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(Hansard)**

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des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 31 October 2016

Lundi 31 octobre 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 31 October 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 31 octobre 2016

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Later this week, the House will be paying tribute to a deceased former member, John Ferris. I would ask that the House have his memory in mind during prayers.

Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very excited to welcome my friends Willem Hart and Ari Moghimi, two volunteers from Thornhill. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'd like to introduce former Barrie MPP and Attorney General George Taylor, who is sitting in the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We thank him. Further introductions?

Mr. John Fraser: The family of page Olivier Bélanger will be in the gallery today. They're from Ottawa. I'd like to welcome Denise and Sylvain Bélanger as well as Julien Bélanger.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to welcome this morning Nancy and Allan Lawton. They are the grandparents of our page from Windsor–Tecumseh, Elisabeth Lawton. Nancy and Allan are here from London. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure this morning to introduce the grandmother of the page from Davenport. Page Bianca Morelli is visited here today at Queen's Park by her grandmother Judy Morelli. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Soo Wong: I just noticed a former colleague and a good friend is here joining us. The former member from Vaughan, Mario Racco, welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a group that is making its way to the House. It includes Haldie Wickie, Shawn Rouse, Karrie Mercier, Dorothy Matute, Enrique Matute, Ann Marie Tulett, Sarah O'Melia Muylaert, Trish McAuliffe, Nancy Brissett, Curtis Coates, Peter Bergmanis, Donna Metcalf-Woo, William "Charlie" Courneyea, Charlene Avon and Natalie Mehra. They are from the Ontario Health Coalition and they are making their way to the House. Welcome to Queen's Park.

CONSIDERATION OF BILLS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, and welcome. Further introductions?

The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration on a point of order; sorry. We'll come back.

Hon. Laura Albanese: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding bills standing in the name of the Attorney General.

I move that, notwithstanding standing order 71(d), bills currently standing—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. You don't get to move it until you get permission.

The minister is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed. Minister?

Hon. Laura Albanese: Thank you. I move that, notwithstanding standing order 71(d), bills currently standing in the name of the Attorney General may be considered in the House and in committee at the same time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. Albanese seeks unanimous consent to move forward a motion that, notwithstanding standing order 71(d), bills currently standing in the name of the Attorney General may be considered in the House and in committee at the same time. Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Another point of order.

Hon. Laura Albanese: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to recognize the former member of provincial Parliament from Scarborough East.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am going to ask you to delay that unanimous consent until I finish introductions. We're not quite done yet.

The member from Scarborough–Rouge River.

VISITORS

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I'm very happy to welcome the students from my riding. They are from C.D. Farquharson junior public school, grade 5. The teacher is Ms. Sara Uddin. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The previous member sparked me to remember that there are students here from Knob Hill school in Scarborough as well. I just met them earlier: some of the brightest young people I've ever seen. I want to welcome them here as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? Seeing none, we have with us today in the Speaker's gallery guests from the Ohio Legislative Service Commission fellowship program. Please join me in welcoming them as they spend the next few days learning

about the Ontario Legislature and politics. Welcome. We're glad you're with us.

I understand that one of them is taking political science. I'm not sure where that's coming from.

Also in the Speaker's gallery today, I have the honour of introducing Margaret Birch, the first woman in the history of Ontario to be appointed to cabinet. Ms. Birch served in the 29th, 30th, 31st and 32nd Parliaments. With Ms. Birch this morning is her family: Randy, Jane, Dan, Jennifer, Meaghan, Roberto, Sarah and Paul.

They are also joined—and today I am going to loosen my rules about introducing former members because it was happening. In this case, there are so many here, we are just simply going to say “welcome” to all of the former MPPs who are here with us to celebrate Ms. Birch. Thank you all for being here. Ms. Birch, thank you; it's an honour to be here with you.

I would now like to recognize a point of order from the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

MARGARET BIRCH

Hon. Laura Albanese: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to recognize the former member of provincial Parliament from Scarborough East and first female cabinet minister in Ontario, Ms. Margaret Birch, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. Albanese seeks unanimous consent to pay tribute. Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Of all the milestones over the last century that have advanced Ontario women's participation in political life, three in particular stand out. In 1917, Ontario women secured the right to vote in provincial elections. In 1943, the first women MPPs were elected to the Ontario Legislature. And in 1972, Margaret Birch, the gracious and remarkable woman we are honouring today, took her seat around the cabinet table, becoming the first woman in Ontario to participate directly in government decision-making as a member of the executive council.

1040

For all of us in this House, but especially for women, Margaret Birch is one of those on whose shoulders we stand: an inspiring trailblazer, a dedicated advocate and a tireless public servant whose name will forever be inscribed in the history books of our province.

Margaret's story began in southwestern Ontario. Born and raised in Leamington, Margaret was forced to quit school at the age of 12 to help care for her younger siblings after her father grew ill. By the age of 16, she was working for \$3 a day as a tobacco picker. She later moved on to the job of quality control at the Heinz plant, where she oversaw the labelling of ketchup bottles.

Her future legacy as a barrier-breaker and change-maker in Ontario politics was presaged by the early grit,

tenacity and determination she displayed throughout those challenging early years.

In many ways, Margaret's path to elected office is typical of many women's entry into public life. She became involved in her community, she saw a problem and she wanted to fix it.

After moving to Scarborough with her husband, newspaper editor Guy Birch, and their two children, Margaret began volunteering at the local hospital where she experienced first-hand the impact on patients and families when health care needs were not being met.

In 1962, she took her first run for office at the municipal level with a platform focused on bringing more hospital beds to Scarborough. Although she did not win that election, she succeeded in getting approval for a new hospital and was invited to sit on the hospital's board of governors. Of all of her achievements, it is her role as a founding member of Scarborough Centenary Hospital, now part of the Rouge Valley Health System, that she is most proud. When the hospital expanded in 1986, the Margaret Birch Wing was officially opened to honour this important contribution.

With her intelligence, commitment and passion for health care, she was a natural choice to chair the Scarborough Board of Health in 1963. Four years later, she joined the mental health council, travelling across the province to review mental health services.

Shortly after being named Scarborough's citizen of the year in 1970, she was approached about running in the 1971 Ontario election, and she put her name on the ballot as the Progressive Conservative candidate in Scarborough East.

It's difficult to imagine what it must have been like for Margaret as one of only two women out of the 121 MPPs who were elected that year. But with her usual energy and aplomb, she set to work as a backbench MPP.

One year later, on September 28, 1972, she was appointed Minister without Portfolio by Premier Bill Davis. Although this barrier had been broken at the federal level some 15 years earlier, Bill Davis deserves much credit for a decision that was not without controversy. Not only did he appoint Margaret to cabinet, he quickly promoted her to the position of Provincial Secretary for Social Development. For the next nine years, she served as a super minister, responsible for the coordination of services across six different ministries involving health care, social services and education.

The door to the cabinet room wasn't the only door that Margaret opened during her time at Queen's Park. Told that she could not attend a political speech at the downtown Toronto Albany Club because female members were not permitted, Margaret complained to the Premier: “If I'm good enough to sit in this cabinet with all these men,” she said, “surely I'm good enough to be a member of the Albany Club.” Premier Davis agreed, and Margaret Birch became the first female member of that once-male bastion.

During her 14 years in government, Margaret advanced policy to improve the lives of women, youth and

seniors. Her passion and some of her most effective advocacy, however, was for veterans and people living with mental illness. She frequently toured facilities and came up with programming alternatives that reduced isolation.

Not only was she a pioneer in her achievements in the Legislature, she was also a pioneer in the field of mental health. She fought tirelessly for less institutionalized models of care.

Margaret's efforts and success demonstrated to Ontarians that the opinions and contributions of women matter, and that better decisions are made when women are involved in making them. She opened the door to opportunity for all of the women sitting in this Legislature now and in the future.

Margaret, on behalf of the Ontario NDP caucus, I am honoured to pay tribute to you today. We thank you for your leadership in paving the way for women's participation in the political decision-making processes that affect them, their communities and their families, and for inspiring us to continue breaking barriers until women's full equality is achieved.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is such an honour to rise today and pay tribute to Margaret Birch, who broke barriers for women in politics as Ontario's first female cabinet minister. It's such an honour to have you here with us, Mrs. Birch. Thank you very much for being here. She's here to receive the Distinguished Service Award from the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians. I could not agree more with their choice, and I know that that is the sentiment in the Legislature.

Margaret's story, some of which you have heard, is a testament to the power and importance of having women actively engaged in politics.

Les réalisations de Margaret à titre de députée et de ministre nous montrent ce que nous pouvons accomplir lorsqu'un plus grand nombre de femmes entrent dans la vie publique.

Margaret was first elected as the MPP for Scarborough East in 1971. That's an election I remember well. The voting age in Ontario was lowered from 21 to 18 that year. I turned 18 that year, so I couldn't wait to get out to vote for the very first time.

I also remember that Margaret was one of only two women in her party's caucus. But Margaret was not intimidated. This is a woman who had faced uphill battles from an early age. At 12, as we have heard, she left school in Leamington to take care of her five younger siblings so that their mother could work while their father battled cancer. At 16, she helped to support her family by working in the tobacco fields of southwestern Ontario, earning \$3 a day for literally back-breaking work.

It will come as no surprise to hear that as an adult Margaret was not just helping to improve the lives of her family members; she was helping to improve the lives of people across her community. While Margaret and her husband, Guy Birch, raised their son and daughter in Scarborough, she began volunteering at the local hospi-

tal. She worked her way up to become the chair of the Scarborough board of health. In 1970, she was recognized as Scarborough's Citizen of the Year. A cabinet minister from the PC party took that opportunity to phone and encourage her to run provincially, and she literally answered the call.

Once elected, Margaret took that passion for young people and health care and turned it into concrete changes in the province—positive changes in people's lives. In her first year on the job, she helped to create a summer jobs program for youth, long before there was a children and youth services ministry. In 1972, she was named Minister without Portfolio, becoming the first female cabinet minister in Ontario's history. She seized that opportunity to bring her lifelong interest in children and health issues directly to the cabinet table.

Margaret toured health care facilities. She met with patients. She learned more about problems, like the problems of overcrowding that were in those facilities at the time. She visited mental health institutions at a time when they were still deeply, deeply stigmatized. She was instrumental in the creation of the Assistive Devices Program, which is still in place to this day, which helps children with mobility issues get the walkers, braces and wheelchairs that they require. It began with children, but I believe that at the time Margaret and Dennis Timbrell said, "It will start with children, but soon everyone will have those services."

As has already been said, she broke barriers in the Legislature but in society as well. I'm going to tell the same story that was told by my colleague, but I just want to read from Steve Paikin's great new book on William Grenville Davis. I'll just read the story about the Albany Club because I think it's one where we can all get a sense of the grit and the feistiness of Margaret Birch:

"But breaking the gender barrier in cabinet wasn't Birch's only claim to fame. At this point in its history the downtown Toronto haunt for Conservatives for nearly a century, the Albany Club, still only permitted male members. The federal PC leader, Robert Stanfield, was about to make a guest appearance at the club, and Birch wanted to go. But, of course, that wasn't permitted. Birch approached the Premier to discuss the issue.

1050

"If I'm good enough to sit in this cabinet with all these men, surely I'm good enough to be a member of the Albany Club," she told the Premier.

"You're right," Davis answered. "We'll work on that."

"And that's how Margaret Birch also became one of the first three female members of the Albany Club. Her proposer was none other than the 18th Premier of Ontario." Kudos to Margaret Birch, and to Bill Davis, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker.

I deeply believe that we need to have more women actively engaged in politics, and Margaret proves exactly why it's so important. Women need a seat at the table because they make a difference at the table, and that difference makes a difference in society.

I want to express my deepest thanks to Margaret Birch today for answering the call in 1970 and paving the way

for more women—including me and all of the women in this Legislature—to enter public life. We would not be where we are without you.

Women now make up 40% of Ontario's cabinet. We're having open and productive conversations about issues like the gender wage gap and combating sexual violence. Child care and education are, and have been, in the spotlight for years, and this is because of women like Margaret. Ontario is lucky to have such a remarkable woman in our history books, and we're all humbled to have you here with us today. Thank you so much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tribute.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I am pleased to stand here today on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to honour an incredible woman and political trailblazer in our province, the honourable Margaret Birch.

In preparing to deliver this tribute, I had a chance to speak with many of Margaret's friends and supporters who were unanimous in their admiration for her. She is a person I have come to admire a great deal. Every one of the people I talked to described Margaret as having an exceptional character and as one of the nicest people you would ever meet.

She was also known for her elegance. In fact, during her first provincial election campaign 45 years ago, she famously handed out the first ever oval-shaped campaign button in order to accommodate her trademark hairstyle in the picture. Her sense of style also extended to her campaign office, which was appropriately decorated with birch trees.

On October 21, 1971, Margaret Birch was elected as the Progressive Conservative representative for the riding of Scarborough East. She arrived at Queen's Park determined to make a difference, and her slogan in that campaign had been, "Margaret Birch cares." It would come to perfectly sum up her long and successful career both inside and outside of politics.

In 1972, Premier Bill Davis would make history by appointing Margaret to cabinet, making her Ontario's first ever female cabinet minister. As a newly elected Premier, appointing women to cabinet was something that he was determined to do. In Margaret Birch, Premier Davis found a serious candidate.

Many of those who knew her well described her as being a level-headed professional, using terms like "on an even keel" and "serene." Premier Davis further described her as someone who displayed a strong sense of loyalty, great integrity and genuine interest in other people. These characteristics make her a role model for all Ontarians to follow today and into the future.

Although initially appointed Minister without Portfolio responsible for youth, she was very soon given significantly expanded responsibilities as Provincial Secretary for Social Development, which was a super ministry—one of only three—responsible for a broad array of social policy areas.

Margaret took public service seriously and was not afraid to face challenges or to take stands on difficult issues. She worked hard to deliver meaningful results to the people of Ontario, and her success and effectiveness

as a minister made her indispensable to the government, so much so that even as she planned her departure from politics in 1981, she was asked by Premier Davis to stay a while longer in order to help organize Ontario's bicentennial. As with all things she undertook, she delivered. The bicentennial was described as a well-articulated retrospective celebration, and it was a fitting note on which to end her amazing political career.

Of course, the Margaret Birch story doesn't end here. When Margaret left Queen's Park in 1985, she continued to pursue her passion for service. As a dedicated resident of Scarborough, she was also proud to be honoured by the Centenary hospital in 1986, which named a wing of the hospital after her. This was in recognition of both her achievements at Queen's Park and for her contributions as chair of the Scarborough Board of Health, where she had served for eight years prior to her election in 1971. Specifically, she had been instrumental in choosing the site of the hospital, now a key part of the Rouge Valley Health System.

If I could add a chapter to the Albany Club story: One of my first events as an MPP in Toronto was with Margaret Birch at the Albany Club.

She still likes to drive and recently passed her driving test with flying colours. Not so long ago, Margaret's son had to call her friend's house at 11 o'clock at night to see if his mother was still there, and she was.

One more anecdote comes from Bill Davis's book launch, which she attended. She arrived at the event stylish as ever, back straight, in high heels, and expressed her surprise at how old her former caucus colleagues seemed to be. Mr. Davis, on that night, pointed out that even though Margaret is now 95 years old, she looks and acts more like 55. So I guess 95 is the new 55.

Speaker, next year we mark the 100th anniversary of women in Ontario having gained the right to vote. In Margaret Birch, we have a living example of what women have been able to achieve in Ontario, so it is appropriate that the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians has chosen to honour her this year. We can be very proud of her legacy as the first female Ontario cabinet minister. We also admire her grace and poise in her post-political life.

Let me close by thanking Margaret Birch for her important contributions to our province and her family for encouraging her and sharing her with us.

Margaret, we are grateful for your work and wish you continued health in the near future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to thank all the members for their thoughtful and very kind comments in this tribute. I would also like to find out who the Premier voted for when she turned 18. I'm not quite sure whether or not Margaret got your vote.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's a secret ballot.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's a secret ballot, so we'll never know.

I would also like to ask, one time, as I was not able to mention every single one of them, could the former MPPs please rise and receive our recognition.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): But I'm not going to mention specifically the member from Brant. I can't do that.

That brings me to my final comment, and that is, the Former Parliamentarians deserve a great deal of credit for the creation of the Distinguished Service Award, along with the work that they do in the province in educating people in a non-partisan way. So I want to remind all members that at 11:30 today in room 228, the final investiture of Margaret is taking place. I want to thank them for the good work that they do in our province.

It is time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Premier. Liberal energy policies have been an absolute disaster. Last week, we learned that Northland Power was awarded nearly \$95 million from the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp. I thought that might finally be the end of Liberal energy scandals, but according to public accounts, that was just a portion of a much larger \$179-million lawsuit the OEFC lost. Another \$84 million gone, just like that, because of Liberal government incompetence.

1100

Speaker, can the Premier tell us when this newest scandal will show up on our electricity bills and how much it will cost Ontario families?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the House will want to know that the member opposite is talking about contracts that were signed in 1998 by the PC government, and in 2012, our government amended a regulation to lower electricity costs for large industrial consumers, so we were working to lower costs that the former government had negotiated. Certain non-utility generators disagreed. They disagreed and took legal action.

I know the Minister of Energy will want to talk to the specifics, but I think we just need to understand that what we were trying to do was to reduce the costs on large industrial users. We were dealing with contracts that had been signed by the previous government in 1998.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Liberals can spin it any way they want. Ratepayers are being stuck with the bill of your incompetence. Let's do a quick recap.

On Thursday, October 13, the Liberals lost a \$28-million lawsuit to Windstream Energy for a project—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We're going to get on this early.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —for a project that hasn't been built. Next, on October 18, it was revealed that the

Liberals spent \$12 million on consultants and advertising instead of rate relief for low-income Ontarians. Then, on October 25, the IESO revealed an \$81-million Liberal accounting error and asked for that back through electricity bills.

Further, we find that the Liberals lost a \$179-million court case to several energy producers. In just two weeks, the Liberals lost \$300 million with nothing to show for it. Can the Premier explain who will be paying for this latest Liberal energy scandal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased to rise and put the facts out on the table for the honourable member. As mentioned by the Premier, these were electricity contracts that were signed in the 1990s, specifically in 1998, by that party when they were in government.

In 2012, our government amended a regulation to lower electricity costs for large industrial consumers. Certain non-utility generators disagreed and took legal action. Now we've sought leave to appeal before the Supreme Court of Canada and we're challenging this decision. As the legal process is ongoing, I cannot comment further on the specifics of that case.

But when it comes to actually having a plan—which they don't, Mr. Speaker—we announced this morning more audits and retrofits to help families save money. That's what we do on this side of the House: We try and do our best to make sure that we save families money.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I wonder what the people of Ontario think of that statement, that this government is saving them money.

In just two weeks, under this government, Ontario families and seniors are on the hook for another \$300 million in scandal, waste and mismanagement. I repeat: In two weeks, the Liberals spent \$300 million and Ontario ratepayers have absolutely nothing to show for it except higher energy bills.

Speaker, I'm not looking at five, 10 or 15 years in the past. I'm just talking about the last two weeks. How much higher can Ontario electricity bills go? Again, I say to the Premier, because of this \$300 million wasted in only the last two weeks, how much higher will Ontario ratepayers' hydro bills go?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased to stand up and say that in the last two weeks we passed legislation in this House that's actually going to save families 8% on their hydro bills, starting January 1. For those who are in rural or remote areas, they will see their bills reduced by 20%. Then, of course, for small businesses, they'll see that 8% as well. We're actually doing a lot on this side of the House to ensure that we can help families save money.

Just this morning, we were talking about helping families fight climate change and reduce their energy bills at the same time: a rebate program that's going to help an additional 37,000 homeowners who can get this energy audit that will cost them \$500. They get that money back,

and they can save up to \$2,000 to help pay for these retrofits.

This is another program of many that we have which will actually help families. We're very proud on this side of the House of the programs we're putting forward that are helping Ontarians each and every day.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Premier. Ontario's corrections system has strict policies regarding the reports that must be filed when an individual is held in segregation. Corrections staff conduct reviews every five days. After 30 days, a more thorough report is sent directly to the desk of the assistant deputy minister for institutional services. In Adam Capay's case, this would have happened at least 50 times. According to human rights lawyer Paul Champ, after 60 days, a report goes directly to the minister.

Speaker, justice delayed is justice denied. How long was the Premier going to allow Adam Capay to remain in segregation, putting justice at risk?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the minister will want to comment. I have said a number of times that this is an unacceptable situation in Ontario. I've been very clear about that. The issue points to some very serious challenges—and problems, quite frankly—that we face in the province.

First of all, too many First Nations youth are not getting the supports that they need in their communities. We've been very open and frank about that, and we're working to put those supports in place. We are collectively—and I would say collectively across the province—failing some of those young people. We need to make sure that we work much harder to put supports in place.

Secondly, we recognize that we need to see faster access to justice. We understand that. In the interim, as we work to put those changes in place, there needs to be a transformation of the system. We have changed the rules around segregation and we have committed to doing a review starting with the issue of segregation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Back to the Premier: If, after 60 days, the minister responsible receives a warning, that means that both the Attorney General and the Minister of Community Safety received 25 different warnings about Adam Capay. Twenty-five times the ministers were told that a man was being held in segregation without trial. Twenty-five times these two ministers ignored those warnings and allowed justice to be delayed.

Mr. Speaker, why did the ministers ignore 25 separate warnings as Adam Capay went without justice?

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

Hon. David Oraziotti: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. As I said last week, and as I can continue to add to this discussion, we are committed to a full review of Ontario's correctional system. We will be announcing a review very shortly.

I am aware of Mr. Capay's circumstances, obviously. As you know, last week he was moved to a different cell and has access to a day room, phone, TV and shower facilities, as well.

The characterization by the member opposite—what I would say is that there's regular reporting. The circumstances with respect to segregation in the province of Ontario are the following: There are about 8,000 individuals in custody at any given point in Ontario. About 7%, or 560 to about 600 individuals on any given day, are in segregation. Every day, nurses see—

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Mr. Capay was moved because of renovations.

While the Attorney General was on tour of the Thunder Bay Jail, union president Mike Lundy specifically pointed out Adam Capay and told the minister that he'd been in segregation going on four years. Conveniently, the Attorney General can't seem to recall that. Mike Lundy responded by saying, "That's unfortunate, because I saw the look on his face that day."

So not only was the AG told personally; his office would have received nearly 25 warnings while he was minister. Now, because the minister ignored Mike Lundy and ignored the warnings, charges are at risk of being dropped. Speaker, again, justice delayed is justice denied. How could the Premier allow her ministers to keep a man in solitary confinement for four years without trial?

Hon. David Oraziotti: As I was saying, on any given day, these are the numbers in Ontario's correctional institutions. Every day, individuals are seen by nurses to ensure that they are receiving the supports that they need.

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With respect to the time taken for Mr. Capay to come to trial, the Attorney General, I think, made it quite clear that on the part of the government and the crown, we will do everything we can to expedite individuals' access to justice and ensure they get to trial in a speedy way. But the member also knows there are other reasons for the delay that may be beyond the government's control.

More broadly, we're committed to a full review. I'm very concerned about the conditions of segregation across the province in the sense that we are doing everything we can to improve the conditions that anyone will experience if they're in custody and, for their safety and the safety of others in the institution, need to be in segregation—and only as a last resort.

ONTARIO PLACE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. During the 2014 provincial election, Premier Wynne held a media availability at Ontario Place where she said, "Our waterfront should be for all to enjoy." I want to know from the Premier: Does she still believe that today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I absolutely do believe that. I know that the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport is going to want to speak to

the supplementary, because I believe the member opposite is going to talk about how we may be moving away from that position, but we are not.

We believe that Ontario Place and the property there, the trail that is being completed, is exactly that. It is there for everyone to enjoy, and we want Ontario Place and that property to continue to be, and to be once again, a vibrant part of the city and a marker of the greatness and vibrancy of this province. That is our goal and that's what we're working on right now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again, back to the Premier: Over two years ago during that campaign, the Premier jogged into Ontario Place to declare that her government would not be selling off Ontario Place land. She noted that condos, like the ones proposed by the government advisory panel led by John Tory, were off the table. The Premier said, "Selling land to a private developer may be an option for others, but it is not our choice."

But the Premier has quietly put into her new omnibus bill changes that make it possible to do just that: to sell off Ontario Place lands to private interests. Is this another broken promise to Ontarians? Is the Premier going to sell Ontario Place?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I'm delighted today stand in the House, and I want to thank the honourable member for her question. We share, she and I, a passion for vibrant communities that are bicycle- and walk-friendly. We also share a common passion for green spaces.

To build on the Premier's comments, that's exactly what we're doing with Ontario Place. We're moving forward with a vision to revitalize Ontario Place into a vibrant waterfront destination that engages residents and visitors of all ages. Our proposal builds on the vision and guiding principles from the minister's advisory panel in 2012 that the member referred to, to create a destination that's open year-round and offers public access to the waterfront. That's very important, Speaker. Ontario Place is remaining in the hands of Ontarians. We worked very hard on this vision, and I want to mention that and underscore that today.

The amendments—I'll just touch on them—that the member opposite refers to would actually improve the Ontario Place Corporation Act to better support our vision and make it easier to do business—

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Back to the Premier: The Premier's omnibus Burden Reduction Act expands the purpose of Ontario Place to enable a possible change in focus from a public to a commercial operation. Ontarians want to know why the Premier thinks it is necessary for the Ontario Place Corp. to be empowered to sell off land.

I ask the Premier again, why is it necessary to make these changes? What is she planning for Ontario Place? Are a casino or condos back as options? Are they or not?

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I'm happy to build on the question that I started earlier. Just to clarify, it's very

important that the House and all Ontarians understand very clearly that what the member opposite is contending is absolutely false.

The proposed changes that we're talking about would lower the cost and complexity of transactions for the government, Ontario Place Corp. and third party businesses interested in investing in Ontario Place, and would support ongoing revitalization work, including the development of a culture hub on the west island and a celebration hub on the east common.

We have a long-term vision for Ontario Place—let me talk about that, if I may—that includes more green space and areas for cultural activities. We hope all Ontarians will join us for an important Grey Cup celebration that will be taking place later this month where we can celebrate the complexity of the Grey Cup and the passion that it brings to all Ontarians, because that's what Ontario Place is all about.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock. Order, please.

New question.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. Minister Hoskins has tasked the Premier's privatization specialist, Mr. Ed Clark, with determining the value of Ontario's eHealth assets.

According to the provincial eHealth records asset inventory found on the eHealth website, there are 73 electronic health assets in Ontario. These include eClaims, the New Drug Funding Program claims management system, and the subscription management service, which allows providers to specify how they would like to receive health information, by email or SMS or cell.

My question to the Premier is simple today: Will all 73 electronic health assets be subject to Mr. Clark's review and potential privatization?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is going to want to comment in the supplementary, but let me just say once again we are not selling eHealth and we are not selling patient information, Mr. Speaker. The reality is, we know that eHealth's mandate expires in 2017 and it's responsible to look at what has been accomplished and what the next steps are.

But I want to make a link between the two questions that we have heard from the NDP this morning. Both those questions are underpinned by a lack of understanding of how important it is that government work with the rest of society, that we work with businesses. The issue around Ontario Place: Having connections with business at Ontario Place will make it a vibrant place. Already there are partnerships in place on that property.

Mr. Speaker, it is incumbent upon government to find ways to deliver the best service to people in this province, and that means we have to acknowledge that working with business is part of that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Well, let me draw the link for the Premier. The link from this side of the House, as we see your work, is that you put private interests ahead of the public services in this province consistently. You can see why people would be concerned about privatizing eHealth assets, both strategic and tactical. They determine the health—

Interjection.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll wait long enough.

Please finish.

