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(Hansard)**

Monday 14 November 2016

Lundi 14 novembre 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 14 November 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 14 novembre 2016

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce my daughter Alexis MacLaren, who is a registered nurse working in the intensive care unit at the Queensway Carleton Hospital.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: A good friend of mine, Terry Yaldo, is here. He's with the Ontario Convenience Stores Association. There is a reception later on this evening, to which everyone is invited.

Welcome back to Queen's Park, Terry.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to introduce some members of the Ontario Convenience Stores Association. With us today we've got Dave Bryans, the CEO; Noah Aychental, the chair; Satinder Chera, the CEO of the Canadian Convenience Stores Association; Joe Rabba; and Wendy and Steve.

I'd like to remind all members that there's a reception today in room 228. They'd love for you to come.

Mr. Lorne Coe: It's my pleasure to introduce to the Legislature Naomi and Zachary Soliman. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to welcome members of the Canadian Diabetes Association to the assembly. They're here today to speak to members, and they'll also be in the dining room tonight, so please join us.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'd like to welcome a member of the Ontario Convenience Stores Association to the Legislature this morning: Mr. Steve Tennant is a resident of Barrie and is the chief operating officer of Gateway Newstands.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I would like to welcome to the Legislative Assembly Glen Heatherington from Tiny township in Simcoe county, who is here today with the Canadian Diabetes Association. Welcome, Glen.

Mr. Steve Clark: This is not an introduction but an announcement. Last evening, in Edmonton, Alberta, I became a grandfather for the first time—a seven-pound, 11-ounce baby boy, Eli James Clark, to parents Mitch and Megan. I want to wish Mitch, Megan and baby Eli all the best. I miss them and I hope to see them soon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's a great introduction.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I also want to extend a welcome to a visitor from Thunder Bay as part of the Canadian Diabetes Association, doing great work: Ms. Stacey Livitski.

Mr. Norm Miller: I would like to welcome the father of page captain Sage Nakamoto, who is from the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka: Craig Nakamoto, who is in the public gallery here this morning.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I just wanted to welcome to the gallery the young students who are coming in from Josyf Cardinal Slipyj Catholic School in my riding of Etobicoke Centre—they are led by three wonderful teachers: Ms. D'Souza, Ms. Domenegato and Ms. Czynianski—and a large group of parents who are constituents of mine and also in Etobicoke Centre. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to introduce page Reagan Smith, daughter of our esteemed colleague and member from Prince Edward–Hastings, Todd Smith.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I too want to welcome a page from my riding: Reagan Smith, daughter of MPP Smith.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's nice to see a member of the Paikin family making something of themselves. I'd like to welcome one of our new pages, the daughter of Steve Paikin from TVO, Giulia Paikin, who joins us as a page in the Legislature today too.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Point of order, the government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I believe you will find we have unanimous consent that members be permitted to wear blue circle pins to recognize World Diabetes Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to wear the pins. Do we agree? Agreed.

We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery teachers from across the province participating in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario Teacher's Forum. Please join me in welcoming Ontario's teachers. Thank you for being with us.

OPPOSITION DAY MOTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On November 3, 2016, the government House leader, Mr. Naqvi, rose on a point of order to express concerns about an opposition day motion filed by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Brown, and scheduled for debate tomorrow. According to the government House leader, the motion is out of order because:

- (1) It contains a factual error.
- (2) It is contrary to standing order 23(h) because it makes allegations against a member.
- (3) It is contrary to the sub judice rule in standing order 23(g) because it deals with matters relating to undisposed charges laid under Ontario's Election Act.

The member from Simcoe–Grey, Mr. Wilson, and the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, Mr. Vanthof, also spoke to the point of order.

Having had the opportunity to review Hansard, our precedents, various procedural authorities and the written submission of the government House leader, I am now ready to rule on the point of order.

With respect to the contention that the motion contained a factual error on the basis that an individual named in the motion no longer has the job title that the motion attributes to her, I have to say that, when faced with a point of order on a motion, the Chair is focused on dealing with procedural error as opposed to a factual error, ambiguity or disagreement. Nevertheless, the person in question did have the job title at the time of the events that the opposition day motion deals with, so I think it's possible to understand the reference to her in that context.

On the contention that the motion makes allegations contrary to standing order 23(h), let me remind members that this standing order provides that the Speaker shall call a member to order during debate if the member "makes allegations against another member." While the motion does not make a specific allegation against a member, it instead infers or assumes that the Premier had knowledge of the matters referenced in the motion. This inference or assumption comes as close as it gets to contravening standing order 23(h). I am ruling that the motion does not contravene that standing order, but I want to caution members not to craft their words in such a way as to see how close to the line they can come without actually crossing it, as I have in the past.

1040

Let me now turn to the sub judice concerns that were raised in the point of order. In a statement to the House on May 8, 2008, Speaker Peters explains that the sub judice convention is "a voluntary restriction on the part of a legislative body to refrain from discussing matters that are before a judicial or quasi-judicial body."

The convention originated out of the parliamentary desire to respect the separation between the legislative and judicial branches, and to avoid any possible prejudice to proceedings before a judicial or quasi-judicial body. The convention is less likely to be applied in the context of civil proceedings compared to other kinds of proceedings.

Ultimately, it is for the Speaker to determine whether a matter is sub judice. As noted in page 630 of the second edition of the House of Commons Procedure and Practice, "The Speaker's discretionary authority over matters sub judice derives from his or her role as guardian of free speech in the House. The Chair has the duty to balance the rights of the House with the rights and interests of the ordinary citizen undergoing trial. Indeed, the Speaker intervenes in exceptional cases only where it appears likely that to do otherwise would be harmful to specific individuals."

Not only does the assembly have the sub judice convention; it also has a sub judice rule. Under standing or-

der 23(g)(i), the Speaker must call a member to order if the member,

"(g) Refers to any matter that is the subject of a proceeding,

"(i) that is pending in a court or before a judge for judicial determination; ...

"where it is shown to the satisfaction of the Speaker that further reference would create a real and substantial danger of prejudice to the proceeding."

As stated at page 193 of the third edition of McGee's Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand, the sub judice rule is not intended to prevent discussion on "a generality of cases" dealing with some aspect of the administration of justice. "To apply the standing order so generally would be to stultify debate in the House. The law in general may be discussed, but not its application to a particular case that is before the court."

In reviewing our own precedents, I found that the precedents dealing with sub judice concerns in the context of question period are not all that relevant to sub judice concerns on motions and debates, for the simple reason that the Chair and ministers know that the ministers can indicate their sub judice concerns when responding to an oral question. As noted by Speaker Peters, Speakers here and in most other jurisdictions have adopted the practice of minimal responsibility with respect to the sub judice convention during question period.

Our precedents on previous opposition day motions are more relevant and helpful. For example, I note that on May 14, 2001, the House debated an opposition day motion calling for a public inquiry into circumstances surrounding the death of an individual in a provincial park. No one questioned the orderliness of the motion, but it bears noting that criminal proceedings relating to the death had ended, and that the only individual identified in the motion was deceased.

