil society processes. But when people come to talk to government, to make their representations after they've done their work, you want them to talk to a legislative body that has the power to enact and is representative of the Legislature."

1710

So I would argue that a large committee of academics and others is not a good substitute for that civil-society process that will go on and will be provoked as we go through the summer and have this.

I would argue that a parliamentary process covered by the rules, subject to review, subject to over 150 years of tradition around here about how you do business with good checks and balances, is the way to do it. I don't think there are a lot of good substitutes, quite frankly, for that parliamentary process, because it's not the Liberal government, Mr. Speaker; it is the Legislature of Ontario that will own this process. There are constraints on the government, and there are constraints on the opposition. As the owl on the other side says—and the other one, I think, is the eagle—we have a different role to play in those kinds of areas, for the consent that we have to work for, every four years, from the public.

I also have been waiting for a narrative to emerge, Mr. Speaker, from the opposition that's different than what I've heard from them before on what the government has put on the table. I think that if this was a fundamentally difficult, intransigent problem that no one had solved before or on which there was a plethora of different methodologies and approaches, what the third party is suggesting would make some sense—but this isn't. This is a fairly concrete set of options on which there are a really limited number of practices that are generally accepted.

It's really time to get on. I don't think we should delay this. I actually think we need to get this done, and I think a two-stage parliamentary process is the right way to go. We've just done this. You can make the same case that climate change should probably have gone through a whole bunch of committees, because it's much more complex and we have all the more justification to do that.

I want to conclude with one final thing which I just disagree with, and I think it's an important thing that we share. The Leader of the Opposition, who, during this particular period of time, was out there accepting large amounts of money from people in numbered companies and having private meetings—doing all the things that he was accusing the government of, as if there was a separate standard for him, Mr. Speaker—I had some difficulty with that. If you're doing it, you shouldn't be criticizing other people for doing even less than that.

But he made the statement that the Integrity Commissioner, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and the Chief Electoral Officer should be members of this committee. This is another important disagreement. Those people have to be at arm's length. It would be absurd to have the Environmental Commissioner writing the laws of which he's supposed to be the independent eyes and judgment. These people are going to have to examine and interpret that and represent themselves, if they wish, at committees. But you totally confuse the role of table officers and legislatures if you put the independent officers, the people who police our laws, to make them. We should listen to them, but that distance is the whole reason they're non-partisan officers of the Parliament. If you look at the readings of Paul Thomas and Speakers' rulings before, that separation is critical.

It goes to my final point, which is that there is this diminishment of the parliamentary role. What I'm hearing today that is bothering me more than anything else is that it is our own members who don't seem to understand that not using the parliamentary process for something like this is the final diminishment of our role.

I respect the views of the third party. I congratulate them on bringing forward a creative idea. I hope you understand that the government's commitment to an open and very democratic process, using different conventions, isn't a lesser commitment than yours. It is different one, and we can have a respectful debate about it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the member from—

Mr. Bill Walker: Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):—Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: One of your favourites. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to speak today to Ms. Horwath, the leader of the third party. I want to start off by her opening line:

“Whereas any efforts at major electoral reform must be conducted in a fair, transparent and non-partisan manner in the interest of protecting the democratic process; and

“Whereas Ontario has traditionally used an independent, consensus-based approach overseen by the Chief Electoral Officer as the basis for any legislative changes to the electoral process...”

That says a lot in a short period of time. It's about fundamental trust. It's about integrity. It's about changing our electoral process and that all parties should be involved.

It has been interesting to sit in here. The last two speakers from the Liberals talked a lot about democracy, and yet I find it hard—especially the Minister of the Environment, talking about coming from a country that didn't have those democratic rights and that he actually is condoning special closed-door meetings, that only one party would actually write this legislation. I find it hard to fathom that someone coming from that type of a background would not want to ensure that all three parties—and in fact the Green Party as well, a fourth party—would be in the room to change something as significant as this.

We, the PCs, believe in ensuring the right to freely exercise our vote and that all parties must be involved. The third party has asked for this committee. We went even further, with a select committee and a few other conditions, but we actually are on exactly the same page. Our party has a track record of tabling bills in an effort to strengthen Ontario's election advertising laws. Five years have passed since our party first called on the Liberals to clean up political financing. Our efforts are aligned with concerns voiced by Greg Essensa, the province's Chief Electoral Officer, as far back as 2009. They keep saying, “We've got to rush. We've got to move. We've got to really hurry and get this done.” Since 2009, Mr. Essensa has been there. Back in 2011, our esteemed member from Wellington—Halton Hills presented this House with Bill 195, the Banning Collusion in Electoral Advertising Act, and they voted against it. In 2014, you, Mr. Speaker, raised your own bill in this House, Bill 101. Then, I came along in 2015 and brought in Bill 96, the Special Interest Groups Election Advertising Transparency Act, and every single member opposite voted against that.

So it's interesting to hear them talk about, “We want this sudden change. We want to make sure we make a difference. We want to make sure that we”—as long as they are writing it. They got caught, at the end of the day, and people are now questioning—the media are questioning, the public are certainly questioning them. So it's a little bit hard to stand in this House and listen to them talk about democracy, transparency and accountability.

The Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care was in earlier, talking about the democratic process, so I'd like to ask her and each member of her caucus, her cabinet, how did they vote against my PMB in October 2015? They voted it down unanimously. They could have already had changes. They could have already invited other members in to make sure that legislation was in place—but no. I think one of the members over there said that the media got involved. Yes, the media got involved because they found someone with their fingers in the cookie jar.