Ms. Catherine Fife: People deserve to feel secure that their private health information will not be sold off to the highest bidder. This government has a very poor track record on keeping personal information secure. People want to know that when they need medical advice or treatment, what they say and what goes into their health records will stay between them and their doctor, not a private company.

If all 73 assets are being valued by Mr. Clark, will the Premier guarantee, right here and right now, that none will be privatized, sold off or contracted out?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Of course I can provide that assurance. I'm becoming a little concerned that the third party is beginning to sow the seeds of fear among Ontarians, that somehow they think there's an effort under way that will compromise the integrity of their health records. It couldn't be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. In fact, last week I had the opportunity to sit down with Mr. Clark. We had a very good conversation. We made it absolutely clear that the intention, which he shares, is that we're going to look at the remarkable progress that has been attained with eHealth over the past decade.

We're going to look at those successes and how we may actually continue to make improvements. None of that involves any possibility whatsoever with regard to privatization of that system or people's personal health records. We continue to have confidence in eHealth. We want to build a stronger eHealth system for our health care providers and for Ontarians.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: People in this province are very afraid. They are afraid to open their hydro bills, because you said that you wouldn't sell it off and you did. The Premier must understand why it is so hard to believe her when she says that her government is not selling eHealth. That's exactly what she said to me in this chamber on

Hydro One, and we all know how that turned out. It is hard for Ontarians to trust the Premier this time when, last time, she said one thing and then she did the exact opposite.

Mr. Speaker, why should we believe the Premier or this Minister of Health when they say that the 73 eHealth assets are not for sale or available to the highest bidder?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, we are not selling eHealth, but it's interesting because it is the member opposite, when we reflect back to the 2014 election, who talked about finding \$600 million if the NDP were to be elected into government. It was part of a CBC interview that she did.

Of course, their platform was silent on exactly where that \$600 million would come from. In fact, the member opposite who just stood up said that the NDP's proposed new accountability minister would look to find efficiencies to find that \$600 million in health and post-secondary education. When she was asked, she would say, "I would go first to health" to find that \$600 million.

That's what we face from that party opposite, and that's the sort of fear they're sowing on eHealth across this province. It's irresponsible.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Premier. In January of this year, I met and spoke with Minister Naqvi while he was Minister of Community Safety, as well as with Attorney General Meilleur, to discuss many of the failings in our justice and corrections systems. I made a point of speaking with both ministers on the critical need for the sharing of information and the lack of coordination between the two ministries.

Now we find out that as we spoke, both Minister Naqvi and then-Minister Meilleur knew of Adam Capay and the horrible abuse of process that he was being subjected to. We also now know that neither of the ministers did anything about it.

Why have the Premier and her ministers denied Mr. Capay his right to a fair and expeditious hearing, and why are they adamant on denying him his day in court?

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

Hon. David Oraziotti: We're all very acutely aware of the challenges of getting to court. I think the Attorney General has been very, very clear on this particular situation. He indicated last week that the charges are extremely serious but that the crown is doing everything in its power to ensure that there is a speedy trial not only for Mr. Capay but for anybody who is in custody and remand, waiting to be tried in Ontario. So we're working on that.

As I understand, as well, we will continue to do everything we can with respect to individuals being held in our institutions, whether they be in the general population or in segregation, to ensure that the conditions in which they are placed are appropriate and meet all of the appropriate standards.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Again to the Premier: At that January meeting, I took the ministers at their word. They both seemed genuinely sincere and recognized the flaws and failings in both our prison and justice systems and they conveyed to me that it was a priority for them to fix. Now we realize nothing has been done, just like the other 43% of all criminal cases that are stayed or withdrawn before trial.

In an email to the Globe and Mail, the Attorney General said we must “ensure that we don’t influence the outcome of that prosecution in any way.” Speaker, the outcome has been influenced. Mr. Capay has been denied due process.

I want to know: Is our justice system being used to punish, to coerce and to beat people into submission, rather than to seek justice?

Hon. David Orazietti: Speaker, The accusations the individual is making are completely inappropriate. I can’t speak specifically to an individual’s case with the detail around their particular circumstances, but what I can say is that on this side of the House, our government is doing everything we can to ensure speedy trials and access to justice.

I know the Attorney General is working very hard, and the Attorney General will want to speak to this issue as well. They have added additional resources for the ability to be able to testify through video and other technology supports in our court systems—to continue to help to make investments and support speedy access to trial.

As I have indicated, as well, there are many reasons why an individual may be delayed in getting to court. But on this side of the House, the crown will do everything it can to ensure a speedy and expeditious trial.

NURSING HOME DEATHS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre.

The Chief Coroner for Ontario has just issued his annual report on deaths in our long-term-care homes. This year, the report looks at 35 such deaths, including nine tragic homicides in our nursing homes. He makes 54 recommendations to prevent future deaths and homicides. He recommends provincial standards for dementia care, including appropriate staffing levels 24/7. He recommends one-on-one care for some residents with dementia and better mental health care for all seniors. He recommends a concrete plan to address resident-to-resident violence.

Will the Premier implement the coroner’s recommendations to improve the safety and care of the residents of our long-term-care homes?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We obviously always take the reports coming from the coroner very, very seriously. I look forward to reading his report in its entirety and looking at the recommendations, particularly, obviously,

including those that were referenced. Just based on what I’ve heard, we’re already implementing and moving in the direction of some of the recommendations that the coroner has pointed to.

With regard to more supports in long-term-care homes for individuals suffering from dementia, including Alzheimer’s, we’re now providing more than \$50 million a year. We added \$10 million a year just in the most recent budget for behavioural supports in our long-term-care homes—specialized individuals who can provide the necessary support, who are trained to provide that support.

Of course, we are doing many other aspects that I know will be consistent with the recommendations of the coroner, and I’ll speak to those in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It’s hard to believe what the minister just said, that he takes the recommendations seriously, because the coroner is forced to repeat recommendations year after year because they are not being acted upon. In 2014, the chief coroner recommended that the government develop a concrete plan to address resident-on-resident violence. In 2015, the coroner made the same recommendation. In 2016, the chief coroner has just repeated the exact same recommendation yet again.

Every resident of long-term-care homes should be safe. Every worker in our long-term-care homes should be safe. That’s the bottom line. That’s what the chief coroner tells them to do.

When will the government act on the chief coroner’s recommendations to improve safety and oversight of all of our long-term-care residents? Because you know what, Speaker? From where I’m sitting right now, it looks like they don’t care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, we are making changes and improvements all the time with regard to the safety and security of Ontarians in long-term-care homes. Through a variety of ways, just since 2008, we have funded an additional 2,500 personal support workers and 2,100 nurses who are now working in our long-term-care homes.

The behavioural supports that I talked about: We have a specialized program which involves nurse practitioners—the highest level of training among our nurses in long-term-care homes. We’ve doubled our funding since coming into office in terms of the support that we’re providing. And we are constantly looking at ways that we can provide additional care, as well as continuing to ensure the safety and security of our nurses.

Again, I’ll be looking at the coroner’s report and the recommendations in some detail.

TREATIES RECOGNITION

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

Our great province is made up of 46 treaties and other agreements with indigenous peoples, setting out the

rights, responsibilities and relationships of First Nations, the federal government and Ontario.

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Last May, the Premier apologized for Ontario's role in the legacy of residential schools and affirmed our government's commitment to reconciliation with our indigenous peoples. As part of that we announced, through the Journey Together, initiatives to revitalize treaty relationships and promote public awareness of treaties.

Can the minister please tell us more about what the government is doing to broaden public understanding of the importance of treaties?

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, last May I tabled legislation in this House to declare the first full week of November every year as Treaties Recognition Week. Thanks to the support it received from all three parties, next week we'll celebrate the first annual Treaties Recognition Week in Ontario. In doing so, we are taking very important steps towards reconciliation with indigenous peoples.

To support treaties week, we've asked indigenous partners to identify speakers to visit schools and libraries across Ontario to share their perspectives on treaties. There are more than 50 different events happening throughout the province, and I encourage all members and the public to join me and others and take part in an event in their local community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's wonderful to hear that by celebrating Treaties Recognition Week, we're creating opportunities for Ontarians of all ages, especially students, to learn about the importance of treaties and our shared history with indigenous peoples. This supports and sustains our government's efforts to achieve reconciliation.

The minister mentioned that our government is helping schools plan activities during the week to enable teachers to incorporate treaties into their lesson plans. I note that we've also committed to incorporating treaties into the education curriculum, and I can attest that schools in Etobicoke-Lakeshore proudly display the treaty map in every school.

Can the minister please elaborate on the initiatives our government is taking to promote a broader understanding of treaties in schools?

Hon. David Zimmer: Minister of Education.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore for this very important question.

We believe that all students, both indigenous and non-indigenous, are enriched by learning about the histories, cultures, contributions and perspectives of First Nations, Métis people and Inuit in Canada. That's why we're working with indigenous partners to enhance the Ontario curriculum to incorporate mandatory learning about residential schools, the legacy of colonialism and the rights and responsibilities we all have to each other as treaty people.

To mark Treaties Recognition Week, educators will have access to online resources to help teach students

about treaties and how they are relevant today. We have also asked indigenous partners to identify speakers who could go into Ontario schools and share their perspective on treaties.

We're committed to working with indigenous partners on this shared path to support reconciliation. I thank all members for supporting Treaties Recognition Week.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question today is for the Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Over the last several weeks, I have questioned the minister about the plight of small manufacturers struggling with expensive energy bills. He responded by talking about the taxpayer money his government has handed out to some of the biggest companies in North America.

With a provincial debt that recently blew past \$300 billion, the minister can't possibly intend to subsidize our entire economy into prosperity. Although they are unable to donate at the same level, small companies are facing the same obstacles as large multinationals: incredibly high energy costs, incoming cap-and-trade and onerous regulations.

Speaker, can the minister explain why his government thinks corporate grants to the largest companies—by invitation only—is a better plan for our economy than creating a level playing field where businesses of all sizes can be competitive and succeed?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for the question because I really do appreciate the opportunity to respond to it.

Since 2004, we've invested over \$1.7 billion in supports for business—\$1.7 billion that we've invested. Some \$16 billion has been added to our economy as a result of those investments; 70,000 jobs have been created or retained. Oshawa exists because of these—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: I know the member and his leader do not support our auto sector. I know that their preference would have been to see that auto sector wither and die. They said that, Mr. Speaker, so it's absolutely true: They would have let those plants close.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we're not going to let those plants close. We're going to partner with our auto sector. We're going to partner with the manufacturers. We're going to reduce regulatory burdens for our businesses. We're going to maintain a competitive environment for investment and we're going to keep—

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the minister: Small-sized companies are describing this government's policies as "death by a thousand cuts." Some 80% of manufacturers in this province employ 50 people or less. They can't afford to lobby this government, and they

don't have the resources to deal with all the problems this government throws at them.

Speaker, one company I spoke with was told they would need to spend over \$60,000 to evaluate their plant emissions, and then freeze operations for three years while they waited for the ministry to review the report. If they needed to make changes to operations within that time, they were told by this government that they should just hire a lawyer.

Minister, the first step to finding a solution is admitting that you have a problem. When will the minister finally acknowledge that this government is placing an unreasonable burden on small- and medium-sized businesses? Or will he continue to insist that he knows more about the business of these companies than the owners do?

Hon. Brad Duguid: This government has been passionately tackling that regulatory burden that the member correctly refers to. We do need to continue to reduce regulatory burden. We'll ask the member opposite and other members of the Legislature. We're open to their feedback.

We work very closely with our business community on this. What have we achieved so far? Some 80,000 regulatory burdens have been reduced or eliminated between 2008 and 2010. In a recent report, \$88 million has been saved for businesses. That's 2.8 million hours on the job that we've saved for our small businesses because of Open for Business.

But there's more work to do. That's why we set up our Red Tape Challenge, so we can reach out in particular to small- and medium-sized businesses, and 25% to 26% of the respondents to that have been those small businesses that we're targeting.

Do we have more work to do? Yes we do, and—

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

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. This province's justice system is in a mess. This province has been under 13 years of Liberal rule, and for four of those years, Mr. Adam Capay has spent his time in custody in solitary confinement with 24-hours-a-day artificial light. This is simply appalling.

First the Human Rights Commissioner, and now other constitutional and human rights experts have said that these conditions amount to the international definition of torture—torture, Mr. Speaker. How can the Premier and the minister be okay with that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have said repeatedly in this House and outside of this House that the situation is unacceptable, that the status quo is unacceptable, which is why we are making changes. We have already made changes in terms of the weekly reviews, in terms of the number of days in segregation. It's unacceptable.

We have challenges in the corrections service that must be addressed. The Minister of Community Safety

and Correctional Services has it as part of his mandate to tackle those, including doing a review specifically of the issues surrounding segregation.

I know the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services will want to speak in the supplementary, but I just want to be clear that the status quo is not acceptable. We have been making changes, but there is more that we have to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Saying that it's unacceptable without doing anything is meaningless. Without any real action, it's meaningless. What makes it worse is that Mr. Capay wasn't moved out of solitary confinement for compassionate grounds. It was because of a renovation.

The protocols are very clear. The minister on the file will receive a report on the isolation of Mr. Capay at least 25 times over four years. That's 25 times receiving a report. The question is, what did those reports say about the conditions of Mr. Capay and what did the minister do about those conditions?

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

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Community Services and Correctional—

Hon. David Oraziotti: I appreciate the question—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Can I finish introducing you first before you start?

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Hon. David Oraziotti: I'm sorry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. David Oraziotti: Sorry, Speaker. Thank you.

To the member opposite: We take these issues very, very seriously. The conditions that have been identified and brought to my attention are unacceptable in Ontario. We are working to do everything we can to immediately address issues of segregation that do not meet standards that we all expect.

The use of segregation in Ontario facilities has been a long-standing practice, decades and decades old. All governments in this Legislature, all parties, know that at times, when they were in government, the use of segregation has been a practice that has been used. We want to make sure that the conditions that anyone is in while in segregation are appropriate and are fitting.

We are committing to a full, independent review of segregation. Just last week I announced other changes to segregation that will help to improve the conditions of anyone in segregation in Ontario.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is to the minister responsible for women's issues. This month was Women's History Month, a time when we recognize the important role women have played in our rich history, the amazing triumphs we have made and the many obstacles we have overcome to achieve equality. I am honoured every day to serve as the first elected female MPP in the

riding of Davenport under the first female Premier of Ontario, Kathleen Wynne. I want to thank Margaret Birch, who joins us here today, for paving the way for women in politics.

I know we have made great progress for the empowerment and representation of women in leadership roles, but there is still more work that can be done. Mr. Speaker, could the minister please share with the House the hard work being done to increase the representation of women in leadership positions in this province?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Davenport for this very important question. Earlier this month, of course, we celebrated Persons Day, marking the milestone of women's history where women finally got recognized as persons under the law, allowing women to sit in the Canadian senate. But almost 100 years later, Speaker, women continue to fight for equal representation across the world. Our government is a leader on this front and we've taken strong action to further empower women and increase the number of women in leadership roles. We're encouraging businesses to set targets of 30% women on their boards of directors. Just this morning, the Minister of Finance and I met with our women in business steering committee. We have set a clear target of 40% of women in all provincial agencies and public entities by 2019.

Our Premier, of course, is leading by example by naming her cabinet of 40% women earlier this year. Increasing the number of women in boards and senior management positions is good for the economy, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I would like to thank the minister for her answer. I am proud of Ontario's leadership and recognize the important work being done to shatter the glass ceiling for women leaders in Ontario.

The gender wage gap has been in the media quite a bit recently, and it seems like global progress on closing the gap is not as fast as we had hoped. While I find this global trend concerning, I know that Ontario is taking great efforts to close the gender wage gap at a much faster rate. Mr. Speaker, could the minister share with the House what leadership our government is taking to continue the narrowing of the gender wage gap in Ontario?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Again, I want to thank the member for the question. Our government is indeed taking strong action to promote gender equality and close the gender wage gap. Our gender wage gap steering committee's report made a number of recommendations on how to do this. Minister Flynn—the Minister of Labour—and I are taking action. To this end, we are making the OPS, Ontario Public Service, salary range data available by gender. We're ensuring that a gender lens is brought to the development of all government policies and programs to further promote the empowerment of women in every government decision.

The wage difference between men and women in the Ontario Public Service was down to 12% in 2015, from 16.5% in 2008. While this shows there's still much more work to be done, it also shows the work we are doing is

making a difference and that we're moving forward to an Ontario where women and men are paid equally.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Premier. Thirteen years ago, the Ontario Human Rights Commission's ground-breaking report showed that students with disabilities face far too many unfair barriers in our society. Sadly, as a result, people with disabilities face very high unemployment rates that former Lieutenant Governor, David Onley, your accessibility adviser, calls "a national shame."

There are 334,000 students with special education needs in Ontario-funded schools, one of every six students. This government has no comprehensive plan to ensure that our education system will become fully accessible by 2025, as the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act requires. The AODA Alliance has pressed you for over half a decade to agree to develop an education accessibility standard under the AODA to tackle these barriers. It's a great idea. Will you agree now to do this?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Education is going to want to comment, but I want to tell the member opposite that I had the opportunity to meet with David Lepofsky, actually, and with the minister responsible for people with disabilities. We had a very good conversation about the education standard.

As the member will know—or may not know—there is a health standard that is being developed right now. That was one of the things that the AODA had been advocating up until this time. As I say, we had a very good conversation about the education standard.

I know that the Minister of Education and the minister responsible for people with disabilities are having a conversation about how we might move forward with that. I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the Premier: You've been having lots of conversations but there's still a lot that needs to be done. Ontario is not on schedule for full accessibility by 2025, the deadline this Legislature set.

The Toronto Star recently reported that new accessibility barriers are still being built in new buildings in Ontario, including on university campuses. The renovated Osgoode Hall Law School is much harder for a blind person to get around than it was before it was renovated. The new Ryerson Student Learning Centre has a student area that requires students with disabilities to climb steps they can't climb. This violates the Premier's promise that public money would never be used to create new barriers against people with disabilities. Recent Ontario Building Code changes don't solve this problem.

Will this government agree that Ontarians with disabilities need an educational accessibility standard to do what the Premier's throne speech promised: to build up Ontario for all Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister responsible for accessibility.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member for the question. You know, I'm pretty proud to be the first Ontario minister responsible for accessibility in this province.

It's very important to remember that Ontario is a leader in accessibility. Ontario was the first to move to a modern regulatory regime that mandates accessibility reporting, the first that requires staff to be actually trained in accessibility, and the first in Canada with legislation that sets out clear goals for accessibility by 2025. That's in all aspects of daily living, whether it's transportation, whether it's employment, whether it's our buildings and our built environment, whether it's the information and communication systems we use. It's important that everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential and that barriers be removed for persons with disabilities so they, too, can have full participation in our daily—

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

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. Recently, the federal Liberal finance minister told a room full of Ontario party faithful that the future of work in this country under his watch is to be precarious, part-time, temporary and without guarantees or benefits—what a pep talk. The Prime Minister then repeated the very same sentiment, as has the Premier's privacy czar and principal adviser, Ed Clark. Don't plan on good-paying jobs with a stable future is what they're saying to young people entering the workforce. Does the Premier agree with this sentiment?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: On this side of the House what we are working on is actually working with businesses and working with communities to create those well-paying jobs. We're seeing investment in this province, whether it's in the auto sector, whether it's in aerospace or whether it's agri-food. We are seeing investments and an expansion of businesses that is creating jobs.

There is a global reality that the nature of work has changed. That is a reality.

I'm not going to judge the comments of either the federal finance minister or the Prime Minister, but what I know is that what our government is doing is we're working with businesses. We're creating jobs together and we, as a government, are creating the conditions that allow those businesses to thrive.

Ontario is one of the leading economies in the country in terms of job creation and growth. That's something to be proud of. I hope the member opposite feels the same way.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham and the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, come to order.

Supplementary, please.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Here's the reality: Youth unemployment has stayed at record highs, as high as 17% in

some areas. Young people at the start of their working lives want to be able to afford and pay their bills, pay their rent, and they need relief from their student loans to be able to plan for their future.

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Does the Premier agree with her federal cousins and Ed Clark that young Ontarians should just get used to precarious employment?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: What we agree with is the need to ensure that we're preparing Ontario's youth and Ontario's economy to take on a fiercely competitive, fast, disrupting global economy. We've got to do the work to get there because we have a responsibility, and so do the members opposite, to pass an economy on to the next generation that we can be proud to pass on to that next generation.

Yes, we have a lot of work to do to get there, and we're determined to do that. Putting our heads in the sand and pretending that the world isn't changing is going to do a disservice to every young boy and girl, man and woman in this province.

We're going to take on that global economy. We're going to make sure that Ontario is leading the disruption rather than being swept up in it. We're determined to get that done because we're going to pass on to the next generation a strong economy so that we can be proud of the fact that we've done them justice.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Harinder Malhi: My question is for the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development. Last week, I was proud to celebrate with you when you announced the second round of calls for proposals for major capacity expansion, calling for two new post-secondary sites, one in Milton and one in my hometown of Brampton.

This presents an excellent opportunity for a university to partner with a college, the community and businesses to bring further innovation and benefits to Peel and Halton regions. Can the minister tell us more about this exciting call for proposals and when we can expect to know more about these post-secondary sites?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Brampton–Springdale for this really important question.

If we want to have innovative and top-notch graduates leading our province, then we need to provide innovative, top-notch environments where students can learn. That's what our government has been working on.

In May of last year, we announced a new York University–Seneca College campus in Markham. Last week, we announced that we're moving forward with two new post-secondary sites in Brampton and in Milton. We'll launch a formal call for proposals in January 2017, and we'll announce the successful bids by the fall of 2017. We're investing up to \$180 million to create these

post-secondary sites. We're very excited about how they'll improve not only those two communities, but the province as a whole.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Thank you to the minister for her answer. We know that Brampton and Milton are two of the fastest-growing communities in Ontario, and we can expect great young talent to continue to emerge from those areas. That's why I was encouraged to see that this call for proposals has a specific focus on programs in science, technology, arts and mathematics, or as you called it, STEAM disciplines.

Can the minister tell us more about what we are seeking for these post-secondary sites?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we recently received some excellent advice from the Premier's Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel, led by former member Sean Conway, on how to prepare for a more technology and knowledge-based economy. It was important to us that our second call for proposals for capacity expansion aligned with their advice. That's why we're looking for projects that provide students with high-quality academic research, experiential learning and entrepreneurship opportunities they need to prepare themselves for the technology and knowledge-based jobs of today and tomorrow.

We'll succeed when we all work together. That's why we're expecting universities to work with college partnerships, with businesses and with local communities in Brampton and Milton to develop innovative proposals for these new sites. We're looking forward to seeing those proposals as they come forward, and we'll work with them to make sure we get the very, very best new opportunities in Brampton and in Milton.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is for the Premier. Last week, the Environmental Commissioner released her annual report, where she highlighted the fact that the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change has not completed Environmental Bill of Rights reviews going back as far as 2009. Not only that, she noted that even when MOECC completes environmental reviews, the department does not deliver on the commitments it makes. For example, just this past August, Ontarians were not informed when raw sewage was dumped into the Toronto harbour again, for the second summer in a row, despite the government's assurances the public would be informed.

The Environmental Commissioner says it's going to take time for this ministry to earn Ontarians' trust when it comes to respecting and protecting the environment. Premier, when will your minister commit to taking real action when it comes to protecting the environmental rights of Ontarians?

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I think the member opposite knows—I guess she wasn't at the press conference where

the Environmental Commissioner actually complimented the ministry on the amazing progress that it has made. In fact, 525 of those files were closed in the last year, which is a record, I think, in the history of the province. We're down from well over—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member asked the question. I think she should try to listen to the answer.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No other comments are necessary, thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: —which I think is just about a record for this ministry in catching up. We're about 200 behind right now, which is about the best it's been.

The second thing is that we have posted, as the member opposite would know, a complete review of the EBR. Right now, we are working broadly with business and communities to update what has been some of Canada's most groundbreaking legislation in environmental rights.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Perhaps the minister hasn't even looked at the report title. It's called Small Steps.

Anyway, again, back to the Premier: Her government is not respecting Ontarians' environmental rights and ignores complaints registered on the EBR, the only avenue that people have to register their concerns. The ministry has not cleared its backlog. For goodness' sakes, the environmental registry itself is so far behind that it still runs on DOS. How archaic is that, Speaker?

Just recently, a freedom-of-information request to the Ministry of the Environment revealed there is a backlog of 2,700 files regarding unresolved noise complaints related to industrial wind turbines from over the last 10 years. When will this Premier put Ontarians first and finally commit to ensuring that all complaints registered on the EBR are respected and responded to?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I did just close by saying that we are now out consulting on a complete revision of the EBR. And actually, the member opposite is wrong. The EBR does not run on DOS and hasn't run on DOS for a long time. Just in the last year made a major investment in the information technology. And as she knows, because I know she watches our procurement, we are now making another major investment in the ministry's information technology and rewriting and redesigning the EBR.

I don't know why she didn't ask that question a year ago or two years ago, or why it always takes the Environmental Commissioner to do the member's job for her. But I do want to point out the zero waste bill, Bill 151, and the cap-and-trade climate change bill, the Great Lakes Protection Act, work on pesticides and work on groundwater—I don't think there have been two years where we've done this kind of work since Jim Bradley was the environment minister. This has been a very busy—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now the member is getting testy.

New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier. Earlier this year we learned that enrolment for the Ontario Electricity Support Program was only 25% of eligible families. Now we have found that the government has excluded even more low-income families by refusing to grant enrolment for anyone living in a unit that is not individually metered.

I have seniors on low fixed incomes calling my office and telling me they are struggling with increased hydro costs. They don't qualify for OESP because their building's hydro bill is split among residents. They are living in energy poverty. They are struggling with high, rising hydro costs and they are below the income cut-off.

The Ontario Electricity Support Program excludes so many people, including seniors and others living on fixed incomes. When will the government fix the OESP to ensure that all low-income families can benefit?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I thank the honourable member for the question. I know there are some specifics that she brought up. While I can't speak to the specifics, what I can talk about is the OESP and the great work that it's been doing since it started—it'll be 11 months tomorrow.

This program is getting about 14,000 families and seniors applying for this program. We do want to see more families on this program, and that's why we continue to spend money on advertising. It's a great program for it, and that's why we're making sure that we send more of these brochures to the opposition offices, to make sure that they can talk to their constituents about it because \$45 a month, for some families, goes a long way. For seniors and those families who heat their homes with electricity, they can apply and get up to \$75, and that's something we're happy to see.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no deferred votes, this House stands—one moment, please.

PAUL DEMERS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order. The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Je crois que nous avons le consentement unanime pour observer une minute de silence à la mémoire du chanteur Paul Demers, qui a marqué la culture franco-ontarienne et a inspiré un peuple à prendre notre place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member is seeking unanimous consent for a moment of silence. Do we agree? Agreed.

Please rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1202 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to welcome once again my friends and premier volunteers from Thornhill, Ari Moghimi and Willem Hart, as well as my niece Ella Gladstone Martin, who is on her way here right now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

It's now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise in support of parents, students and rural communities in a desperate fight to save their schools. Ten schools in Leeds–Grenville are among 29 identified for closure by the Upper Canada District School Board. Hundreds more are at risk in communities across Ontario. This is not just about saving individual schools. It's a fight for the future of rural education and the ability of students to learn close to where they live.

Last week, I wrote the Minister of Education and called on her to do two things: Restore the top-up funding they cut to put so many schools on the chopping block and suspend the rigged process this government manipulated to allow boards to fast-track closures. I've also asked the Upper Canada trustees to support my request by resolution and to suspend their accommodation review.