A 2008 precedent offers more guidance. In that case, an opposition day motion called for a public inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the release on bail of an individual who was identified in the motion. At page 3584 of the Hansard for October 27, 2008, Speaker Peters indicated as follows: "This motion not only does not address the general application of such rules," on the apprehension of persons charged with serious criminal offences, "but it also identifies, in every one of its clauses, the names of individuals associated with a very serious incident that is still before the criminal courts. It also draws conclusions on certain evidence and on the actions of officials involved in the administration of criminal justice in Ontario. Absent these specifics and written a very different way, it is likely such a motion could have proceeded, as was the case with the opposition day motion about the justice system in Ontario that was put forward in November 2006."

After the Speaker ruled this 2008 motion out of order, the House debated a reworded opposition day motion. It called for a public inquiry into Ontario's bail system, so it was thematically similar to the earlier out-of-order motion. However, the motion did not identify any individuals and it did not refer to the details of any specific case.

No concerns were raised as to the orderliness of this replacement motion.

Applying these precedents to the case at hand, the opposition day motion identifies—by name, job description or both—five individuals, two of whom are identified as having been charged with electoral offences that are still before a provincial offences court. It provides a quote allegedly made by one of the defendants, and it calls on the Premier “to identify the individual who ordered” the two defendants to offer an alleged bribe to a named individual, and “to identify the person” who ordered the defendants to offer an alleged bribe to another named individual. In other words, the motion infers or assumes that at least one other individual is involved in the alleged offence, and that the Premier knows their identity.

My principal difficulty with this is that there is no getting around the procedural reality that standing order 43(d) requires a decision on an opposition day motion on the same day that the motion is moved. Whether the motion is carried or lost, a decision will have been made. The House will have taken a position—pronounced its opinion—on elements of a specific proceeding that is before the courts. It is hard to reconcile the possibility of having a debate on this motion that could be held within the bounds of sub judice when, at the end of the debate, the House will vote and make a decision on a specifically worded motion. I find that scenario particularly troubling, and I believe the prospect of it does rise to the level of creating a real and substantial danger of prejudice to the proceeding.

For these reasons, I find the motion to be out of order for contravening the sub judice rule in standing order 23(g). I thank the government House leader, the member from Simcoe–Grey and the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane for speaking to this matter. I also thank the government House leader for providing a written submission.

Point of order: The member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Given your ruling, we won't challenge your ruling. When we submitted the motion, the table did warn us that you could go either way. But I would seek unanimous consent to replace that motion, so that we don't lose our opposition day tomorrow, with the motion dealing with electricity prices in the province of Ontario.

I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice, pursuant to standing order 43(b), regarding an opposition day motion, and that it be debated on Tuesday, November 15, 2016.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe–Grey is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice, pursuant to standing order 43(b), regarding an opposition day motion, and that it be debated on Tuesday, November 15, 2016. Do we agree? I heard a no.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Be helpful. Thank you. Order, please. I think I've asked twice now. Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Deputy Premier. The Liberals hired David Herle and the Gandalf Group to conduct polling on electricity prices. Mr. Speaker, you know what the polling told them? It told them that 94% of Ontario families wanted hydro relief. Why did the government need polling—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Exactly. No kidding.

Why did they need polling to tell them what everybody else already knew? They could have walked into any coffee shop in this province, asked the same question and gotten that answer. They could have knocked on doors in their ridings, and the answer would have been the same. But alas, this government had to conduct polling to tell them that the people of Ontario want relief on their hydro bills.

Can the Deputy Premier tell us just when and how you became so out of touch with the people of Ontario?

1050

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. I think it's important that we look at what we have done when it comes to energy over the past many years. We took a dirty, unreliable electricity system, and we have made significant investments to make our electricity clean, with an electricity system we can count on. When we flick the switch, the lights come on. We couldn't say that when these guys were in charge, Speaker.

We do recognize, though, that the costs of electricity are really troubling for many families. That's why we've taken very clear action to reduce the costs for people as we have made the investments. It's cleaner air, but we are focusing on reducing the costs. One item—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'll be happy to go further, Speaker—

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Just confirming that they're out of touch.

Not only did this government need to conduct polling to tell them what almost everyone in Ontario was telling them—that they believe they pay too much for electricity—but the Liberals chose to hire their campaign manager to conduct a poll, and they paid him with taxpayers' money. There doesn't seem to be any money for real hydro relief, but there seems to always be money to feed Liberal friends.

Speaker, just how much money did the Liberals pay their campaign manager, David Herle, to tell them the obvious—that people in Ontario are paying too much for electricity?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we are reducing bills by 8%. We're cutting delivery charges to the most rural customers by 20%. Our new agreement with Quebec will reduce electricity system costs by almost \$70 million from previous forecasts. We've introduced the Ontario Electricity Support Program and the Rural and Remote Electricity Rate Protection Program. The regulated price plan rates will not increase for Ontario's residential, farm and small business customers. We have taken a number of steps because we recognize the burden of electricity prices on the people of Ontario.

I have to say I was really heartened when I saw the Toronto's Vital Signs report earlier this year that said hospitalizations due to dirty air are down 41%, and premature deaths due to dirty air are down 23%, because of the actions we have taken to shut down coal-fired plants.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I didn't hear an answer about the cost.

I get phone calls and emails every day, like my colleagues, from families and seniors looking for hydro relief. Every—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Minister of Children and Youth Services, come to order.

When the question is being put, I would appreciate the other comments not to happen on the same side.

Finish, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: At every event I attend, someone tells me—more than someone; lots of people tell me—they cannot afford their hydro bill. I can't go into a coffee shop without a constituent telling me about the pain that Ontario's electricity policy is causing them. But this government needed to spend thousands upon thousands of dollars to hear the obvious.

Do Liberal members not speak to their constituents? Do they ignore phone calls? Do they not read their emails? Why did it take taxpayer-funded polling from the Liberal campaign manager for this government to recognize the mess they've created in this province, and what everybody else already knows—that electricity prices are too high? How could they have kept their heads in the sand this long?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as I said earlier, we have taken concrete, real steps to reduce energy costs. But we stand by the decision we made to shut down the coal-fired plants. Coal is the cheapest energy, but we actually put a value on the health of the people of this province.

When we see that hospitalizations due to dirty air have declined by 41%, when we see premature deaths reduced by 23% because of the decisions that we made to have clean energy in this province, we remain committed that this was the right decision and remains the right decision.

We are opposed to coal-fired plants, Speaker. I'm not sure where the opposition stands on that, but our decision to shut down the coal-fired plants was absolutely the right approach to take.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the Deputy Premier. My last question wasn't about coal; it was about the poll.

Speaker, my question is back to the deputy. Every day, I hear another hydro horror story. Often it's a story of a business closing because they can no longer afford to pay their electricity bills. I ask the Deputy Premier: How long will she allow businesses to continue to close in this province because of the electricity crisis that your party has created for business in this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: For the member to suggest, even in this Legislature—a partisan body, we all know—that Ontario's economy is not going well, that Ontario's economy is not growing, that businesses across Ontario are not growing, that rather they're shrinking, either suggests that the member is completely misinformed and is not paying attention to what's happening in the economy, or he's just trying to score political points in this Legislature—

Interjection: Spinning, spinning.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Just spinning.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is we're up 642,000 net jobs in this province since the recession. That's a good thing. The fact is—and we'll find out today; our finance minister will talk about projected growth today—BMO suggests that we're growing at 2.6% this year for growth in our economy. That's faster than every G7 nation.