It's clear to me that the Wynne Liberals are afraid of an open and transparent process, or they'd gladly acknowledge—as we have asked for a select committee, and as the third party is now asking for this committee to be struck. The only difference between now and then is, again, they got caught. Shutting down public dialogue, debate or any open consultative process, going against every principle and pledge she made when she ran for office—and I'm talking about the Premier. She said, “I'm going to be different.”

Mr. Speaker, being non-transparent, closing down and keeping such a thing as changing donation laws, third-party advertising laws, behind closed doors with one party only involved is not open, transparent or effective government.

I respectfully ask the members opposite to ask themselves: Why wouldn't you want these reforms completed the democratic way? What are your goals if you're not going to allow members of my party and the third party and the Green Party to be at the table? I want to hear what the government has to say. Why won't you allow tripartite committee hearings? Tell us. Stand up and explain why you're not having a public inquiry into past conduct of the Liberal government and the Ontario Liberal Party. What have you got to hide? Tell voters in Ontario why you believe in muzzling, not free speech; why you believe in collusion, not a transparent political process; why you want major electoral reform written on the back of a napkin and decided by one party, your Liberal Party, your self-serving party. It smacks that what you're worried about is actually standing there and ensuring that you get to do it your way, that you get to do it your own self-serving way, not opening up to what we believe.

We're here as democratic representatives of all of our areas of this great province of Ontario, and we need to ensure that we actually have that ability to bring their voice to the table and create a piece of legislation. It's going to have significant repercussions once it's put in place, and it has to be open and fair.

I support the principles laid out in the NDP motion, and would in fact go further and seek a select committee to also review and address the need for reform of lobbying rules and fundraising targets for ministers, which the Premier admitted exist under her leadership and which were brought up by our leader, Patrick Brown. I respectfully encourage the Liberal members to tell their leader that the Ontario PC Party, the NDP and the Green

Party are together in solidarity to demand a process that focuses on the best interests of the people of Ontario, not the Wynne Liberals' political survival.

1720

Democracy is about open, fair and transparent activity and the participation of all. I hope they'll actually do the honourable thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to be able to stand in the House today and be in full support of this motion to create a non-partisan committee.

I've heard talk from the other side about how we don't understand the democratic process. Here's my view of the democratic process: A government wins; a majority government has a right to put forward its agenda. But what it doesn't have a right to do is change the democratic process by itself. That's what it's trying to do here. That's the crux of this issue. It's trying to change the process. It could potentially be trying to skew the game. We've seen so many times that amendments have been downed by this government, amendments that were good in other legislation. I'll give you my one example of an amendment that had to do with the democratic process.

A few months ago, when we were looking at the Electoral Boundaries Act, we put an amendment forward to move the Wahnapiatae First Nation from Timiskaming-Cochrane to Nickel Belt because they could not physically access the riding of Timiskaming-Cochrane. I know very well; it's my riding. Everyone agreed, including the chief, that this had to be done. It was time to do it, and this government chose not to. So why should we have any faith that this government will not, in the end, once again choose to rig the system?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: A pleasure to speak to the motion of the leader of the third party today on election financing reform, which is what the Liberals, after getting caught, have brought—the idea—to the Legislature.

I've heard the various members of the Liberal caucus, including the Minister of the Environment, say that the Premier proposed changes last June. Well, I would like to see, either in the media or in Hansard, where the Premier ever said any such thing. The Premier alluded to third-party advertising—because she was under so much pressure from the Chief Electoral Officer, after his repeatedly saying that something had to be done about that—but I never heard a word uttered by the Premier that said that she was looking to change the way that political parties raised money through donations. But all of a sudden, when the media was on top of them because of high-priced dinners with ministers—ministers who had the power to enact legislation or change rules affecting those stakeholders—the attention started to turn to, “Well, maybe we've got to do something different.”

When the media pointed out that through the last three by-elections—in Sudbury, Simcoe North and Whitby—

Oshawa—during those writ periods, the Liberal Party used those opportunities to raise over \$6 million through political donations, people started to bring their attention: “Wow, something here needs to be changed.”

I want to thank Mike Crawley for doing a little research here at the CBC. He looked up the biggest donors since 2013. Interestingly enough, since 2013—I'll just talk about the top 10—the largest donors in the province of Ontario donated \$1.89 million to the Liberal Party, \$720,000 to the NDP, and \$499,000 to the PC Party of Ontario—the 10 largest donors in the province of Ontario.

And on top of that, the Premier just had her heritage dinner. Reports are that she raised about \$2.5 million to \$3 million at that dinner. Now she comes to the Legislature and says, “No more private dinners. We're not going to do that anymore. The ministers won't have dinners that are strictly set up to get money from their stakeholders.” They've raised \$6 million during three by-elections, \$2 million since 2013, and about \$3 million at their fundraiser. That's \$11 million. All of a sudden, they sanctimoniously say, “Okay, we're going to stop now.” Well, I guess they've got to stop; they can't carry the packsack. It's too full. They've got so much money in the last couple of years that they're overloaded with money. Now they're going to change the rules unilaterally.