I will not allow this government to sit on the sidelines as communities are thrown into turmoil. No one disputes the need to discuss the future of education in a time of declining enrolment but we demand a fair process. Let's take the target off schools and work with parents, boards, municipalities and MPPs from all parties to develop a long-term solution.

If this government chooses to sit back and allow these schools to close, it will be too late. If they value rural education, they must act now. Thousands of parents and students await a response.

ADAM CAPAY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Few things and issues have galvanized Ontarians like the plight of the young indigenous inmate Adam Capay. Adam, 23 years old, has been in solitary confinement in an Ontario provincial prison for four years. He is housed alone in a basement at the end of a long corridor in a cell sheathed in Plexiglas. The lights are on 24 hours a day. They found him, in fact, to have memory, orientation and speech problems brought on by his prison conditions—prison conditions, by the way, that are considered torture by the UN and others.

He is also legally innocent. He was charged with first degree murder in 2012 but he has not been tried. The Supreme Court of Canada says that any delay between the laying of charges and the completion of trial longer than 30 months is a violation of an accused person's charter right to be tried within a reasonable time. He's been held without trial for 52 months.

We give thanks to the prison guard who brought his plight to the attention of Ontario's chief human rights commissioner, but it shouldn't have to take that. This is egregious. This makes us look terrible on a world stage. This is terrible, and the public demand is that the inhuman treatment of him—that he be released from solitary and given medical care by the end of this week, not just for an interim period, and that those who allowed this to happen be held to account.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to share with this House much-anticipated and exciting news. On October 26, the constituents of my great riding of Mississauga–Brampton South and surrounding communities learned that our government will be bringing a university-led post-secondary site to Brampton. This initiative by our government is significant as it will pave the way for coming generations toward a better and brighter future through higher learning.

The institution's main focus will be on science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics. As Ontario moves towards a technology- and knowledge-based economy, this institution will prepare students for jobs of today and jobs of tomorrow and offer them opportunities for training and skills development needed for leading sectors of our economy. This institution will also address the needs of an underserved but fast-growing population area and ensure that students find more educational opportunities closer to home.

Bramptonians are excited about our government's initiative towards building dynamic and vibrant communities, and great places to live, work and study.

MEAFORD SCARECROW INVASION AND FAMILY FESTIVAL

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise today to offer congratulations and appreciation to Marilyn Morris, her organizing committee and volunteers who ensured that the 20th annual Meaford Scarecrow Invasion and Family Festival was a huge success in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Three hundred scarecrows took to the streets on September 30 in celebration of the fall harvest. The town was decorated to the nines, with scarecrows hanging from every streetlight and pole in the community. The OPP Golden Helmets motorcycle riders even had scarecrows adorning their bikes during their performance.

Since its inception in 1996, this family event has become a popular destination for locals and tourists, and

has received both community and provincial awards ranking as one of Ontario's top events. All the hard work and dedication by the organizers and hundreds of volunteers, the generosity of sponsors and the enthusiasm of the entire community is the reason why the Scarecrow Invasion and Family Festival has earned this recognition over the past 20 years.

In 2002, the scarecrow invasion tried to challenge the record for most scarecrows in the Guinness Book of World Records. Meaford created 2,211 scarecrows, but the record was not achieved. Now in its 20th year, the invasion has 300 volunteers dedicating over 3,000 hours.

I would also like to pay special tribute to a Meaford businessman who was honoured for his role in starting the scarecrow invasion 20 years ago. George Potopnyk was one of the 60 to 70 guests attending the 20th anniversary of the Scarecrow Invasion and Family Festival in the gallery of Meaford Hall. I invite the House to join me in congratulating Marilyn Morris, George Potopnyk and the entire Meaford community for ensuring the Meaford Scarecrow Invasion and Family Festival achieved top honours, and wish them much continued success.

POSITIVE VOICE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm honoured to speak today about a pilot project happening in my riding. The program is called Positive Voice, and it has been organized by the staff at the Nokee Kwe employment and education centre in London–Fanshawe.

The main philosophy of the program aims to provide a safe space for the mentorship and empowerment of urban aboriginal women. The organizers achieve this through assisting aboriginal women in developing positive life narratives and positive community connections through the use of media and technologies. The program helps to empower women participants as they transition into different educational or employment opportunities.

I recently visited the centre and attended one of their sessions. I was immediately impressed and captivated by the women I met and the enormous impact the program has on their lives. The women I met came from different places and backgrounds. They ranged in age from their early twenties to their fifties. They had all overcome their own individual adversities, but they all shared a common goal to succeed in the next chapter of their lives. It was clear this new program was helping them to do just that.

I would like to commend Nokee Kwe and the organizers of the Positive Voice program for providing women the opportunity to share their stories, develop their skills and find the confidence in their ability to succeed.

OSSINGTON PENTECOSTAL CHURCH

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I rise today to extend my congratulations and best wishes to Ossington Pentecostal Church from my riding of Davenport. They'll be celebrating their 60th anniversary this weekend. In particular I would like to congratulate the congregation, who will

be holding a fantastic celebration with a mass and a reception.

Ossington Pentecostal Church is a member of the Canadian Assemblies of God, and are a biblically centred congregation of believers who come from a wide variety of nationalities and cultures, yet they all share one thing in common: They worship Jesus Christ.

The founding congregation of the Ossington Pentecostal Church was a part of the first Italian work in 1922 that was called the Assemblea Cristiana under the combined leadership of Reverend Ferdinando Zaffuto and Reverend Luigi Ippolito. In 1956, a group from Assemblea Cristiana built and established the church that exists today located at 686 Ossington Avenue.

In February 2003, Reverend David Quackenbush joined Ossington Pentecostal Church to shepherd the congregation.

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Today, all sorts of people join this church in prayer on Sundays. Currently, the facility is undergoing renovations to accommodate and better service the members of the community.

As the member of provincial Parliament for Davenport, I'm privileged to represent a number of very active and engaged constituents, including the religious community of Ossington Pentecostal Church. I want to thank them and the congregation for their commitment to our community.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mrs. Gila Martow: We're all wearing our poppies today. It's so wonderful to see. Remembrance Day is next week. It's a sad and solemn time, but it really brings communities together.

I want to read a poem. Actually, it's a song, but I'm going to spare you my singing voice. I know we're not allowed to sing here, Mr. Speaker. It's by my niece Ella Gladstone Martin, and it's called Don't Let Me Be Forgotten.

Poppies don't grow on hidden graves.
Am I only worth something when I can be brave?
We can't surrender, Lest we regret.
We must remember lest we forget.

Don't let me be forgotten
Don't let me fall behind
'Cause there's no runnin' from the battle Waging
inside my mind

These wounds take time to heal, Before my scars can
just scab and peel

Don't ask me why I do not know
It's much too soon to say goodbye
But you just stand there and watch me go

Don't let me be forgotten
Don't let me fall behind

'Cause there's no runnin' from the battle Waging
inside my mind

I put you first, now aren't I worth just a bit of your
time?

If you give me your hand I will give you mine.

Don't let me be forgotten, Don't let me fall behind
'Cause there's no runnin' from the battle Waging
inside my mind

So let's all remember today and next week—hopefully, we're going to be bringing forward this week to have Remembrance Week, as the schools and the Legions often do commemorate things for the whole week of Remembrance Day. Let's remember. Let's not forget. And let's remember also what they were fighting for: our democracy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My compliments to your niece.

MOOSE MANAGEMENT

Mr. John Vanthof: For the first time in my time in the Legislature I'm going to quote a Toronto Star headline: "Mighty Ontario Moose Need Our Help to Survive."

As the representative of a people for whom moose hunting is part of our culture, I think moose hunters across the province—no one wants the long-term survival of the moose more than the population who have hunting as part of their heritage.

It's not all the government's fault, but there are some things that the government could do immediately to help with this. It is a crisis.

The first thing is adequately fund the MNR. In my part of the world, we have two conservation officers over 50 townships. You cannot manage a wildlife population when you're spread so thin.

The MNR has to take steps to actually make accurate counts of the moose. In unit 28, the most heavily hunted area, there's supposed to be a count every three years; they did it over five years. Again, this is a crisis. We need to spend the time and the money to do this right. All moose harvested should be reported, regardless of who harvests them.

There's kind of a funny line in here. It says that in some parts of the province, moose used to be so plentiful that there are road signs warning against drivers hitting them. I can assure you there's still moose because I hit one a month ago, and I'd like to thank Frank and Eveline Bourassa for saving the meat and for cooking me some great meat pies.

JOSEPH GALLUZZO

Mr. Mike Colle: I rise today to give tribute to one of our long-time staff support workers who has worked here for 20 years: Joseph Galluzzo. I knew him when he used to own a grocery store at Scarlett Road and Eglinton. He

did that with his brother for many years; then he came on here to work in the precinct properties branch. He is one of the many incredible, dedicated workers we have here who take care of our heating, our cleaning, our plumbing and our furniture removal and setup. We've got a real crew of dedicated, professional support staff here at Queen's Park, and Joe has been one of them. He has loved every day that he's been here. As you run into Joe in the hallways, he's always got a smile on his face; he's always happy to work.

One thing I mention about Joe too is that he, along with the other staff workers here, do the same work as the staff support workers at city hall in Toronto down the road, yet they make \$5 to \$10 less an hour than people doing the same work down the street, and I think we should all be cognizant of that, especially the Board of Internal Economy. Sure, we've had a wage freeze here for seven years, but it's not right to freeze the wages of the workers and the support staff. It's about time we gave them a decent wage for the work they do, as the workers get down the street.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I have nothing but admiration for Joe, as well, and we wish him well in his retirement.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Scarborough–Rouge River on a point of order.

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I'm very, very happy to welcome students from my riding. They are grade 5, from C.D. Farquharson Junior Public School. I hope all the students have a great experience at the Ontario provincial Parliament, in the House.

PETITIONS

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I'm pleased to sign and give this petition to the page.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to read this petition into the House. It reads:

"Hydro One Not for Sale!

"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 couldn't agree with this more, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to affix my name to it and give it to page Dylan to bring to the Clerk.

GO TRANSIT

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

"Whereas Cambridge, Ontario, is a municipality of over 125,000 people, many of whom commute into the greater Toronto area daily;

"Whereas the current commuting options available for travel between the Waterloo region and the GTA are inefficient and time-consuming, as well as environmentally damaging;

"Whereas the residents of Cambridge and the Waterloo region believe that they would be well-served by commuter rail transit that connects the region to the Milton line, and that this infrastructure would have

positive, tangible economic benefits to the province of Ontario;

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

"Direct crown agency Metrolinx to commission a feasibility study into building a rail line that connects the city of Cambridge to the GO train station in Milton, and to complete this study in a timely manner and communicate the results to the municipal government of Cambridge."

1320

I agree with this petition and will affix my name and send it to the table with page Elisabeth.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Robert Bailey: I have a petition here that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there is a growing energy affordability crisis in Ontario; and

"Whereas the government's proposed hydro rebate is a band-aid solution that's simply too little, too late;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the Liberal government to take immediate action to give the people of Ontario real relief from high energy bills."

I agree with this petition and will affix my name to the same and send it down with Riya.

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 page Bianca to deliver.

LUNG HEALTH

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas lung disease affects 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario;

"Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths ... lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

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

"One in five Ontario schoolchildren has asthma;

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

"To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a lung health advisory council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues; and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario lung health action plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

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

I support this petition, affix my signature to it and hand it to page Paige.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have an important petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Whereas the billion-dollar gas plants cancellation, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020; and

"Whereas the Liberal government wasted \$2 billion on the flawed smart meter program; and

"Whereas the recent announcement to implement the Ontario Electricity Support Program will see average household hydro bills increase an additional \$137 per year starting in 2016; and

"Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

"Whereas home heating and electricity are a necessity for families in Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario's power consumers, including

families, farmers and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity.”

I affix my name to this petition.

CHILD CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to thank my supporter Dorise Desrochers from Chelmsford in my riding for signing the petition from the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 commits Ontario to ‘a system of responsive, safe, high-quality and accessible child care and early years programs and services that will support parents and families, and will contribute to the healthy development of children’;

“Whereas recent community opposition to Ontario’s child care regulation proposals indicates that a new direction for child care is necessary to address issues of access, quality, funding, system building, planning and workforce development;

“Whereas Ontario’s Gender Wage Gap Strategy consultation found ‘child care was the number one issue everywhere’ and ‘participants called for public funding and support that provides both adequate wages and affordable fees’;

“Whereas the federal government’s commitment to a National Early Learning and Child Care Framework provides an excellent opportunity for Ontario to take leadership and work collaboratively to move forward on developing a universal, high-quality, comprehensive child care system in Ontario;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To undertake a transparent policy process with the clear goal of developing a universal early childhood education and child care system where all families can access quality child care programs; and

“To publicly declare their commitment to take leadership in developing a national child care plan with the federal government that adopts the principles of universality, high-quality and comprehensiveness.”

I’m happy to support this petition, and I’ll ask page Cooper to bring it to the Clerk.

HOME INSPECTION INDUSTRY

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition that’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the home inspector industry remains largely unregulated; and

“Whereas homeowners are increasingly reliant on home inspectors to make an educated home purchase; and

“Whereas the unregulated industry poses a risk to consumers;

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

“To protect consumers by regulating the home inspection industry and licensing home inspectors.”

I agree with this petition and will affix my name and send it to the table with page Dylan.

HIGHWAY RAMPS

Mrs. Julia Munro: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the town of Bradford West Gwillimbury will continue to have robust growth of population and commercial activity in proximity to the Holland Marsh,” also known as Ontario’s salad bowl, “which consists of 7,000 acres of specialty crop area lands designated in the provincial Greenbelt Plan and is situated along the municipal boundary between King township and the town of Bradford West Gwillimbury, as bisected by Highway 400;

“Whereas the Canal Road ramps at Highway 400 provide critical access for farm operations within the Holland Marsh allowing for efficient transport of produce to market, delivery of materials and equipment and patronage of on-farm commercial activities; and

“Whereas the loss of that critical access to Highway 400 may threaten the significant financial benefits that the Holland Marsh contributes to the Ontario economy;

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

“That the council of the corporation of the town of Bradford West Gwillimbury hereby advises the Honourable Steven Del Duca, Minister of Transportation, that the town does not support the elimination of the Canal Road ramps at Highway 400, and further, that the town requests that the duration of the temporary closure of Canal Road between Wist Road and Davis Road be minimized to the greatest extent possible during the Highway 400/North Canal bridge replacement project.”

I’ve affixed my signature.

LOGEMENTS POUR PERSONNES ÂGÉES

M. John Vanthof: « À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Attendu que les personnes âgées habitant au deuxième étage de la Villa Aubin située au 145 rue Holditch à Sturgeon Falls Ontario doivent utiliser l’escalier afin d’accéder à leur appartement;

« Attendu que ces personnes âgées sont confrontées à des difficultés croissantes en ce qui a trait à l’usage de ces escaliers;

« Attendu que cet accès restreint pourrait entraîner des conséquences néfastes relatives aux soins de santé, telles que l’accès avec des brancards;

« Attendu que divers paliers gouvernementaux ont annoncé du financement pour des fins de rénovations/améliorations aux logements pour personnes âgées;

« Par conséquent, nous, les soussignés, pétitionnons l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario comme suit :

« De charger le ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement à travailler avec la Société de logement du district de Nipissing afin d'obtenir du financement pour l'installation d'un ascenseur dans ce, et autres bâtiments d'accès restreint pour personnes âgées. »

I wholeheartedly agree and send the petition down with page Cooper.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

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

“Whereas the current government under Premier Kathleen Wynne is calling for the sale of up to 60% of Hydro One shares into private ownership; and

“Whereas the decision to sell the public utility was made without any public input and the deal will continue to be done in complete secrecy; and

“Whereas the loss of majority ownership in Hydro One will force ratepayers to accept whatever changes the new owners decide, such as higher rates; and

“Whereas electricity rates are already sky-high and hurting family budgets as well as businesses; and

“Whereas ratepayers will never again have independent investigations of consumer complaints, such as the Ontario Ombudsman’s damning report on failed billing; and

“Whereas the people of Ontario are the true owners of Hydro One and they do not believe the fire sale of Hydro One is in their best interest;

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

“To protect Ontario ratepayers by stopping the sale of Hydro One.”

I fully support it, will affix my name and send it with page Riya.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Miss Monique Taylor: “Petition Supporting a \$15 Minimum Wage.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas too many workers are unprotected by current minimum standards outlined in employment and labour laws; and

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

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

“Implement a minimum wage of \$15 an hour.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this. I’m going to affix my name to it and give it to page Emily to bring to the Clerk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Unfortunately, that concludes the time we have available for petitions this afternoon.

Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, on a point of order.

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to revert back to motions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Zimmer is seeking unanimous consent of the House to revert back to motions. Agreed? I heard a “no.”

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ÉLECTIONS

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 27, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to provincial elections / Projet de loi 45, Loi visant à modifier certaines lois en ce qui concerne les élections provinciales.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to ask for unanimous consent for the opposition to defer our lead.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Barrett is seeking unanimous consent of the House to allow the official opposition to defer their leadoff speech. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Haldimand–Norfolk again.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I welcome the opportunity to present some of my thoughts here today about, as was mentioned, Bill 45. The short title is Election Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016. I’d like to present some of my thoughts on voting machines, which is contained within this legislation. When I say “my thoughts”—and I think it goes without saying for all of us present in the chamber—I’m trying to present what I think people in my riding, for example, may be thinking. It’s always our challenge—what are the thoughts of 110,000 people? I have my own views. I do chat with people. I do hear a bit on the ground about voting machines and the potential advantages and disadvantages, potential for fraud.

There’s one key aspect, in my view, and I feel this applies to all of us here as elected representatives. I describe myself as an elected representative. There are other words for us, but I don’t commonly use them. I consider myself an elected representative. And what’s very, very important: As an elected representative, I have to represent the views of those who elected me—not only those who elected me but other people in the riding. Many people who come into our constit offices probably didn’t elect me—probably didn’t vote for me. I’ve

observed that over the last 21 years or so. But it's our job to represent everyone, whether they vote for us or not, obviously. Hence, it's so important, as elected representatives are chosen in the province of Ontario—two will be chosen in the coming weeks in by-elections. It's so important that we have confidence in the integrity of the processes that are used in our parliamentary democracy to choose these people.

We live in what has been designed to be a fair and open democracy. I will quote the last phrase of the Speaker's prayer: "where freedom prevails and justice rules." That phrase is very important to me. I can tell you, over the last 10 years, that phrase is very important for people in Caledonia. I was with people from Caledonia on the weekend. All they asked for, over the last 10 years, was a system, a government, an environment for them where freedom prevails and justice rules.

It actually boiled down to core values. Really, all the people in Caledonia asked for was peace, order and good government. That's all they wanted. They weren't necessarily looking for government grants or things like that in the presence of what was a very significant crisis with respect to our various institutions of not only government but also, attendant to that, policing and the court system.

As we know, each morning we commence our deliberations by praying. It has been the case for centuries, as I understand, in our British system. We have more than one prayer. I mentioned the Speaker's prayer.

Again, when I see clauses and sections in this legislation that talk about voting machines, it's incumbent on all of us to ensure that if there is a new system brought in beyond the paper ballot, beyond the time-tested issue of scrutineers counting the paper, it would obviously be plugged into electricity. That voting system has to ensure that what will continue is an environment where freedom prevails and justice rules. Anything that compromises that—I wouldn't favour this legislation if it opens up any possibility at all of fraud.

I think of the 110,000 people who live in my riding. We live along Lake Erie. Many people listen to radio coming out of Buffalo. We've always watched television coming out of Buffalo and Erie, Pennsylvania. In fact, when my children were born, my wife and I made a conscious decision. We didn't want them growing up watching television, so we had a couple of very small TV sets with rabbit ears. Some of them were black and white. My kids hate black-and-white television. The rabbit ears really didn't pick up much. We could get CHCH TV in Hamilton, and Erie, Pennsylvania, and that was about it.

As with many people in my riding, much of our information comes from US media. I get the impression that just about everybody in my riding is watching what is going on with the Republican, Democrat and other parties contest south of the border. They are hearing about the concerns with election fraud, the concerns around voting machines. The advice that is given out for people when they vote, because of this danger of fraud and somebody rigging the system—people are being

encouraged in the United States and these various—and I find the American voting system so complicated. They seem to be voting for every Tom, Dick and Harry when they go into the booth, whatever they do.

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I find it really takes me aback that people are being advised in the US elections coming up and in the advance polls—the vote-early system—to take a picture of their vote before they send it in, because there is a lack of trust. We can't go down that road, courtesy of this legislation, if there's any danger of that happening up here.

Obviously, we've got the freedom to vote for whoever we want in our free and democratic society. You can vote for a communist, you can vote for a capitalist or a socialist or a social libertarian or obviously a Liberal or a Conservative, or you don't have to vote at all. The beauty of the system is that nobody is holding a gun to your head.

We have the freedom to vote in a secret ballot—I think that's a fantastic invention—where only you and your God know what you did in that ballot booth or in those little cardboard three-fold systems. Once you walk in there, nobody is telling you how to vote—obviously not Big Brother, not your boss or your union boss or your husband or your wife or your kids. It's a secret. You vote, and you put trust in a system with your single vote.

There is that—I guess it's an old expression now—one man, one vote; now, one person, one vote. I guess we still can use the term "person"; that may change in the future as well. But you know that your vote will count. It will be counted and it will be tabulated and it will be scrutinized in a fair and neutral and objective manner.

Fraud has been present in our elections for as long as anybody can remember. We've had scrutineers for as long as you can remember. I can recall being a scrutineer—gosh, I don't know—40 or 50 years ago, probably. A neutral, objective system: no hanky-panky, no jiggery pokery or manipulation of any kind by man or machine or some kind of computerized or mathematical algorithm. We must have confidence in our elections, Speaker.

As I mentioned, during the recent US contest and going back before what's going on now, going back to the Democratic primaries, apparently there were noticeable differences—I think that's another way of saying "irregularities"—between hand-counting and machine-counting. In Brooklyn—did I pronounce that correctly?

Interjection.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes. In Brooklyn, 120,000 voters were purged—up to 10% of the votes. It was felt that it could have changed the outcome. Clinton had inflated results; Sanders had suppressed results, as we're told.

We've heard about manipulating, hacking, corruption through various election integrity groups. I can't vouch for the integrity of these particular groups. We hear this on WikiLeaks and elsewhere. I'd like to hear this from the government. I would like to hear this kind of information from expert testimony on committee. I assume there are experts in Ontario. There seem to be an awful lot of experts in the United States. We could have some of these people—statisticians and other people that spend

their life working on this kind of stuff, computer software programmers—testify before committee, probably through teleconference.

We hear about these disparities between exit polls and the tabulated results. We heard about this in New York and Arizona and California. The advice was and the message is about how crucial it is to have a paper trail, good old-fashioned paper, the kind of systems that are being used by good old-fashioned scrutineers, those people who volunteer, election after election—I can't do that kind of work myself. I would rather be out and about running from door to door, which I actually have been doing up until about an hour and a half ago down in Niagara West—Glanbrook. There's a fellow running down there who has certainly motivated me to get down there and beat the bushes. Anyone else down there door-knocking?

Interjection.

Mr. Toby Barrett: If you're going to comment, maybe get down there and door-knock as well.

Miss Monique Taylor: I will, on my own time.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Put your boots on the ground. Get involved. We've only got two weeks left.

Paper trails are very important; hand-counting is very important, as it always has been—and not doing an audit, not doing a kind of evaluation by running the ballots through another machine. No; count them. Have paper trails. Or maybe we'd have to rely on another backup—belt and suspenders—taking a photograph of everyone if there is going to be that much lack of trust in the system. Post-election audits are important, however this may be done.

I was reading, on the weekend, statisticians who look at these kinds of things. They say, “The data indicates the footprint of manipulation ... and calls into question the validity of the reported results.” That's a long way of saying that it has been manipulated or has been rigged. Where does the future lie for our voting system? Is it voting machines? After we bring in voting machines, where does the future lie? Does it lie in going back to paper?

Some European countries actually are ahead of us, in the sense that they brought in voting machines. Something like seven or nine European countries—again, this is just what I read; I didn't go over there and monitor the results—have banned the machines. They've gone back to paper. A high court in Germany—this was back in 2009—ordered the banning of election machines. So where does the future lie in Ontario? A number of European countries are getting rid of these electronic machines. Machines, it's felt, can change the results of elections without leaving a trace—hacking the system, controlling the server software itself, leaving it open to internal threats or external threats.

On the weekend, I had a chance to chat with a fellow who has a computer software company. Actually, he worked here at Queen's Park. He was staff with former MPP Peter Preston. Peter represented the Brant-Haldimand area from 1995-99. It was a bit of a sad

occasion yesterday to attend the funeral of a former MPP. I had a chance to chat with his staff. I think, like many of us, our success lies in our staff. So I asked this fellow. He knows a bit about elections. He obviously knows a lot about computer software. He said that computer software is designed and entered by human beings so there are always problems with computer software—at minimum, human error. We may all aspire in the future to see surgery done by computers. As an expert in the field, he has reservations because mistakes are made in the software. That mistake can get translated down the road. It may be a tiny, tiny, incremental mistake. The knife misses your spleen by a—

Interjection.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I won't get into any—who knows of all the permutations and combinations that could occur on the operating table?

I don't dwell on issues of statistics and what have you. To get a degree in economics, I had to take a course in statistics. It was not my favourite subject; it was second only to accounting. I actually got out of taking that one. But things can be manipulated. I knew I was not destined to be a statistician. I also knew, and I worked out the odds, that the chances of me getting more than 30%—to get more than 30 out of 100 on this statistics course—were pretty well zero. But I had to pass this test.

1350

I used the principles of statistics. I went through every question during the one-hour exam. I front-loaded it. I got down. It was multiple choice, and there were about five things that you could work out to an answer. I could only get maybe two out of five, and then I guessed, knowing I get a 50-50 chance.

I got over 60% on that exam. I used the principles of statistics to scam it. I hope nobody's going to take my BA in economics away from me. I even went back and did a master's in economics, and they never did find out about how I passed that statistics exam.

There may be many experts here in statistics or mathematics or computer programming; I don't know. But we have to get this legislation right. We have to bring in some experts to testify at the hearings or, at minimum, to teleconference at the hearings.

There was a bit of information that I was given, a discussion paper put forward by researchers at what's called the National Institute of Standards and Technology, NIST. It states: “Simply put, the DRE”—does everybody know what DRE stands for? I didn't, actually; it stands for direct recording electronic—“architecture's inability to provide for independent audits of its electronic records makes it a poor choice for an environment in which detecting errors and fraud is important.”

I'm running out of time, Speaker. I never thought I could talk about something like this.

There's another term that comes up: cryptography. Some systems include technologies such as cryptography, whether it be visual or mathematical, and paper, obviously, kept by the voter and held to be verified. There are audio verification systems and dual recording

or witness systems other than paper. I'd never heard of this journal, the statistical journal *Significance*, which recommends: Do the audit through a paper trail. It also cautions that sometimes more than one fraudster is involved.

Statisticians themselves indicate that they can see the mathematical trends. For example, we've all sat through elections, and it goes back to the—I think it's called the law of very large numbers. I know I'm running out of time. One guy is winning at the beginning when there are small numbers. After you go through about 100,000 or more, someone else is winning—it's the law of large numbers—and he's winning in a very precise mathematical way. It's not erratic; it's not error. It's been programmed into the software to rig the system.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm glad to stand up and talk to Bill 45. This bill talks about some of the things that we need in order for Elections Ontario to coordinate around the next provincial election. The member spoke about his concerns around technology and software, and—

Mr. James J. Bradley: Hear, hear.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: So there's another member across the way.