The member, on this particular question, I would suggest is sorely misinformed.

Interjection.

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

Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, I think Lewis Carroll writes the answers for the minister.

Despite the spin this government offers, it is clear they aren't doing enough to keep business operating in Ontario. Just over a week ago, it was announced that Cambridge Towel was shutting its doors. The factory is closing despite the fact that the members from Cambridge and Kitchener Centre went to the factory and told everyone how great everything was in this province and how great the government was and how they are listening to the people.

I'll read you a quote from the Cambridge Times. The member from Cambridge said, "We are hearing that everyday Ontarians can certainly use help with lower costs of electricity," and that she believes "this week's energy rebates and savings announcements show the government is listening to concerns." Is listening to the concerns of the 160 people who are about to lose their jobs because of high electricity rates enough, or is it time that this government took real action?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm very familiar with this particular company, Cambridge Towel. It's a company that we've partnered with in the past. It's a company that is

an excellent company. Unfortunately, Cambridge Towel did not get a contract, a long-standing contract that they've had in the past, and that's what has created their challenges. We hope that they will emerge from their current position and continue to be able to provide a good product and provide those jobs.

The sad part about Cambridge Towel is that they were this close to being able to benefit from one of our important changes we've made to our energy policy, our ICI program, where they would have been one of the 1,000 companies that would have seen up to a third of their energy costs reduced. We hope this company makes it through this challenging time, Mr. Speaker, and we hope they—

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

Interjection.

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

Final supplementary?

Mr. John Yakubuski: Back to the Deputy Premier or the minister. I'll read you another quote from Cambridge Towel's chief executive officer, who said "the company chose to remain in Canada, but at a price.

"We decided we'd stay here, but there's a penalty for staying here. Higher costs."

1100

Well, now it appears that those higher costs were just too high. This Liberal government has cost over 160 people their jobs. Will the Premier's office send the members from Cambridge and Kitchener back for another photo op with the 160 workers as they're walked out the door when Cambridge Towel closes its doors, or will that be a photo op that they just won't have time to make?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Speaker, rather than talk down Ontario's economy and Canada's economy, the member ought to be dealing with the facts. The fact is, we've led North America in attracting foreign direct investment for two out of the last three years. The fact is, we've gotten rid of the capital tax—that's saving our company hundreds of millions of dollars. The fact is, we've also brought in the HST, which has provided hundreds of millions of dollars in advantages to companies like Cambridge Towel. The fact is, we've put in place the lowest effective corporate tax rate in all of North America, something that's helping us to attract those investments.

This is a competitive economy. It continues to be competitive. We still have work to do. We're going to work in partnership with our business community to become even more competitive, to continue to attract more jobs, to continue to innovate and to continue to lead North America in growth. That's where we need to be. That's where we plan to be.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Deputy Premier. It's now been almost two weeks since we learned that the Premier's top aide, Pat Sorbara, was charged with two violations of the Election Act, and two

weeks since the shocking allegation that Ms. Sorbara allegedly offered the Minister of Energy an enticement to run for the Premier's Liberal Party.

People are disappointed with this Premier and the scandals of her Liberal Party. Why won't the Premier do what virtually every Premier before her has done, do the honourable thing, and remove her Minister of Energy until his role in the Sudbury by-election scandal is determined?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I think we have discussed this matter in a fair bit of detail in this House, and I very much appreciate your ruling earlier today as well. As I've stated before, and as all members know, this is a matter that is before the courts, and it would be highly inappropriate for this Legislature to speak on matters that are before a court.

It's also very clear that the Minister of Energy is under no investigation whatsoever and there are no charges laid against him as well. He continues to do his very important job as the Minister of Energy, and he is focused on making sure that we are building a clean, reliable energy system and making sure that we continue to keep the prices of hydro at a reasonable level as well by ensuring that we're cutting the 8% HST from hydro bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, this is not about trying the case; it's about doing the principled thing when a minister is involved in an issue that is actually before the courts. The Minister of Energy is implicated in a very serious allegation. The people of Ontario need to know that their government and their representatives have integrity beyond reproach. We are not asking to try this case in the Legislature, and the Deputy Premier and the Attorney General actually know this. That's what people expect: What we and Ontarians everywhere are asking for, in fact, is that the Minister of Energy step aside from his cabinet role until these allegations have been properly dealt with.

My question is, why won't this Liberal government do the principled thing—the thing that should be done—and simply ask that minister to step aside and reassure—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Chief government whip, second time.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —the people of Ontario that the Premier can put aside blind partisanship and prioritize the people of Ontario's faith in government?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The Minister of Energy is not implicated in this matter. There are no allegations towards him whatsoever. He's under no investigation, and there are no charges against him either. The Minister of Energy, in the context of his portfolio, is under no question whatsoever in this matter. So I do not see a connection between what the member opposite is trying to make to the—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Open your eyes.

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: There is no connection between the role of the Minister of Energy, as the minister responsible for a very important file, and the allegations in this matter, which do not touch the minister nor his responsibility as a minister.

As the Premier said, the minister will continue to do the excellent work he is doing in the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, yet again the Premier and her Liberal government are defending and protecting Liberal insiders. This time, it happens to be the Minister of Energy.

When will this Premier wake up and realize that the longer she lets the Minister of Energy remain in cabinet, the more damage she and her Liberal government do to people's faith in democracy in Ontario?

The Premier needs to show leadership here. She needs to realize that this is about more than just protecting one of her MPPs. This is about letting people know that politicians in Ontario are about more than blind party loyalty or partisan politics.

I ask the Deputy Premier again: Will the Premier finally show some leadership and ask her Minister of Energy to step aside until this matter is through the courts and decided?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, if anybody is showing a partisan streak or demonstrating partisan politics, it's the leader of the third party, by continuing to ask about a matter that is before the courts. Instead of focusing on real issues that matter to Ontarians, she is focused on something that the Minister of Energy is not implicated in. There are no allegations against the Minister of Energy. He is under no investigation, and there are no charges laid against him whatsoever. The Minister of Energy continues to do his work.

Perhaps the NDP and the leader of the third party are still not over the fact that they lost that by-election and the Minister of Energy, who has been a great community champion, was successful.

So if anybody is diving into politics and partisanship, it's the NDP. I think they've got to get over it.

The Minister of Energy is a hard-working constituent MPP who has served his community for many, many years, and he'll continue to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. The leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I have to say that there's no wonder the Liberals are where they are these days when they don't think that allegations of bribery are in any way important to the people of Ontario. It's pretty serious stuff.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Deputy Premier, Speaker.

Look, if the Premier won't ask her Minister of Energy to resign over the alleged bribery scandal, she should

over the mess that he has helped her make in our energy system.