The Premier went home and all of a sudden got a pain of conscience and said, “I'm going to fix it, and I've got just the thing to do it. I've got a ballpoint pen and a box of Kleenex. Here we go. We're going to write out a new set of rules. I'm going to have a meeting with Patrick Brown and Andrea Horwath, and I'm going to tell them what the new rules are going to be, and then we're going to leave that meeting and say we all agree. Democracy.” Well, I say to the Liberals, that's not the way it works and that's not the way it's going to work.

The NDP have some proposals that they want to be at least discussed and talked about. Our leader, Patrick Brown, has talked about a select committee. He has also talked about a public inquiry to look into, how did they manage to raise all that money from stakeholders over that period of time? It's a fair question. It's a fair question that the people would like to know the answer to.

So when we talk about election financing reform, there's a lot to be discussed. It isn't something where somebody can come to a meeting on a Monday, after having sat at their kitchen table on a Sunday, and say, “I've got all the answers. We'll draft the legislation, and everything will be fine.”

We know, if past history says anything, that if the Liberals unilaterally draft a piece of legislation, it will be designed in such a way that it will be advantageous to the Liberal Party and disadvantageous to the NDP and the PC Party. That's—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —and ultimately, yes, democracy.

Speaking of democracy, this morning we had a bill—I'll just digress a little bit, like the minister did for 15

minutes—before the House, Bill 181, that the Liberals put closure on. They invoked the closure. They put the guillotine down on a bill specifically talking about democracy. So why would we believe that they're going to be any different when it comes to election financing reform? We don't believe that.

We want this to be set up in such a way that all the parties have something to say before the legislation is drafted—and some of the legislative officers who have a lot of experience in handling election financing. Why would we not want to rely on their expertise? Why would we not want to take advantage of some of the experience that they have in helping us draft a piece of legislation that, at the end of the day, will essentially be bulletproof, so that we're not going to be open to all kinds of criticisms that we didn't get it right, that we didn't do enough, or that we aren't representing what is right for democracy and for the people of Ontario, to ensure that politics and government and decisions of government are not for sale to the highest bidder?

That's the problem, at least in appearance, today. When you see this kind of money coming from corporations and unions, as I said—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Speaker, point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): On a point of order, I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, the member is suggesting something that is inappropriate and unparliamentary. Suggesting that ministers are being bought and sold or implying it indirectly—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I appreciate the minister bringing it to my attention.

If the member feels that he has said something unparliamentary, then I would ask him to withdraw. Other than that, please continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. The minister often imagines things, and this is one of those occasions when he has done just that. What I said was that when we live in a system when massive amounts of money can be transferred from unions or corporations to political parties, it is not unusual that the public gets the impression that politics, government and decisions of government could be for sale. That's what I said. That is exactly what the public is concerned about, and that's why we need reform.

I will pass it on to my colleague at this point.

1730

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to be able to have the opportunity to have a few words on this opposition day motion that was brought forward by my leader, Andrea Horwath.

Really, when we look at this motion, it's about saving democracy in the province of Ontario. There's no reason why any party should be able to change our democratic process without the consensus of all. That is a great concern that we have here on this side of the House.

We are asking for the Chief Electoral Officer to be able to oversee a committee that will come with good decisions. It's not saying that some of the decisions that the Liberal Party are putting forward won't be good decisions; absolutely, there are going to be decisions that come from all sides of the House but will have a non-partisan view so that we will actually make sure that our democratic process in our province is safe and secure and fair—absolutely fair.

We have a lot of people in the province who are not trusting the Liberal government at this point, and we need to ensure that they can trust in our democratic process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'm honoured to rise today and speak in the Legislature to the NDP's opposition day motion on political finance reform.

This, in my opinion, is a very serious issue: the fact that there's a perception that may be out there that there's some sort of pay-for-access game in place in Ontario. It's very disturbing. Whether that actually exists or it's just the perception that does, it undermines the very important work that we do here in the Legislature and it undermines each and every one of us as elected representatives in this Legislature.

I, for one, am glad that some of the former members of the Liberal government in the persons of Duncan and Gerretsen went on the record to decry the relentless push by the current and former leader of the Ontario Liberal Party to fundraise. The numbers are quite astonishing, as my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said. I have an article here from the CBC today that calculates that since January 2015, the Ontario Liberal Party has raised over \$11.3 million. That's \$700,000 a month.

Ladies and gentlemen out there in TV land, if you're watching: Why did people rush to give the Liberal Party of Ontario \$11.3 million? I know they're a great bunch of ladies and gentlemen over there, but I'm sure it wasn't just because of that. People have got to start putting two and two together and come up with five. It begs the question: Why? Why are they doing this? Why are companies across Ontario so eager to donate to them? What are they using these funds for?

There are serious allegations that have been raised in the media, as well as in the Legislature, as to the conduct of this government. The perception is growing that it may have turned a government business into a money-making machine for the Ontario Liberal Party. Whatever's happening, it doesn't pass the smell test, as a number of members have said, both from the third party and from our party.

Something substantive needs to be done to fix what is wrong with this system. Along with my colleagues in the Ontario PC caucus, I support the principles laid out in the NDP motion today. I was pleased to see our leader joining with the leaders of the NDP and the Green Party this morning to call on Premier Wynne to start a legitimate fundraising reform process. We have heard a

lot from the Premier about wanting to work with her colleagues on the opposition benches on this important initiative, but there has been little action to back that up. Why the Premier would want to stand in the way of an open and transparent process to develop these rules surrounding political finance reform is beyond me. The fact that three leaders of three different political stripes have joined together this morning for that press conference illustrates the importance of this issue. Instead, the Premier is pushing a process that will see this financing reform drafted behind closed doors.