There are concerns around that, but we do have to remember that things are changing. Accessibility is one of the things that we have to keep in mind when we talk about software and technology, simply because not everybody can reach a voting station always conveniently—people up in the north—or sometimes it's confusing. I know in London–Fanshawe, there would be a school maybe opening up for the voting station one election, but then the next election it's not there, and people actually go to that same voting station. So technology can play a very crucial role in, of course, letting people know where the voting stations are. It makes it more convenient.

The member talked about his concerns about having paper trails and perhaps tampering. That can happen in any system. I understand his concern, but I think we have to incorporate new technology into the way we run elections today. They do talk about that in the explanatory notes. In number 3 it says, "The Chief Electoral Officer may issue a direction requiring the use of vote-counting equipment during an election and modifying the usual voting process to permit the use of the equipment." I think it's a necessary thing to have in here, but we always have to be mindful of privacy and accuracy when we talk about elections.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to comment on some of the concerns held by my colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk, some of which, by the way, I very much share.

He talks about some of his misgivings regarding technology and the election process. I would point out that no one is suggesting anything but a paper ballot. To

suggest anything but a paper ballot, I would be very much opposed to that.

For example, there are some things in our society you just have to show up to do. You've got to show up to get married. You've got to show up to access the judicial system, the medical system. You've got to show up to join the armed forces or any of our public institutions. And you should show up to cast a vote.

One of the things about this bill that is retained is the notion of a paper trail. There is a proposal to use a machine to count the votes. I'm willing to try that and see how well it goes.

Now, there are some problems with electronic voting—which, I emphasize, is not proposed here—that I'm sure were taken into account. So, for example, one of the cautions in using technology in an election is that the technology is used for about 12 hours once every four years. The system would probably cost more than the entire cost of the election to develop, to be used once, only to find that it's obsolete four years later. This is not proposed here, but it's one of the misgivings that I and I think the members share.

One of the other downsides to being overly reliant on technology is that all it takes is the weakest point in your chain: That could be one open port on one computer, one careless staff member, one disgruntled developer. This bill does preserve the integrity of a paper audit trail, in which votes can be counted if there's any question whatsoever.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to commend the member from Haldimand–Norfolk on his comments. I've got a number of thoughts on this bill, and I think I share some of the concerns of the other two parties and the chief government whip as well. I know he sounds like he's not in favour of this electronic stuff.

I had the pleasure and the privilege to be a returning officer for a number of elections before I got elected to this job, so I've done the job from both sides. I know how difficult it is to go out and get election staff, to get the returning officers, the election clerks, the scrutineers. But at the end of the day we were always able to do it. We always had some problems, but at the end of the day those elections were, in my opinion—and not just because I was administering them. I know a number of others that I was involved with as well over the years that I think ran fairly. You have the local community involved. You have party people from all three sides that are there to cheer on, to administer the elections.

I've got a lot of faith in the old-fashioned paper ballot. And when you get into the re-counts—I've been into re-counts—you actually have to open the boxes and the envelopes and go through them. It's very worthwhile to do that and to know that those paper ballots are there. It might take a few hours to do it, it might take a day or two to do it, but at the end of the day, you know your vote has been cast and you know your vote has been counted. And the integrity of the ballot, as the member and, I think, a

number of members feel—because we're all involved. We who are in this room, or people who will come here to this chamber, have all got a lot at stake here.

I support moving to Saturdays—maybe not Sundays, but Saturdays—for voting, to get away from issues with schools and other halls. But at the end of the day, I want to see the integrity of the ballot. I would work at anything that would do that.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: Later in the week I will have my opportunity to comment further on this bill, but I'm pleased to have the opportunity to have a few moments to discuss some of the brief things that I've read.

1400

I see that this comes from recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer about changes that we need in moving us to the future.

We've heard some members' comments that they have concerns about electronic balloting. Moving into the future, I think there's no stopping it. We need to ensure that the process is good—but I also believe that the ballots are stored within the actual balloting machine. I don't think it's tabulated and then destroyed instantly. The ballots are still there for backup.

One of the things that I want to comment on briefly is the dates being moved from October to June. I'm happy to see this process happening, as we're in a municipal election that year, also, and there's voter fatigue which will cause problems where people are tired of elections. They don't want to see the signs on their lawns all the time. They don't want to have to participate in the process. So I'm happy to see that that has moved, to put some time in between that. We know that we need to do everything we can to encourage a higher voter turnout, not fatigue them with the process and weigh that down.

I'm also happy to see that 16- and 17-year-olds can register to vote, so that they're ready to vote by the time they're 18. This, again, will encourage the conversation. It will help families in the household to talk about engaging in the political process, help them get ready and be participating members by the time they're 18—that they are hopefully looking forward and ready to cast their vote with some thought into the process.

I will look forward to my time on this bill also, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's four questions and comments. We return to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk for his response.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the feedback from members present and the feedback on my concern with respect to fraud. As we know, fraud has been with us for many, many, many elections, and it's understandable. Billions of dollars can be at stake in elections, large or small. There are those groups who do benefit from one person having victory over another.

To try to better explain, the concern I have is with voting machines. There are many different kinds of voting machines. We can see results that we're told defy

statistical laws. We see results—they're not normal; they defy protocol—that can deviate from the statistical norm. This serves as a red flag for statisticians and others who zero in on this. It's not something that—I think for many people their eyes glaze over when they hear this kind of stuff.

Statisticians talk about the law of large numbers. I think this was a theory put forward in the late 1700s, but I'm afraid I don't have the name of the person who brought this forward. Three people don't predict an election. Three people don't predict a poll. You go for larger numbers and polling a representative sample in elections. Every person who shows up is part of the sample. Larger numbers are best in predicting.

I've run out of time again. I'll have to do another comment sometime.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for St. Catharines on a point of order.

Mr. James J. Bradley: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Bradley is seeking unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice regarding private members' public business. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. James J. Bradley: I move that notwithstanding standing order 98 (g), notice of ballot items 16, 18 and 24 be waived.

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

Motion agreed to.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to put a few notes on the record regarding Bill 45, An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to provincial elections.

There are a number of issues in the bill, but I will start with the last one in the actual bill—that is section 15—that talks about, “The Representation Act, 2015 is amended to establish a Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission with a mandate to review the electoral boundaries of Kenora–Rainy River and Timmins–James Bay and make recommendations about the creation of one or two more ridings in that geographic area.”

Let me start by saying that I think the goal the Liberal government is trying to do is to make sure that First Nations finally have a voice here at Queen's Park. How could it be that there are 107 of us and, frankly, we have no First Nation representation? We have no MPP who can stand in this House right now and say proudly that they belong to a First Nation, and that's pretty sad.

The goal of the bill is rather honourable. They want to make sure that First Nations have a seat. But the way we have this drafted in the bill is, with all due respect, a white-person lens onto a First Nation issue. When, right in the bill, it says that only Kenora–Rainy River and Timmins–James Bay will be looked at, you have defined geographically two huge northern ridings that encompass quite a few First Nations, but there are also First Nations

in the north that are in the riding of Thunder Bay–Superior North; there are First Nations in Thunder Bay–Atikokan; and there are First Nations in the north part of my riding of Nickel Belt as well as Algoma–Manitoulin.

If you look at how First Nations organizations exist right now in Ontario, you have two tribal councils and you have three treaty organizations. It doesn't matter which one you look at. Whether you look at the tribal councils, which would be the Treaty 3 council or the Nishnawbe Aski Nation council—they do not follow the boundaries that we have limited them to in the bill. I don't understand why the bill specifically puts a geographical limit as to how First Nations will be represented. Why don't we talk to them, take that out of the bill and keep the end goal, which is very good? The end goal is that we want to make sure that First Nations are represented in this Legislature. But let's respect the travelling routes that already exist. Let's respect the organizations that already exist.

The reality on the ground, Speaker, is that most of northern Ontario is only accessible by air. Unless you are phenomenally rich, own your own plane and have enough money to fly this plane, there is no way for those people to get together in the way that we see them going together. But the people who live there are already organized. They're organized by treaty and they're organized by council, and we should respect that and not limit them to two geographical areas of ridings that happen to be the ridings of two of my colleagues, Kenora–Rainy River and Timmins–James Bay. It works really good for us. It doesn't bother the white guy, and all is good. But it misses the boat. The end goal is to make sure that First Nations people are heard in a part of our province that is really, really hard to reach.

For a lot of people who live in a fly-in-only First Nation community, they have no opportunity to get out of there, as I said, unless they can pay for a \$1,000 plane ride. That plane ride will not take you to the next First Nation, to the east, west, north or south. It will bring you to an airport in what is called the white man's land, not to another First Nation.

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So whether we look at Treaty 3—Treaty 3 is mainly Ojibway—most of them are accessible by road, and those would be the people around Kenora and Fort Frances and Sioux Lookout and all of that area of the northwest, part of the Kenora–Rainy River riding right now.

Treaty 5 is in the extreme west part of our province, and Treaty 5 really expands into Manitoba just as much as it does into Ontario. And then there's all of Treaty 9. Treaty 9 is in and around James Bay. But they do not follow the geographical boundaries as we have them described right now by our Legislative Assembly.

The NDP supports the end goal. We want to have First Nations representatives working with us and beside us. We think that it is a good idea to change, to have a look at this. But I think we're starting with an anchor around our ankle that would sink this entire process by putting in the bill geographical limits that have no connection what-

soever to the First Nations people we want to connect with.

First Nations people have been organized way before we were there, way before the Legislative Assembly ever thought of having ridings. Those organizations know how to connect, know how to speak to one another. They often speak different languages within—where they want.

Treaty 5 and Treaty 9 are represented, as I said, by the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, NAN, and they have opportunities to get to know one another. They certainly would have opportunities to do political work so that people who would be called to the polls would know those people and would know what they stand for. But if we arbitrarily decide who is in and who is out, where will the district end? We have those two big northern ridings that exist. Without taking into account that their organizations also take parts of my riding, of the Algoma–Manitoulin riding, of the Thunder Bay–Superior North riding and of the Thunder Bay–Atikokan riding, we are missing the boat. We are being disrespectful to First Nations when what we want to do is to be respectful and make sure that they have a seat in this House.

As I said, the best of intentions can easily derail if you don't take a little bit of time to get it right. I can tell you right now that when I see in the bill limitations to the representation on the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission, the limits we have put on them, that it could only be one or two ridings, that they have to find those ridings within the two existing ridings that have been made by us, the white people, for them, that's not in the spirit of reconciliation, that's not in the spirit of good collaboration. The chances of getting it right when you start with a mandate that has it wrong are pretty slim, Speaker. We want this to be a success.

We have such a long, long list of good intentions towards First Nations people that have gone completely wrong. I'd like to put on the record one such organization. It is an ongoing issue. I had the opportunity to talk with the minister responsible, who also called his parliamentary assistant. Those good intentions have gone off the rails and done the exact opposite of what we wanted them to do. It basically starts with Mrs. Debra Dupuis, who wanted to have a monument to honour Charles Henry Byce, who is a veteran from the Second World War. He also happens to be a survivor of a residential school. He comes from Chapleau and belongs to the Chapleau Cree—which, by the way, would not be captured by the limits that we have put on.

Basically, what happened was that this spring, Mrs. Dupuis was attending a function with the mayor of Parry Sound. The Premier was there. While the Premier was there, the Premier reached out to Mrs. Dupuis, who was in charge of the Charles Henry Byce commemoration, and asked her, "How can we help you? How can the province of Ontario help you?" Which was goodwill, good intentions and a good goal. Basically, Mrs. Dupuis told them that they had this project, an over \$100,000 project that the federal government had agreed to fund

about \$111,000, they had put forward a big fundraising effort to bring this monument to Chapleau, and they would like the province to contribute about \$20,000 to the project. The Premier was very enthusiastic. She loved the idea of doing this monument in the spirit of reconciliation so that you have the opportunity to honour First Nations. What could go wrong?

Well, it did go wrong. The Premier first asked Mr. Phil Donelson to connect with the group to see how they could help. He first referred the group to Mr. Janeiro. Mrs. Dupuis quickly told them that they had already gone to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, as I think it's called now; they had gone to the Ministry of Tourism, who had made it clear that they had no way to fund their project. Mr. James Janeiro exchanged phone calls and emails and made it clear that this was not going to work.

On August 18, they get a phone call to say that they would be receiving a funding letter and that they would hear from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. The details would be in the letter of what he called "one-off funding." He did not at the time say the specific dollar amount, but she had made it clear when she met the Premier that they needed about \$20,000.

The date for the unveiling of the new monument to Charles Henry Byce came and went. Just before the unveiling, they get this phone call that the ministry, the province, is not going to give them the funds. Had they told them that from the start, the fundraising committee would have continued to fundraise throughout the summer to make sure that they had enough money to cover the cost of the commemorations as well as the plaque and the beautiful monument that was done. But no. The Premier had reached out, had asked how they could help, had put them in contact with people in their office who promised them that they would make it happen, that they would receive the money. Only a few days before the event was about to take place do they hear that, no, they were renegeing on this promise, that it was not going to happen.

The unveiling celebration was a beautiful thing. National Chief Perry Bellegarde was there. The commander of the Canadian Army was there. Joseph Boyden was there, and the province was represented as well. It was a very proud moment.

But the First Nations felt like they had been let down. Why were they strung on, up to the last minute, to say that the province understood how important it was and in the spirit of reconciliation was going to help them achieve this great commemoration ceremony? And then, at the last minute, they let them down.

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This is not how you build reconciliation. This is not how you consult and learn from the First Nations. We have an opportunity in this bill to do things right, to achieve our end goal of bringing new ridings that are mainly representative of hard-to-reach First Nations communities—but not the way we have it set up right now; not the way we have it set up that does not take

anything into account. It does not take the geography into account. It does not take the natural traffic, travelling patterns or possibilities, into account. It does not take the existing political council into account. It does not take into account the existing treaty. It does not take into account their language, because not every First Nation speaks the same language. We have Ojibway; we have Oji-Cree; we have Cree. And they're already organized, but we want to impose upon them how they're going to campaign and be active politically at the provincial level. Not a winning combination whatsoever.

So, the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association, a non-profit registered charity with indigenous students at the forefront of its mission—had undertaken this project of honouring Charles Henry Byce in the spirit of building education and reconciliation that they had been working on for many years. But all of this good will was lost in one phone call. People feel that they had been promised, they had been supported, they had been encouraged, and then at the last minute they get their phone call that says none of it is going to be.

They don't give up easily. Today, I reached across to the minister in charge of indigenous relations and reconciliation, as well as his PA, and I had yet another talk with them about this. The minister was just in estimates, where I had time to question him about this issue. He was quite adamant that he understood; that the province had done wrong when it came to First Nations; that they were going to look at this and that they were going to fix it. On two occasions, he promised me that, and none of that has happened. Good intentions are not enough. It also has to become reality.

I have the Hansard from October 4, where I speak to the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and where I bring back this issue, and where Minister Zimmer, the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, makes it clear that they have intentions of following back. He says, "Let me go back to the office, and the deputy and I will look into this and provide you and Ms. Patrick with what we can provide." He goes on to say, "Let me look into it and develop the facts, but I assure you that I will endeavour to do what I can as soon as I can."

This was almost a month ago, and if it were not for me reaching out to them once again, all would have been lost and forgotten.

We have to do better, Speaker, when it comes to relationships with our First Nations partners. We have to be respectful and we have to take time to listen.

This bill has a good goal, but this bill will not be successful in achieving the goal if it continues to only describe two geographical ridings held by NDP members—I'm guessing that's just a fluke—when the people that live there also have members in Thunder Bay–Superior North, members in Thunder Bay–Atikokan and members in Nickel Belt, as well as members in Algoma–Manitoulin. This has to be looked at. This has to be changed.

Not last week but the week before, we had the chief of Wahnapitae First Nation with the deputy regional grand

chief come to Queen's Park. They came to Queen's Park to ask the Legislative Assembly to ask the Premier and the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to help them in their dealings with CN.

You see, Speaker, in March 2015, a huge train carrying crude oil derailed just outside of their community, outside of Gogama. Over 30 great big tanker cars derailed, exploded, caught fire and spilled a total of over four million litres of crude. The estimate is that about 1.4 million litres of the crude that came out went into the Makami River. The Makami River is part of the territory of the Mattagami First Nation. This is where they fish. They have a fishery. They have very active outfitters in tourism. All of this is at risk since the derailment took place in March 2015.

Until the fall of 2015, CN was a good corporate citizen. They were at the site daily. I made monthly—and sometimes weekly—visits to the site: They were there. They were trying to clean the shore. They were trying to clean the water. They removed all of the soil that had been contaminated. They put big berms to limit where the oil could go. They took everything—every blade of grass, every speck of sand—out of there to be cleaned, brought it down to either the rock or down to the water table, if there was water coming up. They did as good as they could to clean.

When they were still there and I was last there, in October 2015, they had big dredging to go to the bottom of the river. They had actual people in scuba diving gear with some kind of an underwater vacuum who were going to the bottom of the river, to try to get as much of the oil out as possible.

The people of Mattagami were there on the site, the people of Gogama were there on the site and it looked like things were going to get cleaned up.

Then came winter. With winter came five feet of ice. Then spring came. In the spring of 2016, as soon as the water started flowing again, it was obvious to anybody who bothered to have a look that there was still a lot of oil in the water.

Chad, who is in charge for the Mattagami First Nation, as well as Mr. Benson, who is in charge for Gogama, repeatedly reached out to the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change. The Mattagami First Nation reached out to the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation as well as to the Premier to ask them to mandate CN to continue cleaning, because you know what, Speaker? We have it within our powers that the Legislative Assembly can mandate CN to continue the cleaning. But to no avail. There were no meetings taking place. There was no acknowledgment that those people wanted to be heard, that they wanted action from this government. Nothing was done.

What does that mean? That means that Chief Walter Naveau and fire chief Mike Benson had to go all the way from Mattagami First Nation and all the way from Gogama and come down here so they would have an opportunity to be heard.

This is not what reconciliation is about, Speaker. Reconciliation is about being respectful of the others. It's

listening to what the others have to say. In this particular instance, the other is a First Nation called Mattagami, and nobody has listened to them. Nobody has answered their call. Nobody has agreed to a meeting request.

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I have hand-delivered meeting invitations to the minister. I have talked to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change dozens of times about this issue, and still no action. That's not how we get reconciliation, Speaker—quite the opposite.

Then came one other missed opportunity. This other missed opportunity is for Wahnapiatae First Nation. We're talking about a bill called Bill 45, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act. We're going to change the Election Act in Ontario for all sorts of good reasons, and in large part based on the Chief Electoral Officer himself, who has made recommendations—all good. But a recommendation that the Chief Electoral Officer said that only this legislation can take is to put Wahnapiatae First Nation in the right riding.

Last year we had Bill 115, An Act to enact the Representation Act, 2015, repeal the Representation Act, 2005 and amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act. Basically, last year we voted on adding more ridings to the province of Ontario to more or less mirror what the federal government had done. What an opportunity. We were changing the boundaries of dozens of ridings. What an opportunity to put Wahnapiatae First Nation in the right riding.

Wahnapiatae is a very small First Nation. It's one square kilometre. That's it; that's all. Their traditional territory is huge, but the First Nation itself is one square kilometre on the west shore of beautiful Lake Wanapitei—therefore their name, Wahnapiatae First Nation.

Wanapitei Lake is a huge lake. You can see it on any map of Ontario, it is so big. It is within the boundaries of the city of Greater Sudbury. It is in the riding of Nickel Belt at the federal level. I have my constituency office for the riding of Nickel Belt—you go to Capreol, which is about 20 kilometres away, and Wahnapiatae First Nation is just beside Capreol. They come to my office all the time.

But for reasons unknown, they have been put in the riding of Timiskaming–Cochrane. Some really knowledgeable people in southern Ontario looked at this vast amount of crown land and said, "There's nobody there. Who cares if we put them in one riding or in another riding? Nobody lives there north of Lake Wanapitei." So they went and put this big swath of land down as if it belongs to the riding of Timiskaming–Cochrane.

The problem is, Speaker, that there are people who live there. The good people of Wahnapiatae First Nation have lived there forever on end, but yet, somebody had decided that they were going to be part of Timiskaming–Cochrane. During an election, they have to go through the riding of Nickel Belt and then the riding of Sudbury to make it to the riding of Timiskaming–Cochrane. We are talking hundreds of kilometres to make it to the riding of Timiskaming–Cochrane, or about 25 kilometres to make it to my office. This makes no sense.

We were discussing changing the boundaries of dozens of ridings. What an opportunity to finally right this wrong. It was Madeleine Meilleur, the Attorney General, who was in charge of this bill, so I went to see her. I showed her the letter that the current chief, Chief Roque, had written to her, saying that he wanted his First Nation to be in the riding of Nickel Belt. I showed her the letter that the previous chief had written. I showed her the letter that two chiefs back had written about this, because this mistake was done in 2005. “Oh, I get it,” and she promised it will be done. While we’re changing all of the boundaries for all of the other ones in the south, we will make sure that this one change to the boundaries of the ridings in the north is going to be taken into account, especially in the spirit of reconciliation with the First Nations.

I didn’t take any chances. When it was my chance to talk about Bill 115, I used my entire 20 minutes to talk about Wahnapiatae First Nation, why they had been done wrong and why it was important for Wahnapiatae First Nation to be brought back into the riding of Nickel Belt, like it is at the federal level and like it makes sense on the ground.

Everybody agreed. It went through committee. In committee, it was the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, who happens to be the NDP member on that committee, who brought forward the amendment so that this could be corrected, as the Attorney General, Madame Meilleur, had assured me it would go. Then we had five members of the Liberals on the other side, nodding their head that it was not going to go through. When it came time to vote, they voted not to.

Really? This is the spirit of reconciliation? We have been working on this since 2005. Everybody agrees that it was a mistake. Everybody agrees as to what is the correction. The correction is you take that one kilometre square and you put it in the riding of Nickel Belt, not in the riding of Timiskaming–Cochrane, which is hundreds of kilometres away, and case closed—but, no. All five members of the Liberals voted no. Their reason to vote no was that it was going to open a floodgate from other First Nations who wanted to be moved from one riding to the next.

Not to be outdone, Speaker, I personally wrote to every single First Nation in Ontario. Do you know how many of them want to move ridings? One: Wahnapiatae First Nation. The other 150-some First Nations are quite happy to be in the riding that they are in now.

So now we have this opportunity again. We’re going to be changing the boundaries of some northern ridings. But right now, the way the bill is written, only the riding of Kenora–Rainy River and the riding of Timmins–James Bay can be changed. This doesn’t work for First Nations people in northern Ontario. It doesn’t work for the people of Wahnapiatae. It doesn’t work for the Cree of Chapleau. It doesn’t work for a long, long series of people.

The end goal is we want to be respectful to them. We want to show our true spirit of reconciliation, and we want them to be represented. We want them to come to

Queen’s Park and be part of law-making, and be part of the discussion that takes place at Queen’s Park. But we have a bill that will not allow us to do this.

I cannot believe, after everything that was said about Bill 115, after all the work that was done by Wahnapiatae First Nation, by its chief, by the regional grand chief, that we cannot move this forward.

We have an opportunity. We have a bill that opens up the boundaries of northern ridings. We have Wahnapiatae First Nation, that has made the case over and over and over, as to this mistake.

First of all, it’s quite disrespectful to think that somebody who has enough power to decide where the boundaries should go did not have enough knowledge to realize that there were people who lived there. It’s a little bit scary when you think about it, isn’t it, Speaker? When the boundaries were being talked about, it was clear that Wahnapiatae First Nation was part of Nickel Belt at the federal level and that Wahnapiatae First Nation’s people were going to receive their services from Nickel Belt at the provincial level. Everybody agreed. But when the person who drafted the bill did the drafting, they did not know that Wahnapiatae existed. They did not know that good people lived there. And frankly, they did not care to find out.

1440

But this has been a bone of contention. This has been an irritant for this First Nation ever since, so their band council passed a motion. Their band council came and talked to the ministry—it used to be aboriginal affairs; it is now indigenous relations and reconciliation—and they were given a big smile: “We will work on it. We understand. We want to respect you.” They say all of the right words but take no action. And when they have an opportunity to take action, they vote against it.

What exactly in there is reconciliation, Speaker? What exactly in there could make anybody feel good? The fact that nobody knew they existed? The fact that they are told that they understand that this was an error and they will correct it at the first possible opportunity, but when the opportunity comes they vote it down? Or the fact that we have a second bill that will look at riding boundaries, specifically on northern riding boundaries, but written in such a way that will again be impossible for Wahnapiatae to be put in the right riding?

You cannot say that you want reconciliation and then act in a way that pokes them in the eye, in a way that is completely disrespectful. This is not how you build a good, stable communication and a relationship with anybody, including the people of First Nations. We have an opportunity to do things right. Why put in the bill something like this?

First of all, it’s not something that the Chief Electoral Officer ever asked to be done. It’s not like this is a recommendation, because most of the rest of the bill—Bill 45, Election Statute Law Amendment Act—came directly from the Chief Electoral Officer, who wants those changes. He wants those changes in place in time for the next election, on June 7, 2018. This one, about

looking at creating one or two new ridings to accommodate First Nations' voices, does not come from his recommendations. It comes from the government that wrote the bill. How can you keep making the same mistake over and over?

You have an opportunity to be good on your word. You have an opportunity to correct what you have already admitted to them many times over by many different Ministries of Aboriginal Affairs—because it seems like every 18 months we get a new Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. They've met with each and every one of them. Even the one with the new title, the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, told the exact same thing with the big smile. "We want to work with you. We understand." Then they write a bill that misses the boat completely, that is completely disrespectful, and that showed one more time that they don't exist, they don't matter, and nobody cares.

I care about the people of Wahnapiatae. They're pretty good people. Actually, I invite all of my colleagues to come to the Wahnapiatae First Nation. They are on the side of a beautiful lake, Lake Wanapitei. They have a beautiful band office. Most of the people who belong to Wahnapiatae First Nations have gone to school in the environmental sciences, so they have this huge consultant firm for the environment. They are very knowledgeable in everything that has to do with the environment, as taught in Ontario universities, but also as taught through the First Nation knowledge. They're able to marry this together to make work that is just phenomenal. They are retained by all of the mining around—whenever something's going on that needs to have environmental assessments done or recommendations, Wahnapiatae First Nation's consultants are the top. They're very fun to work with. They work within, I would say, their traditional way of doing things but always with a twist and always interesting.

If you have an opportunity, they are really, really welcoming. I guarantee you, if any MPP wants to come and visit Wahnapiatae First Nation, Chief Roque will welcome you with open arms and will show you a First Nation like you have never seen before. It is a northern First Nation. It is close to Nickel Belt, but in the wrong riding. They have a lot to teach us, and we have a lot to learn. We have a lot to learn from each other.

So, please, do come. Once you see it, it will become obvious that they do not belong in Timiskaming–Cochrane. They have nothing in common with Timiskaming–Cochrane. Timiskaming–Cochrane has a lot of farming and agriculture. For them, they are in the heart of the Canadian Shield. If there is ever a centre point of the Canadian Shield, it may be them. We live on a pile of rocks, and we're very proud of it. It's just beautiful. So I do invite you to come and see. Hopefully, that will motivate the Liberal government to make the changes to that bill and, when the changes come forward, to find it in their heart to vote in favour of moving Wahnapiatae First Nation from the riding of Timiskaming–Cochrane to the riding of Nickel Belt where they belong.

That being said, I have always served the people of Wahnapiatae First Nation. If they need help from their provincial government, I do help them. I have no problem with this because my colleague is also from the NDP, and we work together. Unfortunately, it was not always the case. When I was first elected, it was a member from a different party that was representing Timiskaming–Cochrane. Then, it was rather difficult because they would come to me—I have no problem helping them—but then we would run into conflicts with who should be doing the work. Nobody needs that. We happen to have the NDP that represents both ridings right now. It won't be like this forever. We have a chance to fix it. Let's not let another chance go by. Let's fix this mistake so that we never have to live with this again.