Two weeks ago, I stood on the banks of the Ottawa River, right across from Gatineau, Quebec. According to a Hydro-Québec survey from April of this year, the average hydro bill that families pay in Gatineau is about \$100. In Ottawa, where I was standing, that same survey says the average bill is \$224. Quebec's hydro system is completely public; Ontario's is not.

So I have a simple question for the Deputy Premier: Does she see the connection between the high cost of Ontario's hydro and the fact that we have a system that Conservatives and Liberals have been privatizing for the last 20 years?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I actually happen to have a copy of that report that the leader of the third party was referring to, which compares energy prices in cities around Ontario and other communities. Let me just share: In Toronto, \$246 a month is the average bill for 1,000 kilowatt hours of consumption. In Ottawa, it's \$224, as the member said. In Boston, that number is \$383. In New York City, that number is \$409. In Chicago, that number is \$210. Speaker, I could go on, but what I can tell you is that our energy rates are competitive with other municipalities.

But we do understand that people need relief from their electricity prices. That is exactly why, starting in January—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals may want to swim at the bottom of the barrel when it comes to high hydro rates, Speaker, but certainly Ontario families and businesses expect better from their government.

The Premier's sell-off of Hydro One affects everyone who lives in this province. I recently sat down with Alex and Sherri Moore. Alex and Sherri live in London with their three children. They've watched their hydro bill nearly double since the same time last year. The cost of hydro means they can't save for their kids' future, and they're concerned about being able to afford to enrol them in after-school programs and sports. Like people all across Ontario, the sell-off of Hydro One means life is getting tougher for Alex and Sherri. It means it's harder for them to give their children every opportunity they deserve.

When will this Liberal government help families like Alex and Sherri's and stop the sell-off of Hydro One?

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Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are making investments that will reduce, by 8%, electricity bills for people right across the province. Everyone is going to benefit from that 8% reduction, and those in the most rural parts of the province are going to see a 20% reduction in their delivery charges. We are very much aware of the burden that high electricity prices play in household budgets across this province, but we are taking important steps to reduce that burden.

At the same time, we have replaced our energy infrastructure. We have shut down the coal-fired plants. Green energy is more expensive if you just look at the cost of electricity, but when we can bring down hospitalizations by 41%, when we can reduce premature deaths by 23%—we're talking about a reduction in the number of deaths because of a decision we made to bring cleaner energy to Ontario. I stand by that decision. We stand by that decision.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Deputy Premier can spew out as many Liberal lines as she likes, but the people of this province are not confident in what this government has done with our electricity system. That is the bottom line.

Last week, I visited newlyweds Shaun and May Evans in Sarnia. They, too, told me about how hard it has been to keep up with their skyrocketing hydro bills. Shaun and May were forced to get a roommate to help out with their hydro bills. They have put their dream of starting a family on hold because they just can't risk the additional financial burden when they don't know how much more their bills are going to go up.

I've been in London, Hamilton, Kitchener, Sudbury, Ottawa, Sarnia and Kingston. Everywhere I go, people ask me what they can do to stop the sell-off of Hydro One. Everywhere, people are asking that question. Does this Deputy Premier understand how this wrong-headed sell-off is hurting Ontarians? Will her government finally put a stop to any further sell-off of Hydro One and do what the people want her to do?

Interjections.

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

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think all of us in this House have been hearing from constituents about various costs and various challenges they face. We are doing everything we can to address those challenges.

When it comes to helping families, I am thrilled at the changes we are making to OSAP, reducing the cost of post-secondary education. We're eliminating the financial barrier to post-secondary education. That's going to help all of the families in this province who are faced with decisions about whether or not their kids can go on to post-secondary.

We want every student in this province to work hard, get marks and get accepted, and then we are going to make sure that money does not stand in the way of them achieving their full potential. It's a profoundly important initiative for all of us, not just those who will benefit directly from this.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question today is for the Minister of Economic Development and Growth. We all know the minister enjoys talking about the millions

and millions of taxpayer dollars this government hands out to private corporations. Forgotten in all the political spin is the reality for failed companies like WindTronics, Arc Productions and now, sadly, Cambridge Towel and their workers.

Just over seven weeks ago, this government used Cambridge Towel as the backdrop for another shameless political announcement, this time about "reducing energy costs." Over 160 workers will lose their jobs when Cambridge Towel closes in yet another example of sky-high hydro rates costing real jobs and hurting Ontario families.

How many plants have to close and how many people have to lose their jobs before the minister will admit there is a hydro crisis facing Ontario's manufacturers?

Hon. Brad Duguid: This province has just seen, in the last number of weeks, \$1.7 billion announced to be invested in our auto plants that's going to support and save tens of thousands, if not millions, of jobs across this province. The member opposite opposes all the partnerships that we've done in the past with those plants. His party, his member said, "Let those plants close." And you know what, Mr. Speaker? We refuse to do that. The result is thousands of jobs in Windsor, thousands of jobs in St. Catharines, thousands of jobs in Oshawa, thousands of jobs in Woodstock, thousands of jobs across this province because of the partnerships that you opposed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Minister of Economic Development and Growth: Just over 300 days ago, I wrote to this minister asking him to release the information on the business grants that this government has handed out since 2004. Recently, the minister released information going back only to 2013, including a government grant for \$190,000 to Cambridge Towel, the same company that is laying off 160 people and closing its doors. This grant was awarded just a couple of years ago. Now we know that families in and around Cambridge are going to be without work as we approach Christmas. Minister, that's extremely sad.

Mr. Speaker, how many more factories does the Minister of Economic Development and Growth expect to close before Christmas due to his government's electricity rates and other failed Liberal policies?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We feel strongly—and we feel for those workers whose jobs are in jeopardy who are being laid off at Cambridge Towel. But at the same time, this member is trying to have it both ways. One minute he's saying, "Help those companies." The next minute he's saying that he opposes those very programs that help those companies.

We're proud of the investment we made some time ago with Cambridge Towel. It helped them continue to grow when things were going well for them. We're proud of the investments we've made with our partners in the business community. We've invested \$2.8 billion; \$29 billion of private sector dollars have been leveraged from that, and 160,000 Ontarians have jobs out of those invest-

ments that we've made, investments we're proud to have made, investments he and his leader continue to oppose.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Deputy Premier: When the Premier was elected in 2014, she promised that she would be different. She promised a clean slate, a break from her party's scandal-ridden recent past.

Instead of a break from the past, we have more broken promises and more scandal. The Premier and her government need to take very seriously the implication of the Minister of Energy and the allegations of bribery. She needs to show the people who voted for her that she will put the interests of Ontarians before the political interests of her party.

Speaker, to the Deputy Premier: When will the Minister of Energy be stepping down from cabinet?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It's unfortunate that the NDP continue to ask questions which they know are not relevant to the matters that are before this House. I think the NDP also know that the Minister of Energy is under no investigation. There are no allegations towards him, and there are no charges towards him as well.