Again, as I said, I support the principles of the NDP motion that we are debating this afternoon, including reforming the rules around political party financing, electoral participation and third-party advertising.

Speaking about third-party advertising, I was a victim of third-party advertising in my riding recently. I don't have it in my notes, but my campaign manager reminded me earlier today. He said that we had a number of phone calls to our office in the last election that said, "Who are these third-party people that are saying these things about Bob Bailey in Sarnia-Lambton?" People wanted to know. It was some of this same garbage, this third-party advertising. You all know it took place out there and you all know you're responsible for it, and the sooner we change it, the better.

Anyway, I still won, so I don't care.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: You guys sent a guy down there and he said things about me, and I challenged him. When I saw him down in the dining room one day, I said, "Why didn't you tell me you were coming to Sarnia-Lambton? I would have met with you." You guys know who he is.

Anyway, these principles are a good starting place—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Name names.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'll name him, if you want.

Interjections.

Mr. Robert Bailey: But we're trying to get his support, so I won't say it.

They mirror, to some degree, the six-point plan that our leader and the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound called for, a number of weeks ago. That plan called for an immediate public inquiry into the fundraising practices of the members of the Premier's cabinet, to ensure that everything that happened by all of those members was above board.

I really believe that would be the most important step to regaining the trust of the public, which has been eroded by the revelations around the cabinet ministers' party fundraising goals. Without such an inquiry, there will continue to be a lot of unanswered questions about the past conduct of this government and the Ontario Liberal Party itself.

A perfect example of how the public might question this government's decision-making is the fact that over the past few years, seven renewable energy companies donated over \$255,000 to this government, and in the latest round of renewable procurements, all seven of

those companies were awarded contracts by the Ministry of Energy.

Interjection: What a coincidence.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Is this more than a coincidence? There are many constituents in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton who would like to know.

There's strong opposition in Sarnia-Lambton to further windmill turbine installations there. There's a number of advocates who went out and secured legal representation, at great personal cost, to challenge the future wind projects in Lambton county, and they're at the Supreme Court of Canada. Too bad you couldn't turn some of that money over to them, to help fund that. Maybe that's something you could do. You could send some of that money over to them, to help fund that challenge.

This is an example of why I would like to have seen the NDP include a call for a public inquiry in their motion. It would have been in the best interests of the people in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton and those who are trying to make sense of this government's decision-making.

Our plan also called for the creation of a special select committee, with equal representation from all parties, that would gather public input.

Personally, as I said—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I did write it in here.

Personally, I did have thousands of dollars in third-party spending used and spent against me in the recent election. Constituents continually called my office to find out where this money came from. I'm going to get to the bottom of it before the next election.

A complete phase-out of union and corporate donations would be pleasant to see, with an end to ministerial fundraising targets and strengthening of lobby restrictions.

Again, I want to say that I am pleased to stand here and support the motion that's before the House today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: First of all, I'm quite glad to take time in this debate—and I want to congratulate our leader, Andrea Horwath, and this caucus for putting forward this proposal, because I think it's one that makes a lot of sense.

Let me just say two or three things in regard to this debate.

The first thing is that we need to understand what the government is up to. The government wants the process that it's establishing for a very simple reason: Essentially, they want to make sure they get the outcome that's to their benefit, and an outcome that they themselves will choose what it is.

When it comes to changing the rules and how we deal with issues, such as the rules of the Legislature, election finances and others, you would hope that you'd have a process that is non-partisan, because at the end of the day, we all have to work by the same rules.

What we're proposing is what this Legislature has done for number of years, dating back to the 1970s. It took out of the hands of the politicians, but more importantly, took out of the hands of the government—that's really the question here—the control of how to change the rules when it came to electoral reform and when it came to election finance reform. That's what the Camp commission was all about at the very beginning, and that's what all of the other processes were about, with the exception of the time that Mr. Harris was in office and went back to the bad old days.

But the idea is that if there's a process by which the parties can agree, and a process that is independent, it allows the public to have their say but, more importantly, to end up with a product at the end that everybody can stand behind, that the public can support, that is seen as transparent and, quite frankly, has the confidence of the public. Because at the end of day, if we go through this process that the government is suggesting, which is to send it off to committee at first reading, with the government holding a majority at first reading—in other words, they will control what comes out at first reading. We've seen in committee before, when the opposition has brought forward amendments to legislation, that the government majority essentially blocks those amendments from coming forward.

Why does government decide that it wants to control this by way of the majority at first reading? It's very simple: because they're trying to control the outcome. Once the bill finally comes back to the House and is dealt with at second reading, and—if we take the government at face value—goes out for committee again after second reading, again the government will utilize its majority.

1740

What our leader, Andrea Horwath, is suggesting is that we have a process that has been used in the past that allows those people who are non-partisan and the parties to be at the table as well, to be able to come up with what the suggestions are for the legislation—which would come back in the fall, by September 30—and that we would be in a position to pass a bill before January 2017.

Now, I've heard the government on the other side argue, "Oh, this is just the opposition trying to slow things down so it goes beyond January." No. We were very clear. My leader has said that this panel, if set up, will have to report back to the House, as per the motion, by September 30, and that the legislation then be drafted and put into the House to be passed this fall. We're living up to the government's want to be able to get this legislation done before January 2017. We can live with the timeline; what we can't live with is the process.