I wanted to spend some time this afternoon talking about one part of the bill, as I said, the part that was not brought forward by the election officer but that was brought forward by the will of the government. I thank the government for bringing this part into the bill. As I said, it's a good goal, but let's make sure that we reach that goal. In order to make sure that we reach that goal, we have to respect the geography, the transportation and the associations, political or treaty, that already exist in the northwest and the northeast of our province and not limit them to those two ridings. We have to fix Wahnapiatae.

Another part that I wish would have been in the bill—oh, and just to make sure, I will also be introducing a bill about Wahnapiatae First Nation just to make absolutely sure that everybody knows what needs to happen to correct this. I'm in contact with Chief Roque, and he will be attending as well to make sure that the next time around, we don't continue to perpetuate this mistake and we actually fix things.

1450

The next thing I wanted to talk about is that we have talked a lot about how we get elected. This act is the Election Statute Law Amendment Act, and it obviously talks about how people get elected in Ontario. It will make a long list of changes.

It will change the date of the election. The election will now be on the first Thursday in June, so the next election will be June 7, 2018. We already know that.

It will make a voluntary registry of eligible 16- and 17-year-olds. Here, again, I think this is a pretty good thing to get our youth interested in politics. It will probably make our lists a little bit more accurate when it comes to people who are 18 years old voting for the first time.

I think my predecessor talked about some vote-counting equipment that will be allowed.

They will also bring penalties for owners of residential buildings who deny access to canvassers. I must say that, coming from Nickel Belt, I have one high-rise, and the owner is pretty open to anybody going to canvass. It's not going to change much for my riding of Nickel Belt. But I understand that there's not only Nickel Belt in this province; there are many, many ridings that have many

high-rises, and that will make it easier for them to canvass.

They will also put an ID to each eligible voter.

It changes how the Chief Electoral Officer can communicate.

It changes some of the privacy statements as well.

Political parties will be able to opt out of receiving elector information.

The candidates can request that the surnames that they commonly use be found on the ballots, because a lot of people use a shortened version of their names when they canvass, and that's what they're known under.

The returning officer hours and days would be standardized so that it becomes easier for everybody to know, during election night as well as during the advance polls.

The nomination process of candidates will be easier.

It changes the electoral advertising blackout.

It allows parties with fewer than two nominated candidates during a general election to be registered.

It changes a number of things. Most of them make sense. All of them have been brought forward by the Chief Electoral Officer. I would say that for some of the recommendations, he has been making those recommendations for a long, long time. So, as I said, most of the changes in that legislation would make sense.

The part that is not in there and I think should have been has to do with how we elect people. Right now, we use first-past-the-post. With first-past-the-post, both in 2015 and 2011, the government won a majority with only 39% of the vote. Or, if you look at it with the glass half-empty, that means that 61% of people wanted someone else in government. But with the first-past-the-post voting system, we get that kind of result.

There are five things to know about proportional representation. Our current first-past-the-post system was around before we had cars, before we had electricity and before penicillin was even invented or thought of. It would give what people call a "false majority." As I said, at the federal level both the Liberals in 2015 and the Conservatives in 2011 had those false majorities, with only 39% of the vote going to them. So what would that do? Well, proportional representation would mean that if a party gets about 20% of the vote, they would get about 20% of the seats, and there's a few things that would work differently.

Proportional representation is popular. There are over 90 countries that use a proportional representation voting system, including 85% of the OECD countries, such as Ireland, Germany, Scotland, Wales, Sweden and Denmark. Proportional representation usually means higher voter turnout. Research shows that voter turnout is 5% to 7.5% higher on average in countries that use proportional representation. It also leads to a more diverse and gender-balanced Parliament. Countries that use proportional representation have more diverse Parliaments, with more individuals from underrepresented groups.

Countries that have more than 30% of women in their Legislature use proportional representation and countries that use proportional representation see up to 8% more

women in their Legislatures compared to first-past-the-post. It does not lead to instability or never-ending elections. If you look at the Canadian government, under first-past-the-post we've had more elections since World War II than Germany, Ireland, Sweden and Spain, all countries that do use proportional representation. So this argument doesn't hold. And you can still have a local MPP. So you vote for somebody to represent you in your riding locally, and then the rest of the votes are given to people on party lists.

If we are going to see an Election Statute Law Amendment Act, I would have liked that Ontario at least start this conversation. I would say, Speaker, that there is pent-up demand by the people of Ontario to look at something else. With voter turnout during Ontario elections hovering at about 50%, that is nothing to be proud of. That means that for 50% of the people of Ontario what goes on in here doesn't matter. It does not motivate them enough to go put an X on a piece of paper. That's pretty sad.

When I see this Legislative Assembly talk about changing the election rules, why don't we give people what they want us to talk about? Ontarians want us to talk about other models of elections and getting elected, and this bill is completely silent on that.

I see that time is running out.

Ça me fait toujours plaisir de pouvoir participer aux débats sur les différents projets de loi dont nous parlons ici. Pour le projet de loi—qui a quand même un nom assez long—qui s'appelle la Loi visant à modifier certaines lois en ce qui concerne les élections provinciales, si on y regarde, une partie de cette loi qui m'intéressait beaucoup est la partie qui nous parle : « Une modification apportée à la Loi de 2015 sur la représentation électorale prévoit la formation de la Commission de délimitation des circonscriptions électorales du Grand Nord, qui a pour mandat d'examiner les limites des circonscriptions électorales de Kenora–Rainy River et de Timmins–Baie James et de faire des recommandations quant à la création d'une ou de deux circonscriptions supplémentaires dans cette région géographique. »

C'est très désappointant de voir que, tout de suite, dans le texte de la loi, on a mis des frontières géographiques qui ne tiennent pas compte des besoins des gens des Premières Nations qui demeurent là. Si tu regardes aux gens des Premières Nations qui demeurent là, on a déjà des organismes qui sont en place. Il y a des traités qui existent, que l'on parle du traité numéro 3—qui représente surtout les Premières Nations qui parlent Ojibway et qui est situé autour de Fort Frances, Sioux Lookout, Kenora, dans ce bout-là. Après ça, il y a le traité numéro 5. Le traité numéro 5 est celui qui est au nord et le plus à l'ouest de l'Ontario, tellement à l'ouest que le traité numéro 5 s'en va beaucoup dans le Manitoba.

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Puis, après ça, il y a le traité numéro 9. Le traité numéro 9 est un grand traité, qui a deux sections : il y en

a une qui s'est faite aux alentours de 1909; une autre un peu plus tard. C'est un grand traité qui couvre des Premières Nations autant dans Timmins–Baie James que dans Nickel Belt, que dans Algoma–Manitoulin, que dans Thunder Bay–Superieur-Nord et Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mais la façon dont le projet de loi est écrit, c'est que seulement certaines parties de ces traités—seulement certaines parties—vont faire partie des débats. Le projet de loi, lorsqu'il sera adopté, a mis en place une commission, mais une commission qui part avec un mandat perdant, parce que c'est un mandat qui lui est imposé et qui ne respecte pas ce qui existe déjà.

La communication entre les gens des Premières Nations qui demeurent dans une Première Nation qui est accessible seulement par avion—la communication est très difficile. Pour la plupart des gens qui demeurent dans ces communautés, sortir de la communauté veut dire au moins 1 000 \$ pour des billets d'avion. On peut voir que, pour quelqu'un qui essaierait de faire de la cabale d'une Première Nation à l'autre, à moins que tu aies ton propre avion et beaucoup d'argent pour te payer beaucoup d'essence, ce serait quasiment impossible.

Mais les gens qui demeurent là ont déjà des associations, ont déjà des moyens de communication, ont déjà des routes qui existent qui ne suivent pas les deux comtés qui ont été mis dans la loi. Les moyens de communication qui existent déjà et les moyens de rencontre qui existent déjà représentent des traditions qui sont là depuis assez longtemps—plus de 100 ans—et ne respectent pas les limites géographiques que le gouvernement a voulu leur donner.

Donc, j'aimerais que le gouvernement écoute et change le projet de loi pour s'assurer que la commission aura le droit de regarder à tout le territoire voulu pour que les Premières Nations aient une chance d'être écoutées, aient une chance d'être respectées et aient une chance d'être représentées ici à Queen's Park. À la fin de la journée, c'est assez honteux que, bien que les Premières Nations représentent un pourcentage significatif de la population de l'Ontario, on ne les retrouve nulle part ici dans l'Assemblée.

Le projet de loi essaie de faire ça, mais on ne vote pas sur des bonnes intentions. On vote sur ce qui a été écrit dans le projet de loi, et ce qui a été écrit dans le projet de loi n'est pas respectueux des Premières Nations.

J'en profite également pour mettre de l'avant une autre erreur qui a été faite, et ça, c'est avec la Première Nation de Wahnapiatae. La Première Nation de Wahnapiatae est dans le comté de Timiskaming–Cochrane, ce qui veut dire que pour avoir accès à leur député, ils doivent passer au travers du comté de Nickel Belt et du comté de Sudbury pour se rendre jusqu'à Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Au niveau fédéral, c'est clair : la nation de Wahnapiatae est dans Nickel Belt. On a eu la chance de faire changer ça lorsqu'on a parlé du projet de loi 115 l'année dernière. Après avoir fait des promesses—ils comprenaient que c'était une erreur qui devait être corrigée—les Libéraux ont voté contre la motion qui avait été faite par mon collègue de Timiskaming–

Cochrane. Bien qu'ils nous ont dit, oui, qu'ils étaient pour changer ça, ils ont voté contre. Ils ont, en ce moment, une autre opportunité de passer à l'action, de corriger cette erreur et de s'assurer que lorsqu'on changera les frontières pour les comtés du Nord, Wahnapiatae sera dans le comté de Nickel Belt.

Je vous remercie de m'avoir écouté, monsieur le Président. Ça m'a fait plaisir.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to follow my colleague from Nickel Belt, who, while I don't always agree with what she says, has a way of saying it very, very well and is the kind of person who gives elected representatives a good name.

Speaker, she spoke at great length about some of the issues that she lives with on a day-to-day basis in the north. I would point out that the province has appointed the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission, and I would submit to the member that perhaps we should allow the commission to do its work, rather than to make its operational decisions either in committee or on the floor of the Legislature.

Having been exposed to some of my American colleagues, who described the long and torturous process by which their redistricting came into being—it began with just a little bit of tweaking here and there with the best of intentions and has now devolved to the point where politicians pick their voters rather than voters picking their politicians. In this case, I would like very much to have our electoral boundaries commission continue to be the authority on that.

The member also talked about something that is not in the bill, which is a proposal called proportional representation. Reforming Canada's first-past-the-post voting system received decisive rejections in three provinces during the past decade, from Canada's largest province by population, which is Ontario, to its smallest, which is Prince Edward Island, and two decisive thumbs-down votes by British Columbia.

The fatal flaw in proportional representation is the assumption that if you pay more attention to the people and the parties that lost the election, you'll get better government. The second fatal flaw in it is to assume that the function of a provincial Legislature is not to do something, but to talk about something. I think we're here to do something as a Legislature.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's a pleasure for me to stand and offer my comments to the member from Nickel Belt. She spoke of poor voter turnout when she was talking about proportional representation. From what I hear from some of my constituents about why they don't vote and don't take an interest in voting, I think it really comes down to us. They feel that they vote for a certain candidate because of what they stand for, and then when they get to the House, they feel that nothing is being done to address their concerns.

Certainly a way to get more people involved in the voting process is for us to do more, or to do what our constituents put us here for, and that's to represent them in this House. Maybe they will come away with the feeling—the feeling they have right now is “What's the use in voting?” when we don't represent them in this place. I'm sure that something we all have to address is that when we're put here for a certain reason, we should address the concerns of our constituents and make sure that they feel important that way. Perhaps that will address the significance of poor voter turnout in some elections.

Certainly when there's a real hot-button item, it may draw more people to the polls. Hydro rates are certainly one of them that has got the whole province talking and wondering what the next Legislature will do. Hopefully, we can address that because certainly this government hasn't been addressing the issue of high hydro rates. That's something that the voters in my riding have a real issue with.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's a pleasure to comment on the comments from my colleague from Nickel Belt. She is supremely intelligent. How about that? She does her homework and she delivers knowledge in this House that is not often delivered, so it's great to listen to her.

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One of the things that I picked up on—and it was hard to miss—was the word “Wahnapiatae.” She spoke quite clearly about the need for the Wahnapiatae First Nation to be included. The real common-sense change that would make their community be served a lot better—

Interjection: Properly.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: —be served properly, thank you—would be being included in the riding of Nickel Belt. Well, why hasn't that happened? As she stated, other First Nations around the province were queried on whether they would like to change electoral boundaries. How many did? Zero, except Wahnapiatae First Nation.

I can only imagine, or I can only surmise, that the government is reluctant to make any of these changes because, as they had stated at committee, if they opened up the floodgates, lots of different communities will want to change First Nations. I would imagine that that might be true, given that if they had the opportunity for a New Democrat member to serve them, yes, they probably will want to change boundaries, because they're so ill-served by the Liberal—

Mr. John Vanthof: The other New Democrat.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: No, not the other New Democrat member. I know, it might not work in that circumstance. But you get my drift here, Speaker.

It's common sense. This is something that should be reasonable. You changed the boundaries in Bill 115 and neglected the north. Now, in Bill 45, there will be some changes to the north. Let's include Wahnapiatae First Nation in there as a measure of justice.

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

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I thank you, Speaker, and of course, I support wholeheartedly my colleague the Attorney General, MPP from Ottawa, in his measure here, bringing forward Bill 45, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act.

There are a number of issues. Ultimately, I think we want to increase the participation rate not only with youth but across Ontario. Many other jurisdictions have tried different approaches. For example, I believe in Australia, voting is actually mandatory in their federal elections and, in fact, subject to fines. There are other opportunities, for example. But I think we're striking the right balance here with Bill 45.

One of the things that I think is very encouraging—as an individual at home with both a 17-year-old and a 16-year-old, I think I'd better go and get them preregistered immediately. I think that's a very progressive step that the government is taking. We'll actually, as we said, pre-voter register so that these folks are in fact on the rolls and ready to vote in the next upcoming election.

Why are we doing this? Well, as you will know, the participation rates in democracy, for various reasons, have been falling, perhaps globally. There seem to be just as many protests as voters out there. For example, in 2014, less than 52% of eligible voters actually voted in the province of Ontario.

When you think of how important voting is—affecting your hospitals and your schools and your foreign policy and which jets the federal government will acquire etc.—I think it's extremely important that all of us exercise that franchise.

So whether we're going to make standardized advance polling or preregister youth, we're going to encourage democracy, and that's a good thing, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Nickel Belt can reply.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to thank the members from Mississauga–Streetsville, Perth–Wellington, Essex, and Etobicoke North for their comments.

I spent most of my hour lead focusing on First Nations. There is this section of the bill that will create the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission. I would really like us to get this right. Because we have put a limit on their mandate—it's limited to the riding of Kenora–Rainy River and the riding of Timmins–James Bay—we have failed to take into account that this is not the natural communication pattern of the First Nations who live in the Far North.

The First Nations who live in the Far North are already organized. They have tribal councils; they have treaty councils; they get together. They are already organized. But their organizations do not match the geographical boundaries of the two ridings that exist. It has to be taken into account if we want it to be successful, because we're talking about First Nations that belong to different treaties, that speak different languages and that work differently than what we're trying to impose on them.

I'm happy that we will have the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission. Let's give them a mandate that will succeed by giving them the right to make recommendations that will not only be limited to those two northern ridings but include all of the northern ridings if they so wish.

My second part is that I cannot believe that we will, for the second time, open up the boundaries of ridings and not put Wahnapiatae First Nation in the right riding. This is an error that was done historically. We need to correct this and we need to correct it this time.

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

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's truly a privilege to rise in the Legislature this afternoon to speak to Bill 45, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act. I'll be sharing my time with the member for Mississauga–Streetsville and with the President of the Treasury Board.

Mr. Speaker, you as well as every other member of this Legislature and those who have sought to be members of this Legislature know the tremendous efforts that we and our teams put in during an election leading up to election day. I think we could all agree that there's nothing more disappointing than to see that the voter turnout barely goes over 50%. All this effort to reach everyone in one's riding, and yet almost half of the people choose not to participate, for whatever reason.

The bill before us today seeks to make steps to try to improve that situation, to ensure that everyone's franchise is not only guaranteed but that we take steps to encourage their franchise to be exercised and that we make it easier for them to exercise their franchise.

One of the areas that this bill does focus on in a very meaningful way is our young people. Many 18-year-olds may or may not be interested in voting, but just the fact that they don't know whether they're on the voters list and don't know how to get on the voters list—that might be a discouraging part of the process. With this bill, for the first time, we will be allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to pre-register to be added to the voters list.

This certainly is an opportunity through our high schools to engage with young people, teach them about the election process, about their role in it, their rights to be electors, and encourage them to be engaged several years before an election. I think that's going to be a very powerful tool.

All of us, I'm sure, in our respective ridings have encountered situations with inconvenience of the advance polling locations or the lack of certainty as to where they might be as they shift from election to election. By standardizing locations and hours, I think this is also going to be a positive benefit to all voters and to the entire electoral process.

As was mentioned very eloquently by the previous speaker, there will be a Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission established, whose role is going to be to find ways to ensure that our northern communities are better engaged and better represented in the election process, and most certainly our indigenous peoples who

very much deserve to ensure that they get excellent representation in this Legislature.

It's important to note that these amendments to the Election Act have come about as a result of careful consideration of recommendations of the chief elections officer, who has been very involved in giving us advice on improvements to the electrical—electoral process. Not the electrical process. That's a debate for another day, but we do want to electrify the elections process to get more people excited and involved.

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A couple of things that I think are also important are about when we vote: We know that when we have fixed election dates, it's easier for the participants in the electoral process to get organized, to energize their teams, but I think it's also better for the general public. It's better for the whole process of organizing the mechanics of the election, whether it's advanced polling or other aspects of it. Certainly in the province of Ontario, where we have very often had provincial and municipal elections overlap, moving to a spring fixed election date is a very positive step and will also help to clarify for people who those pesky folks knocking on their doors are. Are they running for city hall, are they running for a school board or for the Legislature? This is an important step in ensuring that the process is very clear and fair to people.

Another key part of the bill before us is the issue of using technology in the election process. We still very much have a 19th-century electoral system in the 21st century. The use of electronic voting lists connected electronically and interconnected is, I think, going to be a very important part of these reforms—and also the use of tabulators, which will greatly speed up the results. To those who question the efficacy of those election tabulators, my own experience running municipally in the city of Toronto, where those machines have been used for many years, is that they are excellent and they provide quick results. In those rare circumstances when there is a mechanical breakdown, you still have the ability to do a paper recount of the ballots in that machine. I experienced that myself in one election and it works, and it still provides for integrity in the system.

All of these are very positive attributes of the bill, and I'm sure my colleague from Mississauga–Streetsville will elaborate further upon them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to continue to discuss this particular bill.

I just want to preface it by talking a little about our present system, because very often people say that our present system, which is called first-past-the-post, is just awful, and they go into any number of reasons why. But for all its falsely perceived demerits, the first-past-the-post system is stunningly simple, brutally effective and actually confers upon a government a mandate and an obligation to do something. It actually allows people to defeat their politicians or their parties.

Never lose sight of this particular breathtaking benefit. To our US cousins who re-elect more than 90% of their politicians most years, the ability to make the type of sweeping change that Canadians regularly make at the federal and provincial levels is just a pipe dream.

Canada's system is a simple system that allows a level and, most importantly, a bare and an exposed playing field. I would caution people against introducing thickets of regulations, exceptions and special cases that make Canada's electoral system a case of blaming the system when, in fact, it's the government that just can't do the job.

A couple of things that my colleagues talked about—the move to a spring election from a fall election. I just want to speak a little bit as a candidate here. In the fall when you're going door to door, each day is getting shorter and darker and colder. When you're going door to door in the spring, the days are getting longer and brighter and warmer. For that reason alone, that's a reform that I think is well worth considering. People are just in a better mood for a spring election. It doesn't overlap any of the fall elections by either design or accident.

There's another reform that's been proposed here, which is electronic voting lists. I think this one is also a good one. I think anything that enables us to get the same information that we would get manually with the same or a greater degree of integrity than we would get manually is a good thing. It enables a campaign organization to know who among those they've identified has actually gone out and voted, which allows a campaign team to not have to bother the same people again and again. They say, "But I've already voted. Will you take yes for an answer?" Being able to gain access to that information more quickly allows us to be more responsive and also more compassionate to the people we're trying, having identified their preference, to get out to vote, to cash it in.

As well, this bill proposes keeping the paper audit trail. One of the things that gives Canadian elections in general integrity is that audit trail. It means that an election is a process that's very closely watched. It also means that both sides provide a check and a balance on one another. As a result, Canadian elections are exposed, Canadian elections are fair, and Canadian elections are honest.

I say in this chamber to my colleagues, in all of the years that I've helped others and I've run myself, yes, I've seen signs pulled down and I've seen little dirty tricks here and there, but I have never seen any large-scale attempt to go out and disturb the integrity of the system of casting ballots and the system of counting ballots. I'd say Canadians can look at their electoral system and say, "This is an accurate reflection of the people who have come out to vote."

When I used to do work as one of Microsoft's Most Valuable Professionals, every year they would bring us down to Redmond, Washington. One day, I remember asking the guy who at the time was developing the Windows product—Windows had 8,000 full-time

developers working on it at the time. I and a few others asked, "How do you make decisions with a team that large?" What he said is something I wrote down, because I thought to myself, "He's actually talking politics here." He said the following: "First of all, we always make our decisions on time"—elections. And he said, "Decisions are made by people who show up"—voters. So the thing that we're discussing here actually has a lot of parallels in the private sector.

My personal wish, as we walk down this exercise of looking at the integrity of our system, is that we retain that integrity, we retain that transparency, and we retain that simplicity that allows people to know that the representatives they send are accountable to somebody and they're also defeatable by somebody.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to rise and to speak in support of Bill 45, Election Statute Law Amendment Act. This is a really interesting act because we're making some—not major, but significant—adjustments to how elections are held in Ontario. When you think about it, the right to vote, to exercise your right to vote, is really the foundation of our democracy, and it's important that we think carefully about how we can continuously improve the way that we hold elections and who gets to vote.

One of the challenges that we've seen lately is declining voter turnout. In the 2014 election, less than 52% of the people eligible to vote actually voted. When you look at young people, the number becomes even more disturbing. In the last election, only 34% of young people cast their ballot, even when they were registered and eligible to vote. So one of the challenges that we face is, how do we engage young people in the process of voting? We know that seniors have the highest voter turnout until they become quite elderly and infirm, but older people are more inclined to vote than young people in a really quite dramatic way.

One of the things that we're looking at is what's called provisional registration of 16- and 17-year-olds. I don't know whether my riding is a little bit unusual, but I actually have a fair bit of interaction with youth and young adults during election campaigns. For whatever reason, I always have at least three of the high schools in Guelph organize all-candidates meetings, and by definition when you do an all-candidates meeting at a high school, almost all of the audience can't actually vote.

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But then also, because it's a university town, as you're going door to door, particularly in the south end of town, you run into a lot of students. Those students may or may not be registered to vote, and if they are registered to vote, it's very likely that they're not registered to vote in Guelph—that they are, if they are registered at all, registered someplace else. So this whole business of talking to people who are young and encouraging them to become involved in the electoral process is a reality that I have in every election campaign.

One of the things that I always tell the university students and young people is that you really need to think about the dynamic that you're setting up when you choose not to vote, because I know that as a politician, your grandparents are the people most likely to show up, then your parents and then you. That means, if the pages who are sitting here think about it, that if I do something that your grandparents want, they're going to show up and vote about it. If I do something that your parents like or don't like, they're somewhat likely to show up and vote. But if I do something that young people like or don't like, you're probably not going to show up at all. So if you look at this from a really practical point of view, the people I really, really need to listen to are actually your grandparents, because your grandparents are almost guaranteed to show up and vote.

That changes the way that politicians at whatever level—this isn't just a provincial phenomenon; it's a federal phenomenon, a provincial phenomenon, a school board phenomenon, a municipal phenomenon. It changes the way politicians think about what they're going to promise to do, because they know that the people they really have to appeal to are the people who are a little bit older. We want to change that dynamic. We want to make sure that our young people are more engaged.

The Chief Electoral Officer, if this bill passes, would be required to set up a process of provisional registration for 16- and 17-year-olds. We're not changing the age at which people can vote; that stays at 18. But while kids are still in high school—the Chief Electoral Officer has said, "I'd like to engage with high schools"—there would be an opportunity to be provisionally registered as voters. Then, when they turn 18, they would be automatically transferred to the for-real voters list, and that registration would mean that they're all ready to vote and participate. That's one of the really interesting ideas that's in this bill.

My colleague mentioned the whole issue of spring election dates. This bill, if passed, would change the regular scheduled election date from the fall to the spring. The truth of the matter is that when you go door to door and you knock on doors in the fall after supper, it's dark out, and people don't really answer their doors to strangers in the dark—except tonight, when it's Halloween. But normally, people don't open the doors for strangers at night, so it makes it really difficult to canvass as you get closer to the election. The lovely thing about the unscheduled election that we had in June 2014 was that it was bright out in the evening, which meant that you actually got to go and talk to people, because they were quite happy to stand outside when it was nice and warm and talk to candidates about what it was that you as a candidate wanted to talk about.

The other thing is, because of the slippage around the by-election, we know that if we have an election in the fall of 2018 we're going to bump into municipal elections and federal elections, potentially. That just confuses people if you've got two or three different elections all going on at the same time. So what this bill would do is move the scheduled election date to the spring.

One of the other things it does, and my colleague also talked to this a bit, was about the whole business of partially adopting technology. One of the other things that I notice is that in Guelph, because we have more commuters—well, this is true all over—we've changed the time that the polling stations are open so that it's later in the evening. If you have to hand-count all those ballots, election day goes on forever. It's getting to be very late at night by the time you know the results. Going to mechanical counting technology means that we can get the results a whole lot quicker and everybody can celebrate more and go to bed.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: I was listening to the debate this afternoon, and I'll be up shortly, but what I heard was the Liberal members speaking about the benign and the clauses and the amendments, but they didn't address any of those elements that actually diminish the level playing field that we have. We didn't hear them talk about taking away the first blackout period in non-scheduled elections or by-elections. Of course, the first blackout period for by-elections and for non-scheduled general elections is to not permit the government to have an undue advantage over the opposition parties in elections, so it puts in a blackout period to even the playing field. I didn't hear them talk about that at all. They want to take away that blackout period and allow them to advertise in the lead-up even before they announce the by-elections. I'd like to see them comment on that as well.

I didn't hear them talk about the need for this electoral boundaries commission for the north, and of course that's limited to only two ridings in the north. We know that there are 11 ridings in the north, but the northern electoral boundary commission is only tasked with looking at boundaries on two of those ridings. Why are not the other nine ridings included in that boundary commission? No evidence, no fact to back up—just more political interference and influence in electoral boundaries.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a pleasure to stand here in my place and represent the views of the good constituents in Windsor–Tecumseh. I say to my friends on the other side of the aisle: Friends, if you're going to improve the way we run elections in Ontario, put a few bucks in here—or more than a few—and do something about the voters list. It's absolutely horrendous. You know it yourself, every time you look at it. It's put together by MPAC, and by MPAC's own admission, they only get about 66% of it accurate. That's the best they can do. Then they turn it over to the municipal officials and the election officials and they say, "This is the best we can do. Can you fix it?" Well, they don't have the resources, they don't have the time and they don't have the money; they do what they can. But if the Wynne Liberals really want to get serious about putting on good elections, they would provide the resources to MPAC and the municipalities to finally have a good voters list that we

can all depend on and improve on. It's the worst thing in the world to go up—and these things are so outdated. So if you want to improve something, go ahead and do it.