He is somebody who is hard-working. He's earnest and works extremely hard to serve his community of Sudbury. As the Minister of Energy, he is focused on making sure that we continue to improve the everyday lives of Ontarians. One of the very important measures that he has brought forward is permanently cutting 8% of the HST from all hydro bills. That will come into effect on January 1, 2017. The member from Sudbury will continue to do his job.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Deputy Premier: The fact that this government is using a court case where two top Liberal political aides are being accused of breaking election law as a reason to not answer what is really a straightforward question speaks volumes.

If the Deputy Premier had been implicated in a bribery scandal, would she not step aside until her name had been completely cleared? Wouldn't she want the people in her riding and across Ontario to have complete faith in her integrity and her honesty? Wouldn't she?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, the facts are as follows: There are allegations in a matter. Two individuals who do not serve in this House are charged in that matter. That matter is before a court. The Minister of Energy is not implicated. The Minister of Energy is under no investigation and, Speaker, there are no charges towards the Minister of Energy whatsoever.

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Furthermore, the matter that is dealt with in that issue has nothing to do with the roles and responsibilities of the minister as the Minister of Energy. These are the facts.

The NDP can try to ignore the facts, and that's their prerogative, Speaker, but the facts of this matter are

clear. There is no reason whatsoever for the Minister of Energy to step down. In fact, there is even more reason that he continues to serve the people of Sudbury and that he continues to serve as the Minister of Energy. He is doing a good job at it, and we have full faith and confidence in him.

HOME INSPECTION INDUSTRY

Mr. Han Dong: My question is for the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. Recently, I joined the minister and the member from Etobicoke Centre to announce the proposed changes that will increase consumer protections for household services.

One of the proposed changes in the legislation is to regulate the home inspection industry. Buying a home is the largest investment many Ontarians make in their lifetime. Consumers want and need to be confident in making these purchases every step of the way. Home inspectors play a crucial role in that process; however, it is one of the only professions involved in a real estate transaction that is not provincially licensed.

Speaker, can the minister inform this House on how our government plans to add accountability to the industry and further build consumers' confidence?

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: I want to say thank you to the member from Trinity-Spadina for the important question and also for his continued work on advocacy regarding the issue.

Consumers hiring home inspectors should be able to expect a level of expertise, quality and consistency. Our government intends to address these issues through regulating the home inspection industry, and as a result, strengthening consumer confidence and increasing accountability within the sector.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of our government's record of listening to consumers and creating the protections they need and deserve. This is why we are moving forward with the proposed legislation I introduced earlier this month which, if passed, will establish mandatory licensing for home inspectors practising in Ontario. Our government is dedicated to ensuring that every Ontarian can be confident in every purchase they make.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Han Dong: I would like to thank the minister for her answer. This is a very important step forward for both consumers and the industry. I know that regulating the home inspection industry will bring consistency to the profession through minimum qualifications that all of us can support.

In my riding and in many ridings across the province, homeowners, including condo owners, can really use this valuable service with confidence when they know the home inspectors are provincially licensed.

Speaker, can the minister provide further details on her plan to regulate the home inspection industry?

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you, again, to the member from Trinity-Spadina for his advocacy on this very important issue.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to setting minimum qualifications for home inspectors, the proposed legislation, if passed, will allow for the creation of a new administrative authority to oversee and enforce the new rules. This authority will be able to establish additional licensing requirements, a code of ethics for licensees, and set a technical standard for home inspections.

If the proposed legislation is passed, our government plans to continue to work with the industry to ensure consumers are protected and confident when buying a home. Our goal is to build a fair, safe and informed marketplace for all Ontarians.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to helping consumers make informed choices to protect their hard-earned money, which is why we are bringing accountability to the home inspection industry.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Speaker, the Premier refuses to come clean about who gave the orders to make the alleged offers that have resulted in Pat Sorbara facing bribery charges under the Election Act. Her silence in the face of these unprecedented charges is an insult to Ontarians, who deserve the truth.

But the Premier isn't the only key player from this government involved in the Sudbury by-election. As Liberal campaign co-chair, the Deputy Premier would also have played a role. As campaign co-chair, what knowledge did the Deputy Premier have about any inducements or offers?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Well, Speaker, it feels a bit like déjà vu. It feels like we've gone back two weeks in time. The opposition has been asking these same questions. You were very clear earlier last week in letting all members know about the sub judice rule, and Speaker, you very eloquently just gave a ruling in response to my point of order on that issue, exactly highlighting the fact that the opposition is trying to litigate a matter in the House that is before the House.

They are making implications that there are other individuals involved when we know the matter is related to only two individuals, who have been charged and who do not sit in this House—all this to say that the government, or I, will not engage in this conversation in this House. This matter is before the courts, and I respectfully ask all members to respect the rule and your ruling.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm going to try again. Back to the Deputy Premier: Speaker, I know this government would rather talk about anything else this morning, but this unprecedented scandal is directly connected to the Premier's office. With the Minister of Energy named in a charge laid by the OPP, this scandal has now landed at the cabinet table.

We have a responsibility, on behalf of all Ontarians, to get to the bottom of who gave the orders to Pat Sorbara.

The Premier won't answer, and the Minister of Energy won't do the honourable thing and step aside. Speaker, will the Deputy Premier tell us about her role in the Sudbury scandal? Or is she going to uphold the Liberal tradition and deny Ontarians the answers they demand?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, Speaker, the member asked exactly the same question that he asked the first time, which he has asked repeatedly before. The answer does not change: This matter is before the courts. It's the responsibility of a judge to weigh all the evidence that is presented before her or him and make a determination. It's up to a judge, based on the evidence that she or he hears, to get to the bottom of it, to quote the member opposite.

Speaker, the standing order rules that you quoted so eloquently in your ruling earlier today are absolutely clear, and that is that this House should not engage in any matter that is before the court or a quasi-judicial tribunal, for the simple reason of not prejudicing those proceedings. The member opposite is trying to prejudice this matter, and that's highly inappropriate.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Acting Premier. Twelve days ago, I stood here in this Legislature to ask the Premier to reunite a Niagara couple who have been separated by the long-term-care system after 70 years of marriage. I was pleased to hear the Minister of Health say that this couple should never have been separated in the first place.

But unfortunately, 12 days later, Clarence and Jessie are still waiting to be reunited. Clarence is 93 years old and is living at Shalom Manor in Grimsby. Jessie is 92 years old and she's living at a home in St. Catharines.

They miss each other terribly, and they need to be together. How much longer will Clarence and Jessie have to wait before they are reunited?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm confident that this couple will be reunited very, very soon. I have that confidence. The member opposite knows that I have been diligently working on this issue. I know he also appreciates that I can't speak to the specifics at all; it would be a violation of the privacy rights of the couple. That being said, my office is working closely—I would say almost on a daily basis—with either the CCAC or the LHIN involved, to make sure that we're addressing this.

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The member is right on this point, that this couple should not be separated. It has been just under two weeks, I believe, since this was first brought to my attention. I want to reassure the member opposite—in fact, I want to reassure this Legislature and all Ontarians—that this is one of my highest priorities, to reunite this couple.