Let me just explain why process is important. Do we all remember the constitutional debate? The Constitution is the ultimate document that any country is governed by. The point is that the government of the day under Mr. Trudeau, the Liberal government, decided to patriate a Constitution without all the signatories being in agreement, that being the province of Quebec. We ended up, through that flawed process, some years later, with a

Constitution that is not supported by the province of Quebec, which is a large size of the population of Canada. It would have been far better to have a process by which we could have all agreed—taking a bit of time, in that case—so that in fact everybody signs off and it's over with. Instead, we've had to live under the threat of what may happen or may not happen within the province of Quebec when it comes to the Constitution, because the government decided to have a process by which they wanted to control the outcome.

So we're saying to the government across the way that this is a very important point, when it comes to the point that my leader is making: If you allow the panel to go out this summer to do the work this needs to be done—to look at how to deal with third-party advertising, how to deal with union and corporate donations, how to deal with maximum limits, all of that stuff, and how much you can spend—and then come back based on work that looks at these issues in some detail, which everybody is a part of, there's going to be much more support to go forward with a bill that is then a bill of consensus. If you can get to that, no political party after will change it. But the problem that you're setting up now is that you're doing a process that the governing party is going to control by way of its majority. I predict you're going to try to foist onto the opposition parts a bill that will be difficult to accept, and we may be in a situation in the future where a future government will change it again.

If we all agree something has to be done, let's do it right. Do what my leader, Andrea Horwath, has suggested: Refer this matter to the panel that we've suggested in this motion, allow the panel to do its work and to come back with something we can all agree on—because we kind of all want to get to the same place. The beauty of that is that once we've signed off and we agree that that's what we're going to come back with, there will be unanimity in this House to be able to move with something that will outlast the political parties that were part of structuring that particular piece of legislation.

So I ask the members across the way to reconsider, to support what my leader has put forward. You're going to get things done in the same timeline, but more importantly, you're going to have a bill that, quite frankly, the public will be able to have confidence in, to move forward with finance and electoral reform that everyone can get behind and that the public can have some confidence in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I know I'm coming in towards the tail end of the debate. It's been a thorough discussion today, looking at ways that we can reform how we finance operations here in the province of Ontario.

I think there's a recognition here that this is a very serious issue. We've been operating with fundraising rules now for a couple of decades here in the province of Ontario, and I think there is a consensus being built that we need to look at ways that we can fundamentally reform them. We may differ here. I think the legislative

process is laid out. I think we can accomplish those goals. Certainly, there will be the opportunity for all sides to bring forward expert witnesses in order to ultimately draft a piece of legislation that all sides of this House can be supportive of.

Mr. Speaker, I think one of the big things, as people come in to provide testimony on this piece of legislation when it's introduced—we'll finally be able to lift the veil on some of these numbered companies that make donations in the province of Ontario. For example, who is 2407553? When I look at a numbered company like that, it's a little more secretive than the Panama Papers. I could probably get more information from the Panama Papers than I could through these numbered companies.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Where'd you see that one?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Well, it's right here, I say to my friend the member from St. Catharines.

Then I look at the Barrie Colts junior hockey club—taking donations from young 15- and 16-year-olds trying to forge a future playing hockey.

So through the legislative process, we can call some witnesses and then shine some light on these nefarious numbered companies that are involved in Ontario's political process.

To top it all off, we have the Petroleum Club, which moved from Calgary to Toronto when the very distinguished Premier from Alberta, one Rachel Notley, came to Toronto, at \$10,000 a head—to bring the Petroleum Club from Calgary to the Royal York hotel in Toronto. Eureka—at one time we were opposed to pipelines, and then, all of a sudden, like Saul on the road to Damascus, we're in favour of pipelines now. I'm not a cynic, but moving the Petroleum Club from Calgary to Toronto and having a change in position—I wouldn't suggest there's anything wrong with that, but it just happened.

Mr. Speaker, as we involve the legislative process, all the witnesses will come forward, and we'll get a great piece of legislation that will serve all of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I allowed you to get your last breath; I didn't realize it was a long breath.

Further debate? I recognize the leader of the third party for her right of reply.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I certainly appreciate the discussion that we've had this afternoon, and I think there are a couple of unassailable facts that we need to wrap up this discussion with.

First and foremost, we're having this debate, we're having this discussion because the Liberals broke faith with Ontarians and were caught with their hands in the cookie jar regarding their unseemly fundraising methods, the latest in a string of scandals that the people of Ontario have watched unfold with this Liberal government in power. Frankly, it's another reason for people to lose faith in the methods that this government uses to run the province. It's certainly something that people lose trust in the government over, when they see this kind of behaviour. When they lose trust, they become cynical about what happens here in their Legislature and about what

happens with their government. So it's not surprising that people might be losing faith and losing trust in the way this Liberal government operates.

That's why, when it comes to the changing of our electoral system in terms of election finance reform and participation in our elections, we need to have a truly democratic process—a process that actually engages all Ontarians in a non-partisan way; a process that is truly transparent, truly open, truly democratic. That is the very bottom line that should be adhered to when it comes to this kind of reform. It's not appropriate for one party, the governing party that happens to be in power, to draft legislation on its own. That is the bottom line: to draft it and to control it is not appropriate, Speaker. It is not democratic.