1540

The other thing; They're talking about the vote-tabulating machines based on the Whitby–Oshawa by-election. Good, but you know what? I read the report from the Chief Electoral Officer last June and he said, "Do it now. We're running out of time. We have to have it now. We need a decision now." That was five months ago. By the time we get through with this, it may well be too late for the staff training, to order the equipment, to have it all in place because we are running out of time. The next provincial election isn't all that far away.

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

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm very pleased to join the discussion this afternoon on Bill 45, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act. What we're focusing on in this bill is looking at changing the election day, trying to engage youth and, really, just modernizing the election process. We do face some very real challenges when it comes to voter turnout; we heard the President of the Treasury Board commenting on that. In the last election, on June 12, 2014, fewer than 52% of Ontarians bothered to vote—she mentioned that—and only 34% of youth cast a ballot. As a society, I think we need to reflect on this and ask ourselves, "How do we address this issue of disengagement?"

Speaker, I will tell you that in my previous career as a news journalist—you might remember this—whether it was a federal, provincial or local election, every single election, we would do stories on why so few people bothered to vote and what we can do to fix this.

Well, one measure in this bill is to get 16- and 17-year-olds involved with pre-voter registration. The voting age would stay at 18, but we can reach out to youth while they're still in school, while they're learning about government, and get them registered and interested in the political process. Also, this pre-registration allows Elections Ontario the opportunity to contact them when they turn 18 with information on where and when they can vote. It makes them feel like they are part of the process and we're reaching out to them. What we can also do for best practices is look to provinces like Quebec and Nova Scotia, where they already have pre-voter registration for 16- and 17-year-olds.

This bill is also going to change the voting day from the fall to the spring. You also heard other members commenting on this. I would agree that it's a lot more pleasant campaigning in the spring when it's warmer and when you have more daylight hours to do this.

Bill 45 makes sense and I encourage all of my colleagues to support it.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm going to be speaking to this at length after my colleague from Lennox and Addington—I never get it—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Frontenac—

Mr. Bill Walker: Frontenac—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Throw them all in.

Mr. Bill Walker: Throw them all in. Exactly, Mr. Hillier.

I think what I want to really get across in my time is, there are certainly some things in this bill that we're prepared to support. Anytime you can improve and engage voters is a good thing, but I think that comes back to more than just some changes with the actual process. You actually have to put faith and trust back for the voter that the government is here to do the right things. I think some of the things I've heard so far in my riding are concerns about the electronic vote tabulators and whether those are going to work.

We had the EQAO score system last week that was hacked and crashed, and cost the taxpayer a lot of money with absolutely no value in it. We've had the SAMS computer program through the Ministry of Community and Social Services that has been an abysmal failure and cost people a lot of money. There are a lot of people out there who are concerned when you say, "I'm going to go to an electronic system," particularly those who have challenges with electronics. In a riding like Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, we still have pockets that can't get electronic information, so a lot of people are of the mindset that, "I want to go in and do that ballot."

But I do support the electoral officer. He's been bringing some thoughts on how to improve on big challenges in regard to getting enough people out to be scrutineers, poll clerks and all those types of things, so there is some merit in trying to do this. But I think we want to make sure that we explore that. Just putting in a system isn't going to change the whole thing if you don't have the trust and integrity that people truly see through. They want to ensure that a government—and all politicians, actually—has trust and integrity, and has the voters in mind.

I'm going to talk a fair bit in my remarks, as well, about the third-party election advertising, which is a big piece of this, and getting those voters who have empathy and don't trust the system to come back to the polls. I look forward to doing that, Mr. Speaker, and I also look forward to hearing my colleague's comments in a few short minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The President of the Treasury Board can reply.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the members from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, Windsor–Tecumseh, Kitchener Centre and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

I wanted to talk a little bit more about the technology-enabled elections. Two things are being proposed.

One is the use of e-poll books. Instead of that great wad of hard-copy paper with people's names on it, it would be an electronic voter methodology where if you do have the voter registration card, it can just be scanned, match you up with your name, and it will shorten the lineups at the polls and make it a way more efficient process.

You're still going to use a paper ballot; that isn't changing. It isn't like you're going to some sort of online voting. You still get a paper ballot, but then the paper ballot can be counted using an electronic tabulator.

This was tested out in the Oshawa by-election, the actual equipment, to make sure that it did work. They polled some of the voters afterwards, and a whopping 96% of the voters who were polled after voting with the technology-enabled model thought that the process was easy to use with the new technology, and 91% of them said they were supportive of that technology being used in future general elections. There has been some test-and-go here.

Now, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh mentioned that the Chief Electoral Officer has cautioned us that he needs a decision very quickly. That's why, with the co-operation of all three parties, we could get this bill passed reasonably quickly. In fact, we would propose that it take effect on January 1, 2017, precisely so that Elections Ontario can get all the equipment and the changes in place in a really timely fashion.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: I listened to the Attorney General in his leadoff debate on Bill 45, and it was astonishing. He took about a half hour, then that was followed up by a half hour by the parliamentary secretary to the Attorney General. For that hour, we heard about how Bill 45 was going to turn the election process, the voting process, into utopia in Ontario, that the youth will now be coming out in droves to vote in Ontario. Voter apathy will be gone and life will be good for all.

I wrote this down. The three words that came to my mind while listening were “hooley,” “poppycock” and “balderdash.” This bill does nothing, really nothing, to improve voter turnout. It does have some good elements, some good housekeeping elements, some technical and bureaucratic improvements to our Election Act, but will it change voter turnout and will it alter voter apathy? Well, I'll let everybody else decide.

I'll go through the amendments here and you guys tell me which one is going to drive the youth out to vote at the next general election. General elections will be scheduled in June instead of October. That's going to drive thousands of people more out to the voting stations? I don't think so.

Here is an improvement. We are going to permit people who are 16 or 17 to be on the provisional voters list, but the 16-year-old or 17-year-old will have to go to the Chief Electoral Officer and request it. I'll say to you, Speaker: Any 16-year-old or 17-year-old who will go through that process and request to be put on the provisional voters list is motivated and they're going to vote when they're 18, regardless of the registration.

1550

Let's go to the next one, vote-tabulating machines. That's going to drive the youth out to general elections, I'm sure. Now that they know they will have vote-tabulating machines in polling stations—you still get to

use a paper ballot, but they'll have a vote-tabulating machine. That's going to drive up the percentage of voter turnout substantially.

Of course, they will have a unique identifier on the voters list. That's going to motivate a lot of people to come out and vote, knowing that they will have a unique identifier on the list, and they won't be confused with some other unique identifier, I guess.

The CEO, the Chief Electoral Officer, will no longer have to communicate information about the general election in print media. That's another amendment: The Chief Electoral Officer will not be required to put information in print media. Well, that should generate a lot more voter turnout. I think it will not have much effect whatsoever.

What else have we got here? The bill identifies what information on the permanent voters list will be available to political parties and restricts what information will be available. A good technical amendment, an important technical amendment, but it has nothing to do with voter turnout. I can assure you that none of my kids would have come out to go vote because they were aware that some information was not available on the voters list.

I could go on and on about these technical amendments, Speaker, but clearly they have nothing to do with voter turnout. I want to call out the Attorney General, his parliamentary secretary and every other member of the Liberal caucus who gets up here and debates this bill suggesting that voter apathy is at the motivation of this bill, to undo that voter apathy and to motivate our youth to be engaged in the political process. I said it earlier: hooley, poppycock and balderdash to those comments. We'll have nothing to do—

But I do want to suggest, Speaker, that there are some elements in this bill that are not benign, that are not just technical in nature and actually do things that will create a position where the electoral playing field becomes skewed, and possibly even offensive in some ways.

Before starting this debate today, I was down in committee with Bill 2, the election financing reform act. Smokey Thomas was in that committee. He was providing comments on the election financing reform, and it was interesting. His comments were that neither he nor the members of the union that he represents have any trust in this government. They don't believe that high ethical standards are able to be achieved in advance by this Liberal government. And when you take a look at this bill, Bill 45, you can see—

Interjection.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Yes, I agree. I spoke earlier, in questions and comments, about the blackout period. Here, right now, the government is prevented from advertising at the beginning of an unscheduled election or a by-election. The purpose and the rationale here are important for people to understand. This prevents the government from taking undue advantage because they are the ones who know when they're going to schedule a by-election. It prevents them from using government money and using party money to advertise before the

other parties even know there's a by-election being called. What does Bill 45 do? It takes away that first blackout period. It gives advantage to the government and puts the opposition parties at a disadvantage. The Liberal government putting the opposition parties at a disadvantage and permitting itself to advertise before other parties: Is that going to turn more youth out to vote? I don't think so. But I do know that it's going to be a disadvantage to opposition members.

Here's another one. At the present time, it's unlawful under the Election Act for schools to prevent their facilities from being used for polling purposes. It's against the law. Schools have to provide their facilities as polling stations. This government, with this bill, will now make it twice offensive. It's going to be an offence under the Education Act as well as the Election Act. Of course, only one penalty can be levied, only one charge can be prosecuted, but now we're going to have two offences where there was only one previously.

Is that going to help anything? I'm pretty confident in saying no. I have no idea why you would have wanted to make an offence under the Election Act also an offence under the Education Act when only one offence can be prosecuted anyway.

There's another one that I found quite interesting—and it will take a moment to explain—and that is access to multi-unit residential buildings. At the present time, owners and operators of multi-unit residential buildings must provide political candidates access to those buildings. If you think of it down here in the big city, the concierge would not be able to prevent a candidate from coming in and canvassing in a building. That works fine for examples like that. It would be an offence if that concierge prevented a candidate.

This bill changes the language of this clause. Now it becomes an administrative, monetary penalty. It's no longer a provincial offence. But it goes even further. Let's say a candidate goes to a multi-unit residential building that doesn't have a concierge service, that is locked, and the only people who can get in are the residents. If the candidate puts in a notice that he or she wants access to that building, if it's not granted within 24 hours, it's an administrative, monetary penalty to the building owner.

The building owner may not even have 24-hour staff, may not have staff there at the building at any time. But just by posting a notice, a piece of paper with a piece of Scotch tape on it, if it's not acted upon within 24 hours, the building owner is fined. They're not even permitted the opportunity to defend themselves against the fine. His or her only appeal mechanism is to appeal back to the very agency that fined them in the first place.

Why are we changing this to an administrative, monetary penalty? Are we seeing great hordes of building owners preventing candidates from having access to their buildings? I could tell you, in my research nobody has ever been charged under that, that I could find. There may have been somebody sometime, somewhere, but it doesn't appear that there's a great offence happening. But

now we're going to make it an administrative, monetary penalty, and no right to defend yourself against that penalty.

1600

I believe the standard penalty, if it's not prescribed under the Election Act, is \$5,000 or \$10,000. It's not small. You can imagine some small landlord with three or four or five or six units, who's hardly making his mortgage payments and his hydro payments and his tax payments, now forced to pay a \$5,000 or \$10,000 administrative penalty because he wasn't at the building every day looking for a notice to be posted on the door—foolishness.

I spoke earlier about the northern boundary commission. This one was an odd one, Speaker—and maybe somebody over there will address these elements in the questions or comments, but it's highly unlikely. I know Sudoku and crossword puzzles are much more entertaining than debate. Regardless, the northern boundary commission is tasked only with looking at the boundaries of Timmins–James Bay and with Kenora–Rainy River. Of course, as I said in questions and comments, there are 11 ridings in the north.

We also know—just for people listening, who may not be aware—that for a couple of decades now this province has recognized the benefit and the value in having our electoral boundaries consistent with the federal boundaries. It makes it easier for people to understand who their member of the provincial Legislature is, who their member of the federal House of Commons is. It provides some symmetry that their member of the provincial Legislature represents the same area as their member for the House of Commons. That's altered in a very minor way at the present time. We have one extra riding in the north—Mr. Vanthof represents the extra riding, I believe—as compared with the federal government. But now we're going to have this boundary commission, made up of five people who will study the need to turn those two ridings either into three or into four.

I think everybody will recognize this: Those two ridings, Kenora–Rainy River and Timmins–James Bay, are very large geographical ridings but have a very small population base. They nowhere near meet the baseline of population for other ridings. In Ontario, our baseline—what we are looking to achieve across all our ridings—is, on average, about 100,000 residents in each constituency, in each electoral district. I believe Kenora–Rainy River and Timmins–James Bay have about 60,000 residents in those two communities as it is, so to break them down into even smaller constituent elements really skews that standard.

I think everybody knows this, but I'll emphasize it: We know that we want every vote cast to be of the same value, the same weight, so that a vote in Toronto is no more or no less than a vote in Lanark; that a vote in Timmins–James Bay is no more or less than a vote in Chatham. But now, under this proposal, if we break this down into four ridings, the votes in the north in those cases will be substantially greater. I would go along with

that, Speaker. I could understand some motivation if the government provided some. Have we seen any evidence, have we seen any rationale, have we seen any studies by this Liberal government about why these two particular ridings ought to be broken down into smaller? I haven't. I have not seen anything. No studies; no analysis; no evaluation.

Let me take you back to those fabulous mandate letters at the start of this session and the mandate letters back in 2014, where the Premier included in the mandate letters that their decisions will be based on science and evidence. Well, there you go. Maybe the member from Sault Ste. Marie will provide us that science and evidence today, because I know that he takes his mandate letters very seriously and would not think of advancing or supporting any bill that wasn't based on science and evidence. So let's see it. In questions and comments, let's bring it out. Let us see the science and evidence behind that.

I also want to go back to the hoey and the poppycock about improving voter turnout that was mentioned so often. Again, I like to base things on science and evidence: look at what studies are available; ponder, question and reflect on how we can make things better. I would like to see greater voter turnout. Without a doubt, I'd love to see a 70%, 80%, 90% voter turnout. It would be great. That would tell me that the people in this province respect what we're doing here. When I see large voter turnouts, that tells me people are looking to their elected representatives to provide value in their lives, provide value in this Legislature. When we're down at 50%—or, in the 2011 election, I believe, we went below 50% for the very first time in a general election: 49%.

Speaker, there's a group, and maybe the Liberals could take a look at this. It's a group called Samara. Samara is a not-for-profit think tank, a group that studies democracy. They've made presentations here in the Ontario Legislative Assembly, at the Legislative Assembly committee, on electronic petitions. They have published a number of books. One that I found very interesting was called *Tragedy in the Commons*. They have studied low voter turnout. I can tell you with absolute certainty, Speaker, that not one of these amendments in Bill 45 was indicated in their books or their studies as a way to improve voter turnout. Not one. Voting machines don't come into the Samara analysis of improving voter turnout. Changing the general elections from October to June isn't indicated in Samara—not at all. And, lo and behold, not one clause in Bill 45 shows up in any document anywhere that I've been able to find as a way or a means to improve voter turnout. So I guess that's why I came to that conclusion about hoey and poppycock with the minister's debate on Bill 45.

Speaker, hopefully we will support this bill. I would like to support this bill, but I would like to have a commitment from this government that the concerns that are raised by us—the concerns about the administrative monetary penalties, about the blackout periods, about the double offence on polling stations—are actually ad-

dressed during committee and, unlike in Bill 45, where not one Liberal member said one word during our committee hearings last week, that they actually engage in democracy; that like the youth, they come out and be participatory during committee hearings on Bill 2; that they find their voice.

1610

Listen, Speaker, if I am wrong in my assertions, I'll be happy to withdraw. If they can demonstrate that there is value in giving the Liberal government advantages during by-elections and allowing them to advertise before anybody else, I'll be happy to withdraw these concerns. But as I see it right at the present time, without a doubt some of these clauses in Bill 45 will have to be withdrawn, amended. I'm not going to sit back and quietly allow the Liberal government advantages on advertising during by-elections—absolutely not. I'm not going to sit back and allow unsuspecting, unknowing landlords and building owners to be fined \$5,000 because they keep their buildings locked. I'm not going to just accept that.

I do want to see, Speaker, the analysis and the benefits of this northern boundary commission. I think that's appropriate. I think it's worthwhile. I think it's beneficial that the government share their evaluation with us.

Oh, here's another one. I don't know how I missed this one. Here's another big bonus that is going to drive our youth out to the polling stations. We are going to consolidate all of the C-1 candidate registration nomination papers. Everybody has been waiting for that one for ages. I get calls from my constituents all the time: "When are you going to consolidate the C-1 registration papers?"

Of course, I should also say that there is a negative with consolidating those papers. At the present time, there are three forms that a nomination contestant needs to fill out to meet all the requirements of Elections Ontario. We've all done it. You have to get—I don't know; is it 20 or 100 names from people in your riding who nominate you? There's a bunch of different forms that have to be done. But now all the forms will be condensed into one, which means you can't actually start being a contestant, you can't open up a bank account, you can't collect money, you can't do anything until you get all your paperwork done—all your paperwork. Heaven forbid that we would want to have somebody engaged in the political process who hasn't got all the paperwork done all at once, all in one form. My, my, my.

Interjection.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Percy, I'm sure the people in Windsor–Tecumseh are going to come out in droves to vote for you now, knowing that you only have one form to fill out and not three. Amazing.

It is important, Speaker—

Interjection.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I see the minister of indigenous affairs has woken up today; it's good to see you join in the discussion for a change.

Speaker, there are a few elements for the members in this House to consider while they are listening to the debate or doing other things, whatever they may be. I do

hope they take it into consideration: Let's make the bill better. We've got a number of technical and housekeeping items that I think are of benefit, but let's not support a bill because you couldn't be bothered to read it. Let's not support a bill because, "It has a lot of words and a lot of clauses and I don't really understand what a C-1 form is anyway." Let's think about things before we actually say we support it.

I really am looking forward to the next committee hearing on Bill 45, to see if we can get any of the five Liberal members on that committee to express an opinion and to be engaged in the discussion on these amendments that will be appropriate to be advanced and, in my view, appropriate to amend Bill 45 so that it is, indeed, a worthwhile bill.

Speaker, I did mention that the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound will be sharing my time. So with that, I'll be happy to take my seat and look forward to the fabulous speaker from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound to provide his comments on Bill 45 to this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to follow my colleague from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. With every bill, what I really appreciate about my colleague is that he goes through and really does look at it. He looks at it from the perspective of, what this is going to do to actually make our province a better place? Is it going to make life better for his constituents and all of the constituents of Ontario? He looks at it from the perspective of what's really going to be implemented and make an improvement.

He brought up some good points in his discussion. I think what he is really saying is, are there things in this bill that are truly going to ensure that the goal is to get more people voting? He brought up things like, if you move it from October to June, is that going to open the floodgates so people will definitely come out more? He talked about the northern riding size and the boundary analysis and the science. He wanted to make sure that Liberals who, at every opportunity, spend money on their consultant friends—why haven't they, on this one, actually put something in front of us that truly shows there's going to be an effect to the benefit of Ontarians?

He talked about administrative monetary penalties, particularly to the building owners, the landlords, who may get a penalty and may not even have anybody there to be able to defend the need to have them reply within 24 hours.

He talked about the advantages of by-election advertising to the sitting government. Again, we would hope that even the Liberals wouldn't put something in that is going to give them a distinct advantage, because this comes down to the trust and integrity that the voter wants to see in government.

The C-1 registration consolidation: I think he made a real valid point, that that will probably open up the floodgates and be trampled with people who are so happy about it.

Mr. Speaker, like you, I've not had one person in my riding ask about any of those things. What they'd really like to see, I think—and the Liberals are promoting Bill 45 as one that would make it easier to vote and engage more people in the democratic process, especially our youth. A lot of these are technical things. They're niceties, but are they the things where people are coming to your door or my door saying that these are the issues? What I hear about from people at election time, particularly during the election period and very quickly after the election period, is voter lists. "Do something tangible." I don't see anything in this bill about improving the voter lists.

The other thing I hear a lot in our communities is about people who travel a long distance. They've been going to the same poll for 20 years and this time, in the last election, they had to go to the other end of my riding to vote; one spouse went to one and one went to another, although they live in the same house. So those types of tangible things.

What I've had people suggest to me is that they want to see improvements to the voter list so they actually know they can vote in a timely manner, in an efficient manner and a convenient manner to them; and their location. They want to make sure, of course, there is accessibility; and we all respect and want that, particularly me, as the accessibility critic.

1620

A number of constituents have come to me and said, "Why aren't we utilizing the schools on a PD day so we actually have access to all of those community facilities that are bought and paid for by the taxpayer and we don't have to be changing all the time and sending people all over the countryside?"

I will support efforts that are actually going to engage and encourage more people to vote, but I think fundamental to all of that—most of the things in this bill I don't think are truly going to do it. I support some things, particularly what the electoral officer has recommended in many cases. Speeding up the process when you get to the voter booth—I like those types of things.

My good colleague from Perth-Wellington said that when he was a municipal councillor they still used the old paper ballot, but when you insert that, the tabulation was much quicker in an electronic sense. I think many people will support that. They're very concerned if it's going to be totally electronic. Particularly people who aren't into the new age, they still want to be able to go in and do it the old way and know that that's going to be there.

I think the best way to engage more voter turnout is through the integrity and trust of the government. I'm going to talk a little bit at this point about my private member's bill that I introduced last October, Bill 96, An Act to amend the Elections Finance Act with respect to third party election advertising. There was a lot of voter fatigue, and I think part of it was because they became cynical. They felt that the system just wasn't working for them anymore, so they stopped coming out as much.

During my debate, I voiced concerns over the fact that provincial elections are seeing a significant decline in voter participation. Specifically, I mentioned that voter turnout has been falling steadily. Ontario used to enjoy a 65% voter turnout, but by the 2003 election there was a 57% turnout; in 2007, a 52% turnout; and in the 2011 election, a 48% turnout. The 2014 election saw a record high number of spoiled ballots: 31,399 Ontarians declined their votes in the last election, the highest rejection level since 1975. The largest protest votes hit the ridings of Brant, Etobicoke Centre, Kitchener–Waterloo, London West, Mississauga–Erindale, Oak Ridges–Markham, Ottawa South, St. Catharines, Windsor West and Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Likewise in the last provincial election, only 34% of youth cast a ballot. Obviously that's something we want to address. I have no issue at all with the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Essensa, suggesting that there be voter registration now so that they're ready for the election. That, hopefully, will help engage those youth. But what I hear from youth in my riding is, "We want to know, when we place our X on that ballot, that it's actually going to mean something and it's going to be a government that respects the integrity of the voter and represents their wishes."

By comparison, voter turnout in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has actually been on the upswing in the last two elections: 42,816 in 2014 compared to 41,306 in 2011.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Perhaps that might have been the situation, but I'm not thinking so, to my honourable colleague from down the aisle, Mr. Hatfield.

We need to consider why apathy is getting worse. Why is engaging voters becoming a bigger challenge? Our provincial Chief Electoral Officer, Greg Essensa, has aptly captured the trends in voter apathy. It's money and special interests, Mr. Speaker, and those two come back to trust and integrity. Does the voter truly think that the government is here to do what's in the best interests of them, or is it a self-serving government who, no matter what I do, they're going to go down the path and do what they think is best to keep them in power?

Many people suggest to me that there's too much money in politics and voters don't approve of money buying special favours for special interests. "The financial support that all Ontario political parties received in contributions from 2012 to 2014, which was one electoral cycle, was about \$98 million," according to Mr. Essensa. "This includes corporate and union contributions that amounted to about \$50 million, or about 50% of all contributions."

Mr. Essensa made it his priority to recommend changes to the government on how to change "election laws so that elections can be administered in ways that are responsive to the needs of the citizens and to their local communities" and with an intent to increase voter participation. He suggested that "rules should balance between freedom of speech and electoral quality." He appealed to the government three times to call for

changes, and each time shared with them new concerns over the lax rules.

"In the 2007 general election, there were 20 registered third parties, and they collectively spent \$1.85 million.... There were three third parties that spent between \$100,000 and \$1 million, and there was one third party that spent over \$1 million—it spent \$1.08 million.

"In the 2011 general election, there were 22 registered third parties, and they collectively spent \$6.08 million. Of note, the collective advertising spending of third parties amounted to 14% of all election spending at this general election. There was one third party that spent between \$100,000 and \$1 million, and there were now three third parties that spent over \$1 million—one of which spent almost \$2.7 million.

"In the 2014 general election, there were 37 registered third parties, and they collectively spent \$8.64 million. Of note, the collective advertising spending of third parties amounted to 17% of all election spending at this general election. There were six third parties that spent between \$100,000 and \$1 million, and there were three third parties that spent over \$1 million—one of which spent almost \$2.5 million."

Mr. Speaker, that was part of the concern that I brought forward in my bill: that there was too much influence by special interest third parties; that it was actually working in reverse. Rather than engaging people, people were actually saying, "Do you know what? Those groups can buy the election. My vote doesn't count. I'm not going to drive—particularly when I have to drive 20 miles to get to a voting booth when there is one half a mile away from my house. I'm just not going to do it because there's too much influence. They're buying the election. There's too much third-party involvement." So I brought that to try to change it so that democracy was protected and it was actually back to the principle of democracy: that everybody should have a vote and should feel that their vote truly does count.

Looking back over the last nine years, these figures show that third-party advertising played a significant and growing role in Ontario elections. We've reached a point where we are seeing third parties outspend political parties in our provincial election. I spoke at length with Mr. Essensa, the Chief Electoral Officer, about this as I developed my third-party bill, to ensure that it was engaging and that it was representative of what his concerns were and, most importantly, what the people of Ontario were telling me. Mr. Essensa concluded that the lack of spending limits and regulations "undermines confidence in the electoral process." I believe that has more impact on people not coming out to vote than many of the things that are in this current bill, Bill 45.

This is why it's so frustrating to watch them ignore efforts to fix political spending rules and vote down bill after bill, including my PMB in October 2015. Every single member of the Liberal government voted against my PMB. They voted against my colleague Mr. Nicholls from Chatham–Kent–Essex, and they voted, Mr. Speaker, against your bill, in 2011, of a very similar

nature—to limit third-party influence and to ensure that actual politics was about the people, not about a political party.

Mr. Speaker, it saddens me, but I do hear this again on the street from a lot of people: “They didn’t want to do anything to fix it until they got caught.” We’ve talked about this in the House: buying access to cabinet ministers. The media jumped on it. The people of Ontario started to pay more attention to it. Then, all of a sudden—remember, in October, they voted unanimously against my bill to make any change, not one single change, to that act. But now they’ve come in and done a full-scale change of it. Then they brought in this bill, suggesting that this is going to solve all the ills and that voter engagement is just going to turn around tomorrow because of this bill. The Liberals are now talking about changing the rules because they got caught holding intimate backroom fundraisers with the very stakeholders who were lobbying them for government contracts and policy decisions. I don’t think even most of the members over there can refute that. I think they actually now will be able to at least acknowledge that some of that was going on. The numbers are out there. The facts are there. Obviously, they’ve had something happen because they brought in election advertising spending changes. So they have obviously come to the conclusion, “Uh-oh. We’d better change public perception here because, yes, there is an election coming in 2018.”

At the end of the day, what we want, what the people of Ontario want, is a fair, more representative Parliament, and we want fair, more representative policies. We need a system to serve the public that is free and open, that is above and beyond public doubt, suspicion or cynicism.

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Walker: I think I’m getting to at least one member over there, who just seems to not be able to take this. It must really be a guilt complex, I think, that’s hitting her because she keeps trying to throw me off, but it’s not—because I’m very determined to ensure that the people of Ontario are who I represent and who our party will represent.