I can't speak to the specifics of the case for privacy reasons, but I'm working on it each and every single day, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Again to the Acting Premier: Couples like Clarence and Jessie shouldn't be separated by our long-term-care system—

Mr. Arthur Potts: Say thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Beaches–East York, come to order.

Mr. Wayne Gates: They should get the respect and dignity they deserve and be able to live all their days with each other. I believe the minister when he says that he wants to fix this situation, but Clarence and Jessie are still separated, and every day that passes is another day they are denied their wish of living together.

Will this government do the right thing and reunite Clarence and Jessie without any further delay?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that we share the view that this couple needs to be reunited as soon as possible, and we are working to that end. We are working with the CCAC that is tasked with the responsibility of finding the bed available to enable the reunification of this couple.

I can't speak to the specifics of the case. All I can do is say to the member that we're working closely together. I know that my office is updating his office on a very regular basis, almost a daily basis. We're doing everything we can to make sure that we're following the process that is there, the legislation that exists—which we changed, in fact, to allow for the reunification of couples such as this elderly couple. I'm confident that we're going to have it resolved very, very soon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. The member for Beaches–East York.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker, and I appreciated your caution a moment ago. I kind of thought the member opposite was going to say thank you, but I didn't hear that.

My question today is to the Minister of Education. Last week was constituency week, and out of the very many meetings I had, I had the pleasure to meet with a company from Quebec called La Capitale. La Capitale provides health benefits to self-employed individuals. I'm pleased to announce that they gave a \$5,000 donation to the Scott Mission in Beaches–East York. The whole event was organized with the Ontario Electrical League, and I wanted to publicly say thank you to all who were involved.

I also heard that the minister attended a very successful event last week discussing with our educational partners how to improve educational outcomes for students, especially when it comes to well-being and equity. The fundamental principle which is driving everything that we do on this side of the House is that everyone has the opportunity to succeed in Ontario, regardless of culture, ethnicity, gender, language, physical or intellectual ability, race, religion or sexual orientation.

Speaker, will the minister talk to us about that event she was at?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member from Beaches–East York for that great question.

Last week, along with the Premier, PA Anderson and Associate Minister Naidoo-Harris, we had a chance to participate in our first partners-in-dialogue day, an event brought together by the ministry with Ontario's education community, all under one roof.

During this two-day summit, we heard views and opinions from all partners, including francophone partners and communities and indigenous partners, so that we could incorporate their unique identities, cultural backgrounds and perspectives on the issues and priorities affecting our youngest learners.

We had more than 500 participants and I look forward to reviewing the feedback that we've heard and strengthening the communications channels we've built to better serve our education system and the needs of all of our students.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Back to the Minister of Education: I can tell you that one of my favourite things I do as an MPP is when I meet with students—children, the youth in my riding. I've been to many events on Healthy Smiles, free tuition, and graduation events. When I meet with these kids, I ask them what their favourite part of school is, and they always warm my heart when they respond. Some tell me their favourite thing is a teacher who takes extra time to help them with their learning. Others shyly and with soft voices tell me it's about their ability to learn in a safe and accepting school environment or place.

Speaker, I would ask the minister if she could elaborate on the next steps that our government is taking to build and sustain an equitable and inclusive educational system.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you again to the hard-working member for the question.

I'm proud to say that, with our education partners, we have built an education system for the future that balances achievement and equity. We know that we have more work to do, and we recognize that the input of students, parents and teachers is vital if we want to improve student achievement and student and staff well-being. That is why we will be holding regional consultations across the province, starting tomorrow in Barrie. We're also conducting consultations online where members of the public will be able to provide their feedback on students' well-being on ontario.ca/studentwellbeing.

At the end of the day, our children are our most valuable asset, and it is our job to ensure that they feel safe, included and capable to reach their full potential.

GOVERNMENT FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Deputy Premier. Today the Liberal government will release its fall economic statement

highlighting their financial track record. This is a record of debt and deficits, significant tax increases, endless waste, mismanagement and scandals.

In his latest report, the Financial Accountability Officer said they have a multi-billion dollar hole in their budget forecast. He confirmed the government is using one-time money from asset sales and contingency funds to artificially balance the budget in an election year. He told us the only way they are going to balance after that is to raise taxes or cut services further.

Mr. Speaker, can the Deputy Premier tell us whether they are raising taxes again or whether we can expect more cuts to front-line services in today's fall economic statement?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know we all anxiously anticipate 1 o'clock, when the finance minister will deliver the fall economic statement.

I think it's really important to get some facts on the table. When it comes to GDP growth in the first half of this year, it was higher than Canada, higher than the US, almost all the G7 countries—Ontario led the way. Our unemployment rate—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It really doesn't matter where anyone sits. I still hear the voice and I know it.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Beaches—East York, second time.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The unemployment rate is at the lowest level in eight years. It's 6.4%. That has been below the national average for 18 months. Some 640,000 net new jobs since the recession—and we're on track to balance the budget. Moody's has upgraded our credit rating. We will balance.

The fall economic statement will show us—

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Deputy Premier: Recently, the Auditor General refused to sign off on the government's financial statements. This was unprecedented in Ontario's history. Now they've appointed a taxpayer-funded panel to audit our own independent Auditor General. They didn't like what the auditor had to say, and now they're trying to continue to discredit her.

This is completely inappropriate. The people of Ontario cannot trust anything this Liberal government has to say. Their numbers are wrong. We've been telling them they're wrong, and both the Auditor General and the Financial Accountability Officer have confirmed this.

Mr. Speaker, will the government come clean and update their false budget projections in today's fall economic statement?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I, too, want to assure the member opposite that we are committed to balancing the budget by 2017-18—and not just balancing the budget, but as

the Financial Accountability Officer notes, we're also incorporating new commitments into our plan so that we can make everyday life easier for Ontarians.

I think it's also important to look at the public accounts, because we beat our deficit target for the seventh year in a row using the accounting treatment that the Auditor General wanted. Even using the Auditor General's accounting treatment, we beat our deficit target seven years in a row. In fact, the FAO acknowledges that the Ontario government has held its program growth spending to 1.4% annually.

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CHILD POVERTY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Deputy Premier. We should be building a great future for every child in this province, but instead, thousands of children are being left behind. A new report today from a coalition of social agencies confirms that Toronto is Canada's child poverty capital. Some 27% of children in this city are living in poverty or in low-income families that are struggling to find good housing and put food on the table, and if we don't make big changes, we will continue to deny tens of thousands of children the great future that we know is possible.

When will this government finally—finally—take some bold action to actually eliminate child poverty in the city of Toronto and right across Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Housing and poverty reduction.

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you for that very good question. Speaker, we as a government have to ensure that children and youth get absolutely the best start in life, through strategic investments in education, health care and community supports. This government has made steady progress towards meeting our target of reducing child poverty by 25%, Ontario's first—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services and the member from Renfrew: another place.

Finish, please.

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to emphasize that Ontario's first Poverty Reduction Strategy alone lifted 47,000 children and their families out of poverty and prevented thousands more from falling into poverty.