Unfortunately, we have a situation where, in the debate, the Liberal members muddied the waters around what this motion was all about. That's saddening, Speaker. They're relying on things that are not the case, that are not factual, in their argument; for example, the idea or suggestion that we want to delay things. Absolutely not true—very clear in the motion. Some idea that they picked off a tree somewhere that we want some huge committee to be put in place—absolutely not true. It saddens me that they use these kinds of tactics on such an important debate, Speaker, because it is an important debate.

I am disappointed. If we see this Liberal government vote down this motion, I will be severely disappointed, because they will have then chosen a partisan path instead of rising to the occasion and showing the respect and the humility and the fundamental underpinnings of democratic principles, as other Premiers in the past have done. They should be setting a high bar, Speaker, not a low bar. Unfortunately, if they don't support this motion, they will be setting a low bar for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day motion number 3. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. It is a 10-minute bell for any recorded vote requested on an opposition day motion.

The division bells rang from 1752 to 1802.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask all members to take their seats, please. Thank you.

Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day motion number 3. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Brown, Patrick

French, Jennifer K.
Gates, Wayne
Gélinas, France
Gretzky, Lisa
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael

Miller, Paul
Natyshak, Taras
Scott, Laurie
Singh, Jagmeet
Smith, Todd
Tabuns, Peter

Campbell, Sarah
Clark, Steve
Coe, Lorne
DiNovo, Cheri
Fedeli, Victor
Fife, Catherine
Forster, Cindy

Hatfield, Percy
Horwath, Andrea
Jones, Sylvia
MacLeod, Lisa
Mantha, Michael
Martow, Gila
Miller, Norm

Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanthof, John
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

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

Nays

Anderson, Granville
Baker, Yvan
Ballard, Chris
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dong, Han
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fraser, John
Gravelle, Michael

Hoggarth, Ann
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Kiwala, Sophie
Lalonde, Marie-France
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Martins, Cristina
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGarry, Kathryn
McMahon, Eleanor
McMeekin, Ted
Meilleur, Madeleine

Milczyn, Peter Z.
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Potts, Arthur
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Sousa, Charles
Thibeault, Glenn
Vernile, Daiene
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 39; the nays are 50.

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

Motion negatived.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I beg to inform the House—

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want a ranked ballot.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please. I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c)—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would appreciate order from the opposition side. Thank you very much.

A change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Ms. Martow assumes ballot item number 38 and Mr. MacLaren assumes ballot item number 45.

Pursuant to standing order—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask that the government side come to order, please.

Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Whitby–Oshawa has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Education.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I will wait for a moment.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): All right. The member for Whitby–Oshawa has given notice of dissatisfaction with an answer to a question given by the Minister of Education. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education may reply for up to five minutes.

I now turn it over to the member from Whitby–Oshawa.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I asked the Premier earlier today a very specific question about transitional funding for Laurentian University students who are unable to finish and obtain their degrees at Laurentian's Barrie campus.

The Minister of Education, to whom the Premier directed my question, failed to answer specifically, choosing instead to focus on the general higher educational policies of the Liberal government.

This government chooses to use students as political pawns when it's most convenient for them and when it's for their political gain. They should be ashamed. As a matter of history, Laurentian University has made the decision to leave Barrie because of the restrictions being imposed by the Liberal government.

The problem is that this leaves a significant number of students without viable options. Yes, it's true that the university has offered residence accommodation and meal plans to those disaffected students, and some have elected to move to Sudbury to complete their courses of the study. But there are many who have limited capabilities to move from community to community.

The move will force students to uproot their lives. There are single mothers who cannot leave their families, older students who will find it inappropriate to move into student residences, disabled students who have medical support in the Barrie area, or students who have jobs in the Barrie area to support their education at Laurentian.

Furthermore, the Laurentian campus in Barrie acts as a corridor, allowing local residents and students from northern Ontario to study near their families and friends. With this departure, these students won't have the opportunity to receive a post-secondary education close to home.

1810

As the president of the Laurentian Students' Union said earlier this year, "It shouldn't matter what program you're in; you should be able to finish your degree where you started. Laurentian has an obligation to see us through our four years of education in Barrie."

The mayor of Barrie, Jeff Lehman, said that each student has their own story and that the options don't work for everyone. Each student is unique from all others. But, Mr. Speaker, they also have a common denominator, don't they? They all signed up for a university education at that location, and apparently the deal is now off. So those students do what they have to for assistance. They attend city council meetings and ask for help; they appeal to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities; they stand in solidarity in Barrie with signs to bring attention to their cause. The students affected by this decision did not enrol to obtain an online degree, nor did they enrol in a three-year degree versus a four-year degree. They signed up to participate in the academic rigour that is in-class lectures and learning from professors they respect and admire.

I believe that this government has failed these students, who are left now desperately wondering when and if they'll be able to finish their university education. The Liberal member for Barrie has failed them. The Liberal member for Sudbury has failed them. The Premier and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities should be ashamed of themselves. They're depriving students of the right to finish their degree the way they started it: in Barrie.

So, Mr. Speaker, my question is really quite succinct. When the issues are distilled, at the end of the day, one remains, and it's clearly one of educational funding. I asked the Premier earlier if she and her government would provide transitional funding so that these disaffected students can remain in Barrie and finish their degrees.