Mr. Speaker, better turnout is about integrity. This bill does not address anything akin to integrity in most of what it’s covering. There are going to be some minor improvements, and certainly I’ll support things that are going to engage more people. But it’s about the trust of people. If they’re going to talk about that, then I think people will listen and will actually start to think differently and perhaps become more engaged. I think it’s fair to say that when the public hears and sees their government and leadership behave indifferently, electoral engagement turns out the same.

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The Liberals—and certainly the member from Barrie—don’t like when I talk about this, when we blow the whistle and they have their fingers in the cookie jar. When they actually get caught, Mr. Speaker, some of them start to step back and become very defensive. They’re trying to go on the offensive, because I think

they know that the people—in this case of Barrie—have figured it out. They don’t like to hear about waste and scandals and mismanagement, especially when there are billions of dollars that are at stake and that have been squandered, that are not there now for people with mental health issues, are not there for people with hip and knee replacements, are not there for people with social services needs that are not there for our youth.

In my riding, as we speak, 18 schools are scheduled to close. My colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry: 30 schools. A total of 600 schools across this province are going to close under the watch of the current Liberal government. They stand up and suggest that they are the education party of our province. I’m not certain how any one of them can stand there and proudly suggest that 600 schools are going to close—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: A point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Northumberland–Quinte West on a point of order.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Speaker, I just wonder if the member should speak about the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I’ll remind the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound that we’re debating the legislation that the government has called today, and would ask him to bring his remarks back to the contents of the bill.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): A point of order, the member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I’m trying to listen to my good friend from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, but the member from Barrie is so vocal this afternoon that I can’t hear him, and he’s only a couple of feet away from me. If you can please bring her to order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): As the members know, all interjections are out of order. It’s important that the Speaker hears the member who has the floor. I look forward to the continued remarks of the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I acknowledge all of those points of order. I’ll certainly do my best, and I hope the member across will do that for my good colleague down the road from Windsor–Tecumseh.

I have, in all of this discussion, tried to bring it to why this bill needs to be here, and the value or the benefit, and why, perhaps—because we’re talking about increased voter turnout in this bill, to ensure that people are actually more engaged. I’m trying to also make sure for the people listening and watching at home that I’m representing what they’re telling me from my great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, why they may not choose to vote.

I was talking a little bit about the challenge that they’re seeing with this government. It’s about trust. Right off the bat, when I started my discussion, I said that the biggest two things are trust and integrity of government. When governments go out and waste, squander, and mismanage the billions of dollars that they have, people become disengaged, disenfranchised.

Sadly, this Liberal government currently is indifferent. Each billion dollars that they've wasted could buy—and listen to this, Mr. Speaker:

—one year of living in a retirement home for all 25,000 seniors who are currently on a wait-list for a nursing bed. They might be more engaged to actually vote if they knew there was something tangible coming from the government.

—support for 500 autistic people who require 24-hour-a-day care for one year. Those people might be actually encouraged to come out and vote if they thought that was going to be a difference.

—eight thousand new affordable housing units in Ontario. Those people I definitely think would come to the voting poll to mark their X if they felt the government was doing things that were going to actually improve their life.

—one year of home care for 55,000 people—55,000 people. Just think of that. If 55,000 more people came to the voting polls, that would be a good increase. This bill would have done its job.

And they might match 35,000 Ontarians with a palliative care bed.

All of those types of things are what I believe the public wants to hear, they want to see in legislation, they want to see in budgets. They want to see that the government is actually in tune with what their needs are. The Liberals essentially could pay for at least half of the litany of promises made during every election when they were shopping for votes.

The other concern that I want to talk about involves efforts to move election data and information online. The government wants to remove the requirement to put advance poll information in print and move it to electronic posts. That's a great thing for anybody who is within the electronic age, who has access, for whom that's the way they communicate. But certainly, in a riding like Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, there are a lot of people who still can't, even if they wish to do that. It won't work in many parts of rural Ontario because we all have pockets that still have no Internet and in some cases no cellphone signal. That electronic world works really great in the urban areas; certainly in many parts of my riding it does. But there are lots of places—and I think we have to always think about every person and their ability to be engaged in the democratic process.

Rural Ontario is still a patchwork, with some areas well-served by small, independent telecom companies, while other areas have little or zero access. The government has just now come on board to realize that it needs to help extend high-speed Internet access to rural southwestern Ontario. Some members over there always accuse me that I never give them credit for anything. Well, Mr. Speaker, they're late to the party. If they hadn't squandered those billions of dollars, we might already have it in every community in Ontario, which, again, would help engage people and get them out to the voter polls. But the good news is the formation of the SouthWestern Integrated Fiber Technology group—

SWIFT, as it's better known—who will now work to extend high-speed access to more than three million people in 350 communities over the next five years.

This is going to be a great thing. I do applaud the government. I just wish—if they hadn't had all the waste in my five years and the eight years before that, we'd already have it. And you know what? We'd already have more hospitals. We wouldn't be closing 600 schools across the province—

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): A point of order, the member for Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I just want to remind you and the member that we are talking about Bill 45. We're talking about modernizing the voting process and engagement with youth. I'm not certain what talking about hospitals has to do with Bill 45, so I would encourage him to come back to the topic at hand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Well, we are debating the elections legislation. The member has brought it back on a number of occasions. He's obviously offering some criticism of the government, but he's bringing it back to the bill.

I recognize, again, the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would expect her to possibly challenge me, but I'm not certain that she really should be challenging you in the Chair. I think you have been listening intently. I have done my best to bring it back and, frankly, the people of Ontario and the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound want me to stand here and tell the truth. They want me to point out, in my role as opposition, why they're not getting health care services, why we're closing 600 schools across this province under their watch, why people are going without hip and knee replacements—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Order. The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound has the floor. Again, I would ask him to make his remarks relevant to the bill.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm certainly trying to do that with evidence. My people come to me every day, and I'm sure in your riding office and in your constituency office, you're having people come in asking you why you're not able to get the services you want, why you're not having the affordable housing, why you're not getting the mental health care services. Why are you going to close my single community school in Paisley? Why are you going to close my school in Markdale, a single community school? This is going to have huge, detrimental impacts to the people of Ontario. I can frankly tell you that people are getting tired.

That's not going to necessarily encourage them to vote, although the people in my riding are saying, "I'll definitely be at the polls, because we need to get them out of there before they do even more damage." They're bringing in the most debt in our province's history: \$320 billion. They're going to put us in debt, which means

there won't be even more services out there for our seniors, for our people on fixed incomes, for our people from special-needs groups who are clamouring for any kind of—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize. I have to ask the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound to make his remarks relevant to the bill.

Mr. Bill Walker: Well, Mr. Speaker, typically what they do is they just shut down debate when they don't want to listen to us and to bring up the truth in the House, but I've tried very hard. This is what the people of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound gave me as information to bring to this table. What I'm trying to show is that there are reasons why voter turnout is down.

It isn't necessarily about the October-to-June change that they're suggesting. It's not about the administrative, monetary penalties that they're talking about. It's not about the C-1 registration consolidation they're talking about. It's about trust and integrity, and why we are not engaged in the democratic process.

At the end of the day, one of the things that I see in there is they're actually talking about getting rid of printed materials for post-elections. Things like advanced ballot days. Those types of things, in a riding like mine where we don't have electronic access on every corner, in every house, in every building—we need to ensure that it's in print. We need to ensure that it's hard copy, so that those people that don't have access have the equal right to be informed, to be educated and to be able to exercise their democratic right to vote.

I'm going to talk a little bit now about electronic vote tabulators. This model was tested during the Whitby–Oshawa by-election, where a scanning machine was used to electronically check off names from the voting list. Mr. Essensa, our Chief Electoral Officer, called the pilot results “an overwhelming success.” He also said an electronic voting system would cost more money in the short term, but it is expected to reduce the costs of elections in the future, because it would use fewer people to staff.

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He came in and did a briefing with our caucus—I trust he's done it with all three parties—sharing some of the challenges that they're encountering. I know in my riding it's tougher and tougher to get enough people out on election day to be able to staff it. If there are improvements we can make there, and if electronic tabulation can help, it certainly is something that I would be supportive of.

I do think we have to be cognizant. There are a lot of people who still—it's going to take some time. They're used to that paper ballot. As long as we're maintaining that, then I think that's fine. I mentioned earlier my colleague from Perth–Wellington. When he was a municipal councillor, you still used your paper ballot, you inserted it in the tabulation and that whole process was refined.

There are concerns about people being able to hack systems. My understanding is it won't be on a network,

so it would be down to each polling station that would actually have that. So it minimizes risk, but people, again, are cynical. They're concerned that someone could actually tamper with the tabulation process. I think it's the Chief Electoral Officer's responsibility to use prime examples, to use science to show that those are all legitimate systems.

My understanding is the new system would cost about \$40 million to implement and would include e-poll books, which would allow for ballot papers to be issued within about one minute of arriving at the polling station. I do recall him in his brief to us saying many people get frustrated. They come in, the paperwork is not correct, it's all over the place, there are a number of stations, and they just get frustrated and walk out of the place. If that can happen in a minute, then I think that lessens the concern people would have, and hopefully they will come out, they'll exercise the right and they'll be there.

Vote tabulators, which would allow vote results to be available within a half hour of polls closing: Again, I've heard good examples from my colleagues that these can work. It does speed up the system. We're not waiting hours and hours for those results. There is an impact certainly from that perspective. As long as we have integrity in the system, it's sound and people can feel comfortable, then I think that's something we can support. It's my understanding that it will take about two years to implement the changes.

Mr. Essensa did say the status quo is unmanageable. I think he's getting back to human resources. The ability to recruit and attract more people to staff is challenging in big rural ridings like mine and many of my colleagues' in rural Ontario, and northern Ontario becomes even more challenging.

Elections Ontario hired 76,000 poll officials for the 2014 election. We need about 100,000 for the election planned for June 2018, because the number of ridings will increase and because of population growth. We already know he's addressed that there are challenges recruiting enough people now, and we're going to actually add a significant number, Mr. Speaker; probably 25% more people are needed.

Hopefully these suggestions he's making are good, and to my thought processes we will support those ones that we believe are good and are actually going to effect some change.

Jurisdictions that have moved to electronic vote tabulators have experienced challenges, most notably New Brunswick. Similar to the SAMS problems—and I've referenced these in the House a couple of times—this voting software was an off-the-shelf computer program that had glitches, and ground that province's election to a halt.

Similarly, we just had the EQAO hacked. We spent millions of dollars—a lot of people, with absolutely no value to that. People, frankly, are bringing those same types of situations to my attention, saying, “Could the same thing happen?” They're just inquisitive, Mr. Speaker. They want to know, when they go up to some-

thing as important as the fundamental process of our democratic process—marking their ballots, marking the X and ensuring that the representatives that are duly elected are in office—they want to make sure that the systems are sound, that they’re there and that there’s no ability for anybody to tamper and have any control over those.

There were comments in that New Brunswick election. Comments like “Call me old fashioned, but I think there is something to be said of counting votes one by one, making it a human enterprise rather than something at the whim of a computer system” were not uncommon following the breakdown of the New Brunswick vote tabulation.

There are people out there who are cynical, who have valid questions, and I think we have to make sure that we can prove to them that the system is robust and that it has integrity.

Because that experience has shaken many people’s belief in counting machines, the government would be wise to ensure that they don’t rush, that they don’t slam things through like they have in the past with many of the bills that, sadly, have been in this House.

I’m going to go back and talk a little bit as well—I see my colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington went through the bill, as he always does, very thoroughly. We struggle with some of the things that they’re suggesting there because are they really going to drive more people to come out to vote? It’s what I was trying to talk about in my earlier remarks. It’s about trust, it’s about integrity, it’s about people having the faith that they’re participating in a democratic process that truly is there to serve them. They want to see the government, regardless of political stripe or colour, serving their interests and needs.

I haven’t seen anything in this bill address the voter list. That’s the biggest issue I hear about: the actual location of where they have to go to vote. I don’t see anything in here that truly is going to have a tangible impact to improve that process.

Some of the other things, as I say, we’ll support—certainly anything that’s going to speed up the process when you get to the voter booth, if they can reduce errors. There are things in there like giving you a permanent ID number. Certainly that’s something that we can support. If we can speed up the process of tabulation and give people a comfort level—that it’s actually not going to be tampered with and that it’s legitimate—then I think we’re fine.

I have addressed, in summary, the concern of reducing totally the ability to print ahead of time, to make sure we actually advertise pre-election, advance notice polls. In my riding, there was a huge uptake with regard to advance polls, and that’s to be accommodating to the people who are voting, which encourages, again, hopefully, increased voter turnout. I want to make sure that in areas where we don’t have 100% electronic capacity, you always retain the old form of print advertising.

I’ve had a number of people come to me, saying, “Why can’t we take our schools? Why can’t we utilize

one of the existing PD days”—not give another PD day—“where we have all those schools that are accessible, that have the electronic infrastructure, that have all the things we need?” In many of our cases, we have them in church basements. We have them wherever we can find them. But it becomes more daunting with the accessibility challenges—and frankly to have the true infrastructure to support. So that’s something that I think would be a good amendment to suggest here. Why wouldn’t they look at utilizing an existing asset that the people that we’re trying to engage actually pay for?

Mr. Speaker, I’m all for improving and increasing voter turnout. Yesterday, I was at a very solemn ceremony, a very wonderful ceremony to recognize local veterans in my community. It’s always an honour and a privilege to go to those types of events and to say thank you, to truly look those veterans in the eye and say, “Thank you for giving me the ability to have peace, liberty and the ability to vote.” I’m totally in favour of anything that allows that, makes it easier, makes it more convenient and truly engages people to come out and exercise their democratic right.

There are some good things in this bill. There are some things that I think we should look at more clearly. At the end of the day, we always have to put the voters of Ontario—every single decision we make should be about them, not us.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I’d like to thank the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. He was very enlightening. He had a lot of points that were valid. I was listening very intently to what he had to say. It’s not very often that we agree on a lot of things, but in this case, I agree with quite a bit.

I could go on forever about this, but there are a couple of points I picked out that I’d like to talk about. The Chief Electoral Officer is required to create a provisional register of 16- and 17-year-olds who request that their names be added to the register. Speaker, I don’t know about you, but when I was 16 or 17, the last thing I was looking to do was register on some register I didn’t know about to vote. But you know what the best part about it is? It’s kind of ironic. The education department of this government is looking at eliminating the civics program in high schools. Isn’t that interesting? They want to engage youth to vote, but they’re going to cancel the program that tells them about municipal, provincial and federal governments. I can’t believe that they would do that. That’s what they’re looking at.

Then it says down here that changes are to be made to the nomination and registration intervals, which permits the identification of electors who voted during the interval. That’s interesting because, speaking of nomination meetings, that party doesn’t even honour the person who wins. The Premier can take that person out and put another person in. They’re talking about democracy? They don’t even accept the person that people picked. That’s unbelievable. It’s almost laughable that they’re talking about democracy over there.

“Information that is currently required to be provided to candidates”—information to the candidates and the people. If you look at the electoral list, a lot of the people on there are dead. They don't even keep it up to date. The lists that come out to the memberships and come out to our parties—

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's an honour to speak to Bill 45 and to join this debate. I just wanted to talk a little bit about—I want to get back to the issue at hand, which is really about engaging young people in the electoral process. I'm a big believer that the more engaged citizens are, the more informed they are and the more they hold their elected officials to account, the more effective their government is. I think engaging the next generation of young people is important not just in the years to come, so that we have that group of young voters engaged, but for the future, to ensure that they vote at a young age, start at a young age and continue to be engaged in the years to come, so they continue to be engaged as citizens and continue to hold their elected officials and governments to account so we build the best possible province and best possible country we can.

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In my riding of Etobicoke Centre, what I've done is started something called a youth advisory group, where every quarter I meet with young people from across the riding. Everyone is invited to join and talk about the issues that are of concern to them. This is a way of making sure that I'm doing my job as an MPP and hearing their concerns and bringing those concerns to government and advocating effectively on their behalf, but it's also an opportunity for them to learn about government and how they can engage effectively.

In this bill, there's a number of things that I think are positive. I think voter registration at an early stage just makes sense. Why not register young people earlier? By registering them, Elections Ontario can communicate with them and can ensure that they are on the list. They're more likely to vote. That's a no-regret move. I don't understand why the opposition is opposed to that.

The second thing is that I think this idea of making sure that people have greater access to condominiums and apartments is important, because making sure that canvassers can access condominium and apartments, where in some constituencies a lot of young people live, is just going to increase the turnout from people all ages, but particularly young people.

Speaker, at the end of the day, the best way to engage young people is to deliver good government and to serve the young people well. That's what the members of this caucus are doing, that's what this government is doing and that's what I'm going to continue to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Sarnia–Lambton.

Interjection: Now we're going to hear the truth.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Now you're going to hear the truth.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to respond. I've been listening to the debate all afternoon. It's quite interesting—and the erudite comments, of course. The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound covered a number of areas that I have had some intimate experience with, along with others.

As far as the list, I was going to talk about something else, but with the list, I know from intimate knowledge of being a returning officer for a number of elections before I was honoured with this job that we spent an inordinate amount of time correcting the lists. I've seen to that and we spent a lot of time and a lot of money—a lot of taxpayers' money—improving those lists. They would go back to Elections Ontario, and invariably, when the lists came back again for the next by-election or the next election, the names that we had spent all that time and all that money removing were back on there again.

So it's not as simple as what people are saying about removing lists and fixing it. If there is any way of doing that, I would like to know, because I think most people who are talking about it have got no idea what they are talking about. I know the amount of effort that I spent and my staff at the time did, trying to remove names from lists. It's next to impossible, because there are always concerns about nefarious activities and somebody trying to take somebody off that shouldn't be. There are security and privacy concerns about ex-spouses maybe finding someone. So it's not simple, it's not easy, but I certainly applaud it.

The ideas about maybe voting in schools, because they do have access to most of the communities: I certainly applaud that. I understand the concerns about safety with outsiders in those schools so I think it should be done on a day when the school is closed, whether it's for a PD day or whatever. It would certainly make sense, because they do have Internet access, there is parking and they're accessible. For all those reasons, I applaud a lot of things that are in the bill, but I look forward to it going to committee, where we can improve it.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to make a comment on the remarks made by my good friend from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. I don't know if you heard him, Speaker, but he said “mental health” at one point in his address, and I say that reminds me that this member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound came down to Windsor last Thursday as the auctioneer of a charity event that raised more than \$40,000. He did it for the Do Good Divas, and \$30,000 of that went for the psychiatric facilities for mental health, to improve those facilities at the Ouellette Avenue campus of Windsor Regional Hospital. I commend the member for doing that.

The Do Good Divas also gave away 10 \$1,000 cheques to other charities, including Coats for Kids, the Humane Society and the Windsor Residence for Young Men. It was because of this gentleman here giving up his own time to come down to Windsor and be an auctioneer for charity, and I think he should be commended for that.

I also commend the member, and the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, for trying to shed some light, if you will, on the Wynne Liberals and their trying to keep us in the Dark Ages when it comes to improvements to voting. They're bringing in a vote tabulator, which is fine. We used them in Windsor in the last municipal election. Of course, there was a court challenge to them: that we didn't pass the bylaw in a timely fashion to use them—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: But did they work?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: They worked fine, and the court challenge was—there was nothing wrong. The police found nothing wrong. The funny thing about it, though, Speaker, was that after I cast my ballot, because they borrowed these machines from America, up came this big waving American flag that said, "Thank you for voting."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound can reply.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm going to start off with my good friend from Windsor–Tecumseh. Thank you very much for the acknowledgement, but the reality is that your wife, Gale, her team, the sponsors and the people of Windsor are who deserve the credit. They came out and raised that kind of money for mental health and a number of local charities. The sad part is that if this Liberal government didn't waste so much money, we wouldn't have to do so much fundraising for such worthy causes.

I also want to acknowledge the Hamilton East–Stoney Creek member. I believe he was invited to join the Liberal Party, and I would suggest that there's probably more chance of them solving the debt they've created by 2018 than getting him to join their party. He did talk about the voters list, as my good friend from Sarnia–Lambton did, and that is something that we need to work on. We need to ensure that when people come out and want to vote, it's convenient, easy, accessible and not a frustrating exercise. That will get more people out.

My colleague from Etobicoke Centre talked about engaging youth. I want to just suggest, back to my remarks, that closing 600 schools across Ontario is going to engage the youth and the parents of those youth to come out in droves, I believe, because it's not a proud moment for Ontario when we're closing 600 schools. The party of education is apparently proud to stand here—not one of them has stepped up and said that they will even slow down the process. If he wants to engage youth, keep doing what you're doing; you're going to get a lot of engagement.

That, combined with the soaring costs of hydro bills, has a lot of people in my riding and, I think, across the province wound up and ready to go to the polls in 2018 to make a change. They've had enough. They want to ensure that they have a government that's actually there putting the people of Ontario first. They want to ensure that they have services and programs when they need them. They want to have their hip replacements. They want to have knee replacements. They want to have the ability for affordable housing. Community and social

services come in my door every day looking for more programs, not the waste and debt of this government.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in the House and give a few remarks on the debate of the day—today, on Bill 45. It's about making some changes to how our electoral system works, the overall bill. The part I'm going to focus on—there used to be a kids' game where you had to pick out the one that didn't fit. I can't remember exactly the word—

Mr. Paul Miller: Kindergarten.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, kindergarten. This bill has got a bit of that in it.

Number 15 in the explanatory notes is, "The Representation Act, 2015 is amended to establish a Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission with a mandate to review the electoral boundaries of Kenora-Rainy River and Timmins-James Bay and make recommendations about the creation of one or two more ridings in that geographic area." It doesn't really fit in the bill, but it's a very important initiative.

I'd like to put that on the record. We're not opposed; absolutely not. The more representation that can be made in parts of the north, the better. It doesn't really fit with the rest of the bill, and that's a bit odd. I also don't think it really captures how the First Nations need to be represented. If you read through the bill itself, it talks about how the electoral commission will be made up of a judge, the electoral officer, a representative of a university and two members of the public, and it names indigenous people. It's a good initiative but it limits it to looking at two ridings.

1700

It supposes that the First Nations that need better representation in the north are limited to those two ridings. That, quite frankly, isn't the case, because the way the First Nations organized themselves, and the way they've been organized before we got here, wasn't around provincial boundaries that we drew. They didn't draw them; we drew them. Now the government is saying, "We're willing to redraw them but only within the boundaries that we originally drew."

Mr. Paul Miller: It's kind of counterproductive.

Mr. John Vanthof: It is a bit counterproductive and it's a bit—coming from this government—disrespectful of the First Nations.

Do we agree that this electoral boundary commission should be struck? Yes. Do we agree that First Nations need better representation? Definitely. Do we agree that this should be just limited to these two ridings and say that, other than that, everything is fine? Absolutely not. I think that's one thing the government has got to look at.

I'm going to go back to an issue—again, it's a First Nation issue—that is currently happening in my riding of Timiskaming–Cochrane and in the riding of my colleague from Nickel Belt. This has come up in this legislation before, and I'm going to give a bit of history. The Wahnapiatae First Nation is in my riding, but it's

isolated because my riding is on one side of Lake Wanapitei and the Wahnapiatae First Nation is on the other side of Lake Wanapitei. Lake Wanapitei is a pretty big body of water, so for the people from the Wahnapiatae First Nation to access my offices or my staff, they have to drive through two other ridings. It's about five hours. The Wahnapiatae First Nation is 100 people on a square mile.

The last time the electoral boundaries came up was last year about this time, Bill 115, where the provincial government passed legislation so the southern boundaries in southern Ontario would mirror the federal boundaries once again and so we would create more ridings in southern Ontario. At that point, we brought up the Wahnapiatae First Nation, that while we were changing boundaries—both the member from Nickel Belt and myself had identified this as an issue. But more importantly, the Wahnapiatae First Nation themselves had requested this repeatedly, verbally, with letters, and over multiple years. We thought, “Okay, we're talking about boundaries; this is the time to do it.” We brought it up at the committee and we made a very strong argument. The government voted that amendment down. As a result, the NDP voted against Bill 115 for that single reason.

Speaker, I took from the Hansard some of the arguments from the government about it, and the interesting one was from a committee member at the time—she's identified here as Mrs. Kathryn McGarry. I don't know what her riding is; she's now the Minister of Natural Resources.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Cambridge.

Mr. John Vanthof: Cambridge. As we were arguing this and just before they voted it down, her argument was “We continue to think that the fairest and most cost-effective approach is to adjust Ontario's provincial boundaries, to adopt the 111 new southern federal ridings and maintain the existing 11 provincial northern ridings in their current form. This doesn't mean that, moving forward, if this bill is to pass, we won't find some of those groups and maybe put together more of a robust list of folks who want to look at changing their riding boundaries in the future and do it all en masse.”

So we have Bill 45, which creates what she was talking about: an electoral boundaries commission for northern Ontario. Once again, we say, “There, we finally got a boundaries commission.” We can put this issue before that boundaries commission and they, once and for all, in consultation with the Wahnapiatae First Nation, of course, because it's their request—we can see if they could actually be moved into the riding of Nickel Belt, which they're actually physically attached to. But we have our doubts that the government is going to listen.

Why I say that is because, in my role as interim House leader, for this bill to come to the House at this point, we need a unanimous consent motion because there's another bill being discussed about the same issues at the same time. So when this bill was brought forward to the House leaders—I talk about House leaders, like the rules of engagement. When the government brings it forward,

they have a special request, and often in a kind of a trade we, the opposition parties, ask for something in return. Our only request for this bill to be brought forward was that the Wahnapiatae First Nation be considered in this electoral boundary commission. And the answer, unfortunately, but not surprisingly, was no.

So once again, we stand here looking at a bill, and in this bill it actually talks about changing boundaries for ridings in northern Ontario to, I think it's fair to say, better represent our indigenous population, which is a good idea. But I'm shocked and we are shocked that this government doesn't actually look and see that we have another problem here that's been identified, and they look the other way. And for the life of me, I can't understand why. I can't understand why.

Mr. James J. Bradley: We're giving the NDP two more seats.

Mr. John Vanthof: This isn't about seats. This is about representation for the indigenous population. What I'm talking about is moving the Wahnapiatae First Nation. It's 100 people. The Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation should understand this is 100 people in the Wahnapiatae First Nation who have requested to move to Nickel Belt. We have made it very clear that this is not our request. This will not make any difference in the electoral system in Ontario. Currently, those people have to drive five hours to access their own riding representatives. They drive through two other ridings.

When Bill 115 was put through this House, we voted against that bill to bring attention to that matter. That's the only reason we voted against Bill 115. We were told in the committee hearings that we needed an electoral boundaries commission. We now have the government proposing an electoral boundaries commission and, once again, the Wahnapiatae First Nation is completely and totally ignored.

We've requested it once already; we will bring this forward again in amendments. The government can do the right thing. It has it fully in their capacity to do the right thing. Is it a monumental change? No. Will it make a big difference for the people in the Wahnapiatae First Nation? Definitely. But more importantly, even crucially, for the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation it will demonstrate that it's more than just standing up and saying, “We're respectful of where we are in the territory of.”

I want to be respectful of the territory of the Wahnapiatae First Nation, and they want to move to the riding of Nickel Belt. They have been served by the riding of Nickel Belt because that's the riding they're adjoined to.

They are, quite frankly, not very well served by my riding, because it takes five hours to get to it. It takes five hours to get to it. And in the committee hearings, the current Minister of Natural Resources was reluctant to vote for our motion, to move it, because she didn't want to open the floodgates. And my response is the same: Every First Nation that is currently five hours away from the riding in which they have to vote and have requested repeatedly to move ridings, let them open those flood-

gates. It's so maddening that the government doesn't move on this. Why? It doesn't hurt anyone. It only helps the people in the Wahnapiatae First Nation. It shows respect for the Wahnapiatae First Nation.