We know there's more to do. We need to continue to build on this progress, and we need to improve the everyday lives of children and their families. Our government remains committed to our goal to reduce child poverty by 25%.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: No child gets their best start in life when their family is living in poverty—no child. Toronto should be a great city for everyone who lives here, but under this government, Toronto is a divided

city. In 2014, this government failed to meet their child poverty reduction targets, and now—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Trinity–Spadina, come to order, and I have about three others I'll deal with as well.

Please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: And now poverty in Toronto is still at epidemic levels. That's what this report confirms. In neighbourhoods like Regent Park and Thorncliffe Park, over 50% of children in those neighbourhoods are growing up in low-income families. We have to change that, Speaker. We need to make sure that the next generation has a real future in this great city.

When will this Liberal government finally do the right thing, lift wages for low-income families and eliminate child poverty in Toronto?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Chris Ballard: I think everyone in this House can agree that it's so important that children get a good start in life, to make sure they've got that foundation to build a successful life. I'm happy to take this question because it allows me to touch on a few of the things that this government is doing.

For example, we've indexed the Ontario Child Benefit to annual increases. The maximum benefit rose to \$1,336 per child. We will not be clawing back the Canada child benefit, another great benefit going through. We've launched the enhanced youth action plan, investing \$55 million over three years to help at-risk youth.

There's so much that this province is doing. One of the biggest things is providing full-day kindergarten for all four- and five-year-old children, 260,000 students, saving families on average—

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

STEM RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Research, Innovation and Science. Our government is committed to supporting theoretical mathematics and mathematical applications to make a real difference in people's lives. That is why our government continues to support the work done at the Fields Institute for Research in Mathematical Sciences. The Fields Institute is a globally recognized international centre for scientific research in mathematical sciences at the University of Toronto.

Could the minister please tell the members a little more about Manjul Bhargava and the prestigious Fields Medal?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member from Northumberland–Quinte West for that very timely question. The Fields Medal in mathematics is the highest international honour that any mathematician can receive.

I'm proud to say that Professor Manjul Bhargava is the first Canadian to win this award.

Whenever a Canadian wins an award, whether it is a medal in the Olympics or a medal in mathematics, it touches all of us and it is something we can all be proud of. This is a huge victory for Canada and for Ontario, and a victory for all young Canadians who aspire to one day win the Fields Medal in mathematics.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you to the Minister of Research, Innovation and Science for his answer.

Minister, research done at the Fields Institute changes the way we approach mathematical problems in various business sectors, including statistics, computer science, engineering, physical and biological science, medicine, economics and finance.

Can the minister please tell the members of this House what our government is doing to support the Fields Institute and the STEM learners across Ontario?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member again for that question.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to improving the lives of Ontarians by investing in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. That's why my colleague the Minister of Education announced recently that our government will be investing in a renewed math strategy.

Our government knows that math is a critical requirement for the jobs of tomorrow. The Fields Institute will receive \$10 million in operational funding to make sure they can continue cutting-edge research. Over the past 13 years, our government has invested \$30 million into the institute, which has led to success stories, for example, in the financial sector, such as S&P Capital IQ, Sigma Capital and Synchrony Capital.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

The number of diabetics in this province has more than doubled. Thousands of diabetics every year across the province develop a foot ulcer that unfortunately never heals and leads to amputation. The health care cost associated annually from foot ulcer complications is about \$400 million. In fact, due to foot ulcers, diabetic patients stay in hospitals up to 72 days, costing the health care sector millions of dollars.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Why are off-loading devices—proven tools that heal foot ulcers—still not available through the Assistive Devices Program?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It's a great opportunity, given that it's World Diabetes Day, to actually speak to this issue. I thank the member opposite for asking this question.

I want to begin by commending the work of all of those who advocate for and provide support, including to those individuals like my sister, one of those rare insulin-dependent diabetics. She's had diabetes for almost 50

years, which would have been unheard of. So this is an issue that's very important to my heart.

The issue of offloading devices and wound care generally is also extremely important to me. For that reason, I've had a number of meetings with regard to this issue. I actually constituted, through HQO, a task force, an expert panel, which is looking at this exact issue, looking at the evidence of best practices. I think they're just about to report back to me in terms of their recommendations.

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

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the minister: Every four hours, a diabetic loses a foot. Public funding for offloading devices is a cost-effective treatment intervention for Ontario. Funding for offloading devices can save the government up to \$75 million annually. Why hasn't this government acted quicker? They continue to pay the \$70,000 associated with a foot amputation rather than make investments towards preventive care for diabetic patients.

The government has wasted millions of dollars on the diabetes registry and billions of dollars on eHealth. Now there's an opportunity for this government to save the system while improving the lives of diabetic patients.

Speaker, when exactly will the minister commit to providing diabetics with offloading devices?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I don't think there's any distance between myself and the member opposite on this issue. I agree with the cost-effectiveness of offloading devices. I agree that the clinical evidence is profound in terms of the potential benefit.

But I would hope that the member opposite would also agree that it's prudent for me to wait just a short amount of time, because I think they're about to report back to me—a committee, a task force through HQO, that includes experts from the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, the experts in wound management care, the association nationally that represents them—all of the right people to provide us with that expert advice so we can move forward, based on that best evidence and based on best practices.

I want to thank the member opposite for raising this question today.

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

The House recessed from 1151 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome to the gallery today Hugh Mackenzie and Paula Nichols from my absolutely wonderful riding of Kingston and the Islands. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions. The member from Beaches—East York—

Mr. Arthur Potts: Speaker, thank you—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):—who is now in his seat.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Who is now in his seat.

I have the pleasure to introduce a good friend of mine, Sarah Ker-Hornell, who is here from Peter Tabuns's riding of Toronto Danforth.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It gives me great pleasure to introduce my wife, Zenny, to this Legislature, to this chamber, sitting in the members' gallery. Welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): With us in the members' gallery, from Scarborough—Agincourt in the 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th and 39th Parliaments, Mr. Gerry Phillips.

As well, in the Speaker's gallery, we have a gentleman who served from June 8, 1995, to September 16, 2016, in the 39th to the 41st Parliaments, in Niagara West—Glanbrook; in Erie—Lincoln in the 37th and 38th Parliaments; and in Niagara South in the 36th Parliament; a former leader of the PC Party and presently the CEO of the Ontario Real Estate Association, Mr. Tim Hudak. Welcome, Tim.

Interjection: Come back.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think there were calls for "come back"—I'm not sure. But I thank you for that.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO CONVENIENCE STORES ASSOCIATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm proud to rise and recognize the Ontario Convenience Stores Association as they visit Queen's Park today.

The convenience store industry in Ontario consists of approximately 9,000 stores, employs 77,000 Ontarians and serves 2.7 million customers every day. The convenience store industry in Ontario is worth over \$18 billion annually, but these businesses provide much more value than that. There's no question that these small-business owners are essential to the success of Ontario's economy. These entrepreneurs overcome challenges every day, and their commitment to providing reliable, timely and fair service to Ontarians is admirable.