I believe that I deserve a proper response to a very direct question. More importantly, I believe that the over 200 students who are so directly impacted deserve a proper response. Speaker, they deserve that response today and now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education has up to five minutes to reply.

Mr. Grant Crack: It's a pleasure to be speaking here before the full House. The member from Whitby-Oshawa asked for a very specific answer, so I'm happy to be able to provide that to him this afternoon.

Our government remains committed to strengthening post-secondary education in Simcoe county. With this shared goal in mind, the province has been working closely with Georgian College, Laurentian University and Lakehead University for a long time on how best to expand access to high-quality degree-level education in Barrie, Orillia and surrounding communities.

Speaker, last summer the government engaged lawyer and former minister John Gerretsen to work with the three post-secondary institutions to develop recommendations for the delivery of degree-level education in Simcoe county. After engaging with many stakeholders—and these are key stakeholders—Mr. Gerretsen's report recommended a fair and balanced path forward for sustainable, high-quality post-secondary education options in Simcoe county. We felt that the

report outlined a positive path forward that would have allowed all three institutions to grow their program offerings in a more collaborative and co-operative context.

We're disappointed that Laurentian decided to cease operations in Barrie, but I want to take this opportunity to correct you on a few of the assumptions that you made about this subject. Firstly, universities in this province are not subject to our demands of where and how they educate their student body. Universities are autonomous institutions that govern themselves, as they should, and will continue to under this government.

On the subject of major capacity expansion and Laurentian being unsuccessful in its bid to create a standalone campus in the region, I want to remind the member opposite in the official opposition of what the former member from Simcoe North said about a Barrie campus: "I don't see any need at all for a satellite campus in Barrie. At this point, I would say we can't afford a second satellite campus, whether it's Laurentian or U of T or whatever it may be." That was from the Orillia Today, July 9, 2014, edition.

With respect to the question of transitional funding, it seems to me that you are under the assumption that this matter can simply be solved by money, when the reality is that this issue is far more complicated and one beyond our scope of governance. The situation is that a body of governance has made a decision to conclude its business in the city of Barrie, a decision which they are within their right to make.

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities does not have the authority to compel a university to remain open. As I mentioned, however, we did work with Laurentian University to try to find a reasonable and fair path forward. At the end of the consultations Mr. Gerretsen carried out over five months, he delivered recommendations for a path forward that included all three schools working more effectively together to better serve students and increase access to undergraduate programming in Simcoe county. It was Laurentian alone that made the decision to exit the area.

President Dominic Giroux—and I know the president well. I've been able to meet with him on a number of occasions. He's a great president and serves the university very well. He's indicated that the president of the Laurentian Students' Union is interested in moving forward on a positive note. And I'm happy to say that of the 700 affected students in Barrie, 500 are able to graduate in Barrie, and of the remaining 200, President Giroux has indicated that 105 will be transferring to Laurentian's Sudbury campus. The remaining 95 first- and second-year students will continue to have the opportunity to work with Laurentian University officials to confirm their individual plan. We are hopeful that a smooth transition will occur for each and every one of them.

The affected students have been presented with a number of transition options, including transferring to the Laurentian University Sudbury campus with residence, meal plan and parking paid for; transferring to another university to finish up the final years of their degree;

completing their degree as a three-year bachelor of arts at the Barrie campus; and receiving a letter of permission from the university to fulfill their degree at another university. We believe that all of these options, along with the ability to discuss an individual plan, will help all affected students complete their studies in a way that best fits their needs.

In addition to these transition options, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities has been working with Georgian College and Lakehead University to ensure that students will have expanded access to high-quality, degree-level education in Simcoe county.

The member opposite should rest assured that the ministry did what it could to help Laurentian University

continue to offer courses at its Barrie campus. We are disappointed that they could not find a path forward to continue offering their top-notch education to students in Simcoe county. But the ministry's goal has not changed: Our focus will remain, first and foremost, improving access to high-quality degree options for students in Simcoe county.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank both members.

There being no further debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

The House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1818.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
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Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
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Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
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Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille 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
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	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)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Scarborough–Rouge River	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
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Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Arthur Potts
Todd Smith, Monique Taylor
Glenn Thibeault
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**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
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Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Toby Barrett, Han Dong
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Peter Z. Milczyn
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Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Lisa Gretzky, Ann Hoggarth
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Robert Bailey, Wayne Gates
Monte Kwinter, Marie-France Lalonde
Amrit Mangat, Cristina Martins
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
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**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Randy Hillier, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Laurie Scott
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Granville Anderson, Steve Clark
Vic Dhillon, Sophie Kiwala
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
Chris Ballard, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Peter Z. Milczyn, Julia Munro
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, Bob Delaney
Joe Dickson, Jennifer K. French
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Bill Walker
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: 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, Lorne Coe
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Marie-France Lalonde, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Continued from back cover

Autism treatment

Miss Monique Taylor	8797
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	8797

Agri-food industry

Mr. Chris Ballard	8798
Hon. Jeff Leal	8798

Electricity supply

Mr. Norm Miller	8799
Hon. David Zimmer	8799

Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	8799
-------------------------------------	------

Visitors

Mr. Percy Hatfield	8799
Hon. James J. Bradley	8799
Hon. Mitzie Hunter	8799
Hon. David Zimmer	8799
Mr. John Vanthof	8799

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Municipal Elections Modernization Act, 2016, Bill 181, Mr. McMeekin / Loi de 2016 sur la modernisation des élections municipales, projet de loi 181, M. McMeekin