1710

It's one of those things where you can't understand why the government doesn't move on it. It's not about creating more ridings. They can heckle on the other side. I'm not talking about creating more ridings. I think it's a good idea to have the electoral boundaries commission look at creating more ridings, but the specific issue of the Wahnapiatae First Nation, that one square mile that's five hours away from the riding that it's supposed to be connected to: Why don't you look at moving it to the riding they're requesting to be moved to?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Why?

Mr. John Vanthof: Why is it repeatedly, "No, no, no"? Here again, hopefully we're making a good enough case that actually someone on the government side is going to look and say, "You know what? Maybe it's time we do the right thing for this First Nation. Maybe it's time." Because this one is not about—you know what? The First Nations have huge, huge issues, and this one isn't a huge issue. This one is easily fixed. There's a saying—and my dad always said something the same—that if you take care of the little things, eventually the big ones will take care of themselves. If you just keep talking about the big issues, but ignoring the little ones, the big ones are never going to get fixed. The way to show respect for First Nations and the way to treat them as nations is, when they make a request and it makes sense, and when they make it repeatedly—to ignore it is extremely disrespectful.

The last time the Wahnapiatae First Nation was denied that, Chief Roque was actually in the building. There was a First Nations conference going on and Chief Roque was in the building, meeting with the government, as another group of the government was in a committee room voting against him. I hope the government doesn't do that again.

Some things in the government are really maddening. They're huge issues and you wonder, why did they do that one? But this one would take a few minutes—a few minutes, Speaker—and that's what makes it maddening. What I've found frustrating in this five years here is that sometimes, for some strange reason, issues that make sense to us all don't seem to progress. I'm sure that if the members on the opposite side looked at this—I've talked to some of the members on the opposite side and they can't understand either why this issue doesn't progress.

Interjection: Partisan.

Mr. John Vanthof: I don't know what it is, Speaker. I really don't know why. And I really don't know why when we asked, in the House leaders' meeting, to have the Wahnapiatae First Nation included in this electoral boundaries commission, we were given a flat-out no. We sincerely hope that when we put forward an amendment, eventually, to this act to include the Wahnapiatae First Nation—or we hope that the government puts forward an amendment to this act, which we will support.

Now, to many that would seem a very small piece in this act, but to the hundred people in the Wahnapiatae First Nation it's a big deal. But not only that, for the government to demonstrate when a problem is identified with the First Nation that it's actually acted upon, especially when it's an easy one.

Overall, the electoral boundaries commission is a good idea. Is it going very quickly? Some people are surprised that it's already going to be in place for the upcoming election. Is that going to be time to adequately consult the First Nations? I'm not the one who's an expert on that.

The one thing I will say: If one or two other ridings are created—and I hope they will have a bit broader view than just out of those two ridings—I hope that provisions are put in place so that the people who are elected there, who have to campaign there to get elected or who get elected there and have to serve their constituents, are actually given the provisions to do so, because that part of Ontario is not like the rest of Ontario. I was going to say "like the majority of Ontario," but that part of Ontario is actually probably the majority of Ontario. But it's very different to serve the Far North than my riding. I live in what I consider to be northern Ontario, but my riding is much easier to serve than the Far North.

If we're going to create ridings to better serve the Far North, we've got to make sure the provisions are in place to serve them adequately and to serve them with respect, because we're talking about places that don't have roads; we're talking about places where you have to charter a plane to go to a lot of these communities. It's not that simple. If we're going to go through the process of doing this, please let's do it right. It's going to be rushed, but we could still do it right.

This should have been brought forward months ago—years ago. It caught us kind of by surprise, but we can do this. We're willing to work with the government to do it, but let's do it right because, quite frankly, these people have been ignored. Not purposely, because the MPPs, who happen to be from our party, who serve them now—the financing has never been in place until the last month to actually get to these communities. They were restricted by how much they could travel. So these MPPs couldn't serve all their communities because they were under travel restrictions. I hope that if the new ridings are created, those same restrictions don't hurt the future MPPs who will have to work hard to serve their people.

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to speak and make some comments to the member from—

Mr. Arthur Potts: Timiskaming—Cochrane.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Timiskaming—Cochrane—thank you. I got tongue-tied. Speaker, in this 20-minute address, he virtually talked about one issue in general. I understand how important that is to him. When I talk about my rural riding, it takes me about an hour and a half to go from one end to the other along the 401, because my riding straddles the 401. Some people think it's a big riding, and I keep on reminding them that we

need to look at northern Ontario, where there are not even any roads to serve some of the constituents that MPPs from that area are able to serve.

So I hear his comments. This government took the initiative, when we decided to follow federal boundaries years back, that in the north, because of its vast size, we would retain one extra riding to serve at the provincial level. I have the pleasure of my riding having the same footprint, the same boundary as the federal. It does work well, because I can talk about some of the concerns with my federal member or vice versa.

I think, as the member suggested, that he acknowledges that the commission is a welcome part of the process as we go through this. I think as we move the bill forward and the commission gets established and does its own investigation, we'll come to a resolve. It's not for me here today to judge what's right, what's wrong and what's in between, but I think that we have a process in place and we should stick to the process.

1720

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane brings up something that is important to him, and he speaks with a lot of passion. When he believes in something, it's interesting to hear him speak.

He and I are both of the agriculture background, and I'm sure there are times that we both wish that this government would subscribe to the KISS method of doing things, but they don't, unless they're blowing \$20 million or \$30 million.

I did not know about the plight of this tribe, of these native people, before it was spoken about today. I know that in my riding, which is about two hours from one end to the other, if I asked people who live in Mount Forest to vote in St. Marys, do you know what's going to happen? It's not going to happen. People are not going to go.

Here we have a small group of people—100 people, you say—in a small, little area who have to drive five miles—

Interjection: Five hours.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Five hours; I'm sorry—to get to their representative and drive across a couple of ridings to do that.

Now, the KISS method of things would say, “Let's change this. Let's do it now.” In fact, we should have done it before. But again, this government doesn't understand what the member is talking about. It certainly doesn't understand what I'm talking about.

I commend the member for bringing this up and talking about it for his 20 minutes so passionately, because I know that in my riding, because of the voting lists that we do have issues with, people are asked to go from one side of the riding, maybe from Mount Forest where they've always voted, to Arthur to vote because of some mess-up, and they don't do it. So I can imagine the plight of these people up in this riding.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I would just like to commend the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane for his passionate speech about some people who seem to have been lost in the shuffle for many years, in reference to their ability to get to their representation in this province. I think that it's tragic that a simple change for a mere 100 people in that particular area, to make it a lot easier for them to get Nickel Belt representation as opposed to John's—it is rather disappointing that things haven't happened a lot sooner.

In reference to this, the member said, “I don't understand. I don't know why this can't be changed.” Well, I'll tell you why it can't be changed. Unfortunately, Speaker, when you take things to committee—I watched my TV from my office the other day and I watched the committee dealing with Bill 2 on electoral finance. For four hours, two people spoke, the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane and the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, and the five Liberal members were silent. They didn't say a word. They left the room, came back, did what they did—BlackBerrys, read papers and did all of the things they did. Four hours and not a word, and you're wondering why the government gets abused and called “dysfunctional” at times. That's a perfect example of control at committee level.

I'm a firm believer that if it's good and it's brought forward by any party to the committee, it should be dealt with, discussed, debated, and maybe—just maybe—we could get some good advice.

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: The government doesn't want to hear this, Speaker, because that's what happens. I've watched committees for years around here. They're dysfunctional, because there are five—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to give the member a few more seconds to sum up, if he wishes.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker. Basically, the defence rests. There they are yelling about something that they know happened, and they're trying to defend it. There's no defence for that.

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

Mr. Arthur Potts: Well, Speaker, the only dysfunction that I'm hearing in this House is the attitude and language that we're hearing from the member from Hamilton. It's unbelievable that we would go on in a filibuster at committee, where you'll yak on about nothing for endless hours, and then use that as a criticism—shameful.

It's so disrespectful to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, who spoke quite eloquently on a passionate issue, that he would reduce the debate down to that level, absolutely shocking. We heard very clearly what the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane had to say, and it's touching. It is a touching issue. I'm not standing in judgment on it. I don't know what the process is going to reveal. I think it's important that we keep

these things in our electoral process—so we keep the kind of political pandering, the gerrymandering of ridings out of the equation. So it's important that we have a solid third-party process in place, and we have a chance to have input into that.

In Beaches–East York, I recognize the two solitudes in my own community. I can drive to the top end in 20 minutes, or side to side in about five. Different communities have different concerns, even in a small, rural area, or in an urban area like I represent.

I can appreciate that there are different reasons why one group will be attached to one northern riding or to another. The distances, of course, are immense up north, and we have great empathy for that. It's fantastic that we have modern technology, as best as we can, to bring information, to have people in contact. You don't always have to go five hours to talk to your representative. If you can go to a store or pick up a phone or use a cellphone, or whatever the means of communications are, it's important. I know there are some challenges getting Internet and such into the north, but there are chances. You don't always have to do this work one on one.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to give him some extra time to finish off.

The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'd like to go on for a long time on this issue.

I do appreciate the passion play we heard from the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane—and I know that that's being received on this side of the House, so we'll find out what's going on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane can respond for two minutes.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank all the members who responded and correct a few things, put a few things on the record about the Wahnapiatae First Nation. When we moved the motion and it was defeated, and it was, "Oh, yes, we don't want to have gerrymandering and redirecting"—fine. Now there's an electoral boundaries commission, and the member from Northumberland–Quinte West said, "Well, they can look at it." No, they can't. They can only look at the two ridings. The government has decided that only two ridings can be looked at in this, so they can't look at it.

It's tough for my riding. It straddles three federal ridings. It is tougher, but it's not insurmountable. That's not the issue. The issue is, one community of a hundred First Nations people are on the wrong side—they are on the one side of Lake Wanapitei, and we drew the map and included them. Their community of interest is in Nickel Belt. To get to Timiskaming–Cochrane, they have to drive five hours. And do you know what? In a lot of the places there, we don't even have Internet. It's not that easy. And this isn't an isolated First Nation.

To the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, I request that you please consider this: to allow this commission to look at the Wahnapiatae First Nation;

to see if that can be done, to talk to them. They have expressed their interest in writing several times over the years. If you look at the federal map, they're on the Nickel Belt side. If you look at the provincial map, they're on the Timiskaming–Cochrane side, but the rest of Timiskaming–Cochrane is on the other side of Lake Wanapitei. The Wahnapiatae First Nation needs to finally get their respect from this government. This electoral boundaries commission has the ability to do it, if the government directs it.

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

Hon. David Zimmer: I, of course, represent the riding of Willowdale. Willowdale, according to the statistics that I've looked at, probably has the most apartments and most condominiums in any riding in Canada. So there are a number of changes that the residents of Willowdale, be they in apartments or be they in condominiums, I know will be very pleased with. I just wanted to walk through some of these changes.

Interjection.

Hon. David Zimmer: Before I begin, I do want to tell the Speaker that I will be sharing my time with the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development and the member for Kitchener Centre.

1730

Speaker, an enormous amount of voter engagement takes place through the political process. Potential voters should have the opportunity to speak with canvassers at the door, and herein lies the issue in apartments and condominiums. If a canvasser is prevented from entering a multiple-residence building such as a condominium building during the designated times, they can give notice that access must be granted within 24 hours, or immediately if they're asking for access on polling day. This notice can either be handed to the person who has denied their access or—and this is very important—posted where access is prevented.

It has no doubt been the experience of many members in this chamber that, in fact, getting entry to an apartment building or a condominium—often, there's a concierge there and the concierge has not been informed or is not aware of the provisions of the election rules and denies access. This change will put the concierge or the apartment or the condominium on notice that the canvasser has to be allowed in. Or, rather than actually giving oral notice to the concierge or whoever is not opening the door, if you will, a notice can be posted on the door to the condominium building or the apartment building. This will ensure access so that members of all political parties, be they Liberal, be they Conservative, be they NDP, be they Green Party, be they any other party, will have a fair opportunity to engage the residents of apartment buildings and condominiums.

Now, what if access is still denied, notwithstanding that notice that you provided orally or notice that you've provided in writing? Well, if access is not granted, the canvasser can formally notify a returning officer of the situation. The returning officer can then impose an

administrative penalty on the owner of the multiple-residence building where access was denied. In the case of a condominium, the penalty would apply to the condominium corporation.

But I'm often asked, then, "Well, isn't this having canvassers freely roaming the halls of a condo or an apartment building risky?" That is, they're just giving notice that they want to be let in or providing a written notice that they wanted to be let in. Well, we do want to make sure that people living in condominiums and apartment buildings participate in the democratic process. We feel that the balance, the idea of hearing from the candidates and their campaign, is an important part of the process. If you take a riding like Willowdale or downtown towards the lake shore, the central area of Toronto, for instance, there are huge numbers of condominiums, huge numbers for voting. Some of these buildings in downtown Toronto are 50 or 60 storeys. I see there's a building going up, I think, on Yonge and Bloor. It will be 80 storeys. The building across the street will be something of the same order. There are huge numbers of voters there. It's the same situation in Willowdale.

Notwithstanding that the campaigner, be he or she from whatever political party, now has access, there is no requirement, of course, that the apartment dweller or the condominium dweller, once they're in the building, has any obligation to open the door if someone has knocked on the door or rung the doorbell. And if they do open the door and engage in conversation, they can terminate the conversation at any time, close the door at any time. They can tell the canvasser, "I don't want to speak to you. I have no interest," or whatever.

Another question, then, is, what types of residences are considered multiple residences? That is, what is considered an apartment building and what is considered a condominium? Well, there are a couple of exceptions. These changes that I've just outlined with respect to condominiums and apartments will not apply to student residences or anywhere where the emotional or physical well-being of the residents could be harmed. Under the act, multiple-residence buildings will include the following: apartment buildings, condominiums and housing co-ops that contain seven or more self-contained units. So the magic number, the kick-in number—the trigger number, if you will—is seven, with the exception that homes where there might be cause for concern about the emotional or physical well-being of the dwellers do not have to grant access.

This proposal goes on to give the Chief Electoral Officer the power to impose administrative penalties. I've talked a bit about that. The question is often asked, then: "Are we changing the mandate of Elections Ontario to an enforcement organization? Are we taking Elections Ontario and giving them an additional policing responsibility, an enforcement responsibility?" To that, I say that while the powers to impose the administrative penalties are new, they are in keeping with the agency's mandate—this is very important—as a non-partisan election oversight organization. The oversight here that

we're talking about is to ensure candidates of all political parties fair access to constituents, to voters, and ensuring that voters have a fair and reasonable access or opportunity to engage with the various political candidates.

An enormous amount of voter engagement takes place through the political process, and potential voters should always have every reasonable opportunity to speak with canvassers at the door.

I also want to say a few words about some of the mechanics, some of the details, of the modernization of elections. We live in an age of ever-changing technology and, of course, the advantages that can be found there should be applied to the electoral process. The bill will allow for the use of certain voting technology in provincial elections, which will enable the Chief Electoral Officer to implement his proposed technology-enabled staffing model.

Under the current system, finding a voter on a list and giving them their ballot is now done manually. What it requires is that a poll clerk and a deputy returning officer go through a process to establish that list. At the end of the day, the votes are also counted by hand. As a result, Elections Ontario requires a tremendous amount of staffing to conduct the election. I can tell you, Speaker, that in the 2014 election, for example, there were approximately 76,000 temporary staff required to conduct that election.

But by introducing appropriate technology to replace both of these functions that I've just referenced, the Chief Electoral Officer estimates that Elections Ontario will be able to reduce its staffing requirements by 41%. That's a huge decrease, and it's a significant step in improving the efficiency of the elections process. There are also significant financial savings.

This new staffing model and the process that was piloted recently in the Whitby–Oshawa by-election also provided for a more streamlined and positive experience for voters. That's what we heard back from the voters as a result of that. A whopping 96% of voters who were polled after voting with the technology-enabled model thought that the process was "much easier with the new technology," and 91% of the voters were supportive of the technology being used in future elections.

Speaker, I want to share my time now with the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister for Advanced Education and Skills Development.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I really very much appreciate the opportunity of weighing in on this bill.

I want to go back to something that was said a little bit earlier about young people and their interest in the political process. Speaker, we very much want young people to know that voting matters, and we want them to know that their vote matters. This bill addresses that by allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to pre-register to vote, so as soon as they turn 18 and are eligible to vote, their names will be added to the voters list. And that's a good thing. It has been done in other provinces, and I think Ontario should, in fact, follow suit.

1740

But I was kind of taken aback when the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek was so dismissive of the notion that young people care about politics. I can tell you that certainly from my experience, young people are the most passionate and the most idealistic. They really have ideas to make this province better, and we should encourage that participation. In fact, I'm sure I speak for the official opposition too. I mean, they recently nominated a 19-year-old to run in this election. The notion that young people don't care is simply a false notion.

Indeed, young people have more at stake than those of us who, as Bill Clinton has said, have more days behind us than ahead of us. Young people are going to live on this planet longer than we are. That means decisions we make here in this House about the environment, about the economy, about pensions, about climate change and all of those issues actually mean a lot more to young people than they do to us, because we're going to be gone when they are cleaning up after us.

In fact, I do want to talk about the changes that we're making to OSAP. These changes were inspired by young people. It was people from OUSA, the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, who, through very, very hard and thorough work, came and approached us with an idea that would make OSAP simpler, more progressive and more generous.

I am delighted to be inspired by, encouraged by and pushed and prodded by young people to make a student assistance system that works for them. As a result of this work by young people, we're going to be making tuition free for families with an income of \$50,000 or less. In fact, there will be support available up to a family income of \$160,000 and more, if your family is large enough.

Young people are making a difference. Putting them on the voters list is going to make them have an even stronger difference—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Ahem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Do you have a point of order?

Interjections.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. I really enjoy listening to the member from London Centre. However, I would rather listen to her talk about the specifics in the bill about the election, as opposed to OSAP or free tuition. As much as I enjoy listening to her talk about those things, this is not the time nor the place when we're talking about the election bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to say that over the course of the afternoon, there have been some members who have occasionally wandered away from the relevance of the bill, and I've had to ask them to bring their comments back to the bill. I hear the Minister of Advanced Education speaking to the bill, and I would ask her to continue, but I ask her to continue to keep her remarks relevant to the bill.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, the link is very, very clear. This bill makes it easier for young people to vote. We're making changes so young people can vote because they care about the decisions we make here. So the changes to OSAP that I've been talking about were inspired by young people. That is just one example of how young people can really drive change. I look forward to a higher voter turnout of young people. This is one small way that I hope we can improve voter turnout for younger people.

I now am going to turn this microphone over to my colleague the member from Kitchener Centre.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm delighted to join the conversation this afternoon on Bill 45, Election Statute Law Amendment Act. This is my second time rising to speak to this bill, and I really do believe in it.

Our message to Ontarians is that their votes do matter. When you vote, you're helping to shape the future of this province. You're helping to decide where the new schools and hospitals are going to be built, just like the people in my community, Kitchener Centre, in greater Waterloo region. When they voted, they decided on a government that, just in the past couple of weeks, introduced measures to renovate and to add additions to three schools in my region, and we are building a brand new one in Cambridge.

You're also deciding how your government is going to grow the economy and create jobs. In my region, in my community of Kitchener Centre, we're seeing a tech explosion. People who are voting, who are choosing how to vote, are deciding which governments to come in with their different policies, like policies to grow the economy. In my region, for instance, people who voted for this government—this government invested in the Com-munitech Hub, which, since 2009, has launched 2,600 new tech companies. Each one has between three to five employees.

Mr. Bill Walker: Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound on a point of order.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm just wondering if we could ask the member to please talk about the pertinent facts of the bill and the points that are in the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes, thank you very much for that. I appreciate the assistance. I would ask all members of the House to try to bring their comments back to the bill when they have the floor, and the member for Kitchener Centre has the floor.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you very much, and it's just very delightful getting advice from the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound on this particular issue.

We've talked at length today about how in the last general election, of 2014, there were only 52% of Ontarians who bothered to vote in that election. The figures are even more troubling for youth: Only 34% of youth bothered to cast a vote. These are very troubling numbers and we need to address this. It's a challenge for us.

We spoke about engagement earlier on. I told you that when I worked as a journalist, whether it was a federal election, a provincial or local election, I would always bring in the so-called experts. I called them “my usual suspects.” They were university professionals from Laurier and the University of Waterloo, and we would ask them, “Why are so few people interested in voting?” They had their theories and their suggestions on how to move forward.

So we have introduced a bill that would, if passed, modernize the voting process to better engage people and make it easier for them to vote; and, specifically, we’re looking at, in Bill 45, reaching out to young people in the political process by getting them to register in advance.

I know that when I go into high schools and I talk to young people about the political process, they may not be interested in politics or politicians but they’re interested in the issues. They want to talk about the environment or animal rights. I know when I did a bunch of high schools in June, they were all talking about Donald Trump, so maybe that’s a cautionary tale right there. However, if we can grab them at that age and get them to pre-register so that when they are ready to vote at age 18 and the voter card arrives for them in the mail, they will want to participate. They will feel engaged like they’re part of the process.

We want to make it easier to find advance polls by standardizing locations and hours. We want to get election results out to you faster by using modern technology. It’s important to do that. Most of the proposals that we’re putting before you were suggested by the Ontario Chief Electoral Officer.

Speaker, I want to leave you with one last comment. In my community, the St. John’s Kitchen—they’re also referred to as the soup kitchen in town—reached out to me and said, “You know, we want to get the people who come to the kitchen every day”—and there are 350 people in need who go in there every day for a meal—“to vote but many of them do not have homes. They’re homeless people. They have a right to vote. What can we do to get them to vote?” And so I connected them with Elections Ontario, who came in and said, “We can set up a polling station here for the next election in 2018.” I’m thrilled to know that we are going to have a polling station there at the St. John’s soup kitchen where many people who are usually marginalized will have the opportunity to vote.

This is the goal. We want more people to vote. We have to find ways to do that. I encourage my colleagues to support Bill 45 because it makes sense.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for questions and comments, I think I have been a bit remiss this afternoon in reminding members that the questions and comments are supposed to relate back to the member or members who just spoke and the remarks that were just given, if we could try to do that in the remaining 10 minutes.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It’s a privilege to speak to this bill. We have heard a number of great opinions on some

of the great pluses of this bill. We do need some modernization and it’s welcome. I’m going to skip back a little bit to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane because I didn’t have a chance to speak to his words. I was quite impressed by what he said about the Far North and the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission and how necessary it is. That was a meaningful presentation that he gave to us. We tend not to think of it because most of us don’t go to the Far North and we just aren’t associated with the distances and troubles of people who are remote and far away, as an oversight. When they’re a small group like 100 people, they fall through the cracks of democracy in this case, so we need to remedy that. This commission will be a wonderful thing, and the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane expressed that very well.

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I heard talk of how important voting lists are, as we all know, and how often there are errors and mistakes and great omissions. We need to spend more time working on having correct voting lists because it’s very maddening for people who have the right to vote and show up and can’t vote because, for some reason, they’re not on the voting list.

There was talk about multiple-residence buildings, apartment buildings that could be locked, how candidates have the right to go in, knock on doors and campaign, and how there would be an administrative monetary penalty for the owner of the building who didn’t unlock the door. It was expressed earlier today how this is very unfair because sometimes there is no building manager; there’s nobody there in smaller buildings. Although democracy needs to be served, and candidates need to be able to go in and knock on those doors, I don’t really think we should be fining people on election day for not complying with the law.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I’m very happy to have some comments on this bill, Bill 45, An Act to amend certain acts with respect to provincial elections. There are 15 recommendations here that were offered by the Chief Electoral Officer.

The Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation talked about the rights of candidates. One of the things he talked about was access to condos and apartment buildings. It kind of led me to think about the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission and what access means to this community of Wahnapiatae.

In the bill, there are things that the commission is mandated to look at, and one of them is:

“(8) In making its recommendations, the commission shall take into account,

“(a) communities of interest;

“(b) representation of indigenous people;

“(c) municipal and other administrative boundaries;

“(d) sparsity, density and the rate of population growth in the geographic areas;

“(e) geographical features;

“(f) the availability and accessibility of means of communication and transportation in the geographic areas;

“(g) representations by members of the Legislative Assembly who represent constituencies in northern Ontario, and other interested persons; and

“(h) anything else that the commission” deems to be relevant.

I hope that when we’re setting up these commissions and when we legislate bills to help people, we actually make them effective in order to do so.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane made a wonderful point. Wahnapiatae is 100 people on the lake who have to drive five hours for representation. That’s a geographical issue. So I hope the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation talks about this in his caucus and pushes his cabinet to make those changes in the commission that’s going to be reviewing the boundaries in the north.

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: It’s a privilege to get up again to speak to Bill 45 and join the debate. I spoke to this bill earlier today, and what I talked about was how important it is that we engage young people in the electoral process and why that is.

One of the reasons I think that’s so important is because young people aren’t engaged enough today. If you think about the decisions that are made in this Legislature, made by governments of every stripe, those decisions are going to impact the young people today more than they’re going to impact any other age cohort, because a lot of those decisions take time to take effect and, frankly, they’re going to live longer than the rest of us. So it’s really important that we engage our young people.

As I mentioned earlier, in my riding of Etobicoke Centre I’ve organized a youth advisory group that meets quarterly. I meet with youth and I hear from them about the issues that are important to them, but it’s also an opportunity for them to learn about how government works and how they can engage and be more effective citizens. I’m a big believer that the more engaged our citizens are at all ages, the more effective government is. It’s doubly important that we engage our young people, not only because they’re not as engaged as some of the folks who are older cohorts, but also because if we engage them young, they’re more likely to be engaged in the future, and that will lead to better government and that will lead to better outcomes and a better Ontario and a better Canada.

I can tell you that on this side of the House we have—this bill has some important things: the registration of young people and allowing people to access condominiums. The minister spoke about how important it is that canvassers be allowed to enter and canvass and com-

municate in condominium buildings. A lot of young people live in those buildings—people of all ages, but particularly young people. It’s an important opportunity to engage them.

These are all zero-regret moves. I hope the opposition can get on board. But I can tell you one thing: The members of this caucus who are here today, this government and I will continue to work to serve young people and the people of Ontario of every age.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

One of the ministers can reply. I recognize the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

Hon. David Zimmer: I just want to say something about the independence of the commission. That’s important, because the decisions that come will be made by this independent commission. The members of the commission are going to include a current or former judge of an Ontario court, the Chief Electoral Officer, a member of an Ontario university faculty and two community representatives who identify themselves as indigenous persons. They will be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor. They will operate independently from any arm of government.

We feel that it’s important to include an indigenous perspective both as a matter of practice and principle. We really hope—I think we all hope in this Legislature—that indigenous communities in the areas being reviewed by the commission will, in fact, make their voices heard and help us to find the right electoral boundaries.

I want to close, Speaker, by just drawing your attention to something that was said by the managing editor of the Daily Press in Timmins, Ontario. He said:

“It’s a move anyone living in Northern Ontario—regardless of their political affiliations—should welcome.

“Adding two additional MPPs from the North, regardless of the political parties they represent, has to be viewed as a good thing.”

I cannot leave out my colleague for Timmins–James Bay, Gilles Bisson, who said, “One of the ways of doing that”—that is, including the north in a better way—“is doing exactly what’s being talked about: Creating a couple of ridings in the northern part of the province. That itself is a good initiative.”

When I reflect on the comments of the Timmins Daily Press and the comments of the member for Timmins–James Bay, I’m encouraged that they see the merit in this legislation.

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

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 o’clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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