Speaker, I can tell you that I speak from experience. I grew up in a family that owned three convenience stores over decades. My father, Hub, and my mother, Lena, opened Hub's Smoke Shop in the late 1950s. Then Hub's Hilltop opened at the top of the hill in North Bay in the 1960s, and a third convenience store, Hub's, in the 1970s. My mom and dad; my grandmother; my aunt, Emelia; my sister, Teresa; my brother, Peter: We all grew up working in these great stores.

The Ontario PC caucus is proud to stand with the Ontario Convenience Stores Association as they continue to grow and prosper, to the benefit of all Ontarians.

MERCURY POISONING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Today, my comments are about the Grassy Narrows First Nation, where three generations of indigenous people continue to suffer from mercury poisoning, which attacks the brain and damages permanently.

My thoughts are with the mothers raising children challenged by mysterious learning delays, adults who, each year, lose more of their sense of touch, their hearing, their vision and their balance.

In May, we learned from experts that fish on the Wabigoon River are still highly contaminated with mercury poison more than 45 years after the government became aware of this dangerous problem. Fortunately, there is a solution to this shameful tragedy. The experts say the river can be cleaned up so that the fish are safe to eat again, and it can be done safely. This echoes what the Minister of the Environment recommended to cabinet in 1984.

Premier Wynne still refuses to clean the river, but last June she and the minister did commit to immediately begin a \$600,000 study to be led by Grassy Narrows and their team of experts.

Now, as the Wabigoon River begins to freeze, I hear that almost none of the money has flowed and that an entire year of fieldwork has been lost as a result. How much longer will this government stall and dissemble while Grassy Narrows families suffer?

Talk of reconciliation is cheap. Where's the reconciliation while babies in Grassy Narrows are poisoned with mercury?

GURU NANAK GURPURAB

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Today is Gurbpurab. Gurbpurab marks the birth anniversary of the first guru of the Sikhs, Guru Nanak Dev Ji. The Sikh community in Ontario and across the world is celebrating the 547th birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Ji.

The basic lessons of Guru Nanak Dev Ji's teachings are truthfulness, living with emphasis on selfless service, tolerance, compassion, love, equality, humbleness and well-being for all. His teachings are based on three guiding principles: vand chakkō, sharing with others and helping those in need; kirat karō, earning an honest living without exploitation or fraud; and naam japo, to meditate God's name.

Guru Nanak Dev Ji also passed the message of a universal brotherhood and believed in a casteless society, a society free of discrimination, and he believed in equality for all.

All of Guru Nanak Dev Ji's teachings could be found in the Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the Sikh holy scriptures. Guru Nanak Dev Ji was the founder of the Sikh religion, and his Gurbpurab is celebrated across the world.

This morning, I had the opportunity to celebrate at Sur Sagar Radio, a local media station in Toronto, and tonight I look forward to celebrating with my community in Brampton-Springdale. Happy Gurbpurab.

WORLD DIABETES DAY

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm pleased to rise today to speak on World Diabetes Day. This year's theme, Eyes on Diabetes, was implemented in an effort to help promote the importance of screening for early diagnosis and treatment for type 2 diabetes.

Currently, one in two people with diabetes worldwide go undiagnosed. With more screenings we could impact up to 70% of type 2 diabetes cases as simply lifestyle changes can help prevent or delay type 2 diabetes.

In Ontario, over 1.5 million people currently have diabetes while over 2.27 million have pre-diabetes. By 2025, the number of Ontarians with diabetes and pre-diabetes will encompass over 36% of our population. Many of those affected by diabetes can lead healthy lifestyles, but until a cure is discovered, prevention of the onset and negative health effects is key. It is important to have regular foot exams, eye exams and screening to manage your diabetes and/or watch for signs of pre-diabetes.

World Diabetes Day reminds us to make the necessary lifestyle modifications, such as eating healthy foods, being active, losing weight and quitting smoking, to prevent the onset of diabetes.

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank the Canadian Diabetes Association and the countless volunteers who not only support diabetics and diabetes research but work hard day in and day out to educate Ontarians.

I'd also like to take the opportunity to make mention that today is Sir Frederick Banting's 125th birthday. We wish him a happy birthday. Without his outstanding research, many of our loved ones would not be here today.

KOMOKA PROVINCIAL PARK

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Komoka Provincial Park, located just outside my riding of London West, is truly a gem in my community. For years, people of London West have visited Komoka to hike its scenic trails, birdwatch or just commune with nature. The park has allowed Londoners to reap the benefits associated with outdoor physical activity. In fact, Rio Olympian and London West resident Lanni Marchant, who just broke a record for a Canadian woman in the New York City Marathon, trained by running on the trails of Komoka park.

Access to the natural environment not only makes people happier and more relaxed; it also makes them healthier, with reduced stress, improved mental health well-being and lowered risk for chronic disease. I am therefore deeply disappointed by the Liberal government's introduction of new parking fees at Komoka park, ranging from \$5.75 to \$14.50 for daily use. There was no call for a paved parking lot, and it's hard to see the fees as anything other than a cash grab—a cash grab that is likely to get bigger each year, given the Liberal government's decision to index all government fees to inflation.

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I am concerned that these new fees will reduce the number of park visitors and negatively affect community

health and well-being. In fact, I have already heard from many residents of London West who say they will no longer be able to afford to visit the park.

I call upon this Liberal government to remove the fees and ensure that Komoka remains accessible to London residents and to all Ontarians.

OPTOMETRISTS

Mr. Bob Delaney: Our eyesight is considered our dominant sense, providing us our biggest window into our world. People say they fear vision loss more than any other disability. We can protect our vision by visiting our local optometrist. As the primary eye care and vision care professionals in Ontario, optometrists provide services in the areas of urgent eye care, children's vision, seniors' vision and disease prevention and management. Optometrists have the skills, technology and expertise to detect and treat eye conditions close to a patient's home. As Ontario's population ages and grows, optometrists will play an even larger role in Ontarians' eye care.

The Ontario Association of Optometrists has designated the week of November 7 as Optometry Week. During this week, MPPs will be able to tour an optometry practice, as I have done, in their communities. My optometrist, Dr. Sabrina Ahmed, explained how complex patient care has become. I hope my MPP colleagues see first-hand the type of services that optometrists provide, the technology that they use and the contributions that optometrists make to our communities, to the Ontario health care system and to the Ontarians that they assist.

GEORGE DEKAY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It is with regret that I inform this House of the death on October 26 of Mr. George P. DeKay of Hyde Park in the county of Middlesex.

Mr. DeKay was a teacher for 35 years. In the early 1960s, he was seconded from the London Board of Education to the Canadian Forces. He taught Canadian children living on RCAF bases in what was then West Germany.

Always interested in history and in particular genealogy, after his retirement from teaching Mr. DeKay completed his research into several connected families who were among the earliest settlers of London township, which included his own family. Mr. DeKay contributed to the published histories of Lobo, Delaware, Westminster and West Williams townships. He chaired the committee doing similar work on a history of London township, published in 2001. His research was meticulous and his writing clear.

Prior to his illness, Mr. DeKay has been a regular volunteer at St. Joseph's Hospital and, later, St. Joseph's Hospice in London for over 20 years. I wish to