Second reading agreed to	8800
--------------------------------	------

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS /
DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS**

Go Transit

Mr. Lorne Coe	8800
---------------------	------

Mental health and addictions services

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	8800
-------------------------------	------

Earthquake in Ecuador

Mrs. Cristina Martins	8801
-----------------------------	------

Waterloo-Wellington Science and Engineering Fair

Mr. Michael Harris	8801
--------------------------	------

Hydro rates

Mr. John Vanthof	8801
------------------------	------

Events in Newmarket-Aurora

Mr. Chris Ballard	8802
-------------------------	------

Barbara Horner

Mr. Robert Bailey	8802
-------------------------	------

Cambridge Chamber of Commerce Business

Excellence Awards

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry	8802
----------------------------	------

Joseph Brant Hospital

Ms. Eleanor McMahon	8803
---------------------------	------

Royal assent / Sanction royale

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	8803
-------------------------------------	------

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS
MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES**

Equal Pay Day / Journée de l'équité salariale

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	8803
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	8804
Ms. Laurie Scott	8805
Mr. Ted Arnott	8805
Ms. Peggy Sattler	8806

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Special-needs students

Ms. Laurie Scott	8807
------------------------	------

Guide and service animals

Ms. Catherine Fife	8807
--------------------------	------

Hospital funding

Mr. Jim Wilson	8807
----------------------	------

Autism treatment

Miss Monique Taylor	8808
---------------------------	------

Child care

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris	8808
--------------------------------	------

Ontario Trillium Foundation

Mr. Steve Clark	8808
-----------------------	------

Workplace safety

Mr. Percy Hatfield	8808
--------------------------	------

Health care funding

Ms. Laurie Scott	8809
------------------------	------

Way-finding signs

Mr. Michael Mantha	8809
--------------------------	------

Tenant protection

Mr. Jim Wilson	8809
----------------------	------

Privatization of public assets

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	8809
-------------------------------	------

Health care funding

Mr. Ted Arnott	8810
----------------------	------

Visitor

Mr. Wayne Gates	8810
-----------------------	------

OPPOSITION DAY / JOUR DE L'OPPOSITION

Electoral reform

Ms. Andrea Horwath	8810
Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris	8813
Mr. Patrick Brown	8814
Ms. Cindy Forster	8816
Hon. Dipika Damerla	8816

Mr. Jim McDonell	8818
Mr. Percy Hatfield	8819
Hon. Glen R. Murray	8819
Mr. Bill Walker.....	8822
Mr. John Vanthof.....	8823
Mr. John Yakabuski.....	8823
Miss Monique Taylor	8824
Mr. Robert Bailey	8824
Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	8825
Hon. Jeff Leal	8826
Ms. Andrea Horwath	8827
Motion negatived.....	8828
Private members' public business	
The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls).....	8828

**ADJOURNMENT DEBATE / DÉBAT SUR
LA MOTION D'AJOURNEMENT**

Post-secondary education

Mr. Lorne Coe	8828
Mr. Grant Crack.....	8829

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 19 April 2016 / Mardi 19 avril 2016

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Municipal Elections Modernization Act, 2016, Bill 181, Mr. McMeekin / Loi de 2016 sur la modernisation des élections municipales, projet de loi 181, M. McMeekin

Ms. Laurie Scott	8777
Ms. Jennifer K. French	8778
Mr. Mike Colle	8779
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	8779
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	8779
Ms. Laurie Scott	8780
Mr. Michael Mantha	8780
Mr. Mike Colle	8781
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	8782
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	8782
Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde	8783
Mr. Michael Mantha	8783
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	8783
Vote deferred	8785

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Toby Barrett	8785
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	8785
Mr. Monte Kwinter	8785
Mr. Michael Harris	8785
Mr. John Vanthof	8785
Hon. Jeff Leal	8785
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	8785
Ms. Cindy Forster	8785
Hon. Mitzie Hunter	8785
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	8785
Mr. Percy Hatfield	8785
Hon. Helena Jaczek	8785
Mr. Tim Hudak	8785
Hon. Charles Sousa	8785
Mr. Monte McNaughton	8785
Mr. Jim McDonell	8785
Mr. Wayne Gates	8786
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	8786
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	8786
Gary Leadston	
Ms. Catherine Fife	8786
Ms. Daiene Vernile	8786

Mr. Michael Harris	8787
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	8788
Earthquakes in Ecuador and Japan	
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	8788

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Autism treatment

Mr. Patrick Brown	8788
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8788

Hydro rates

Mr. Patrick Brown	8789
Hon. Charles Sousa	8790

Electoral reform

Ms. Andrea Horwath	8790
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8791

Electoral reform

Ms. Andrea Horwath	8791
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	8792
Hon. Deborah Matthews	8792

Health care funding

Mr. Jeff Yurek	8792
Hon. Eric Hoskins	8793

Electoral reform

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	8793
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	8793

Aboriginal programs and services

Ms. Daiene Vernile	8794
Hon. David Zimmer	8794

Post-secondary education

Mr. Lorne Coe	8794
Hon. Liz Sandals	8795

Pay equity

Ms. Peggy Sattler	8795
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	8795
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	8795

Pay equity

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde	8796
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	8796
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	8796

Climate change / Changement climatique

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	8796
Hon. Glen R. Murray	8796

Continued on inside back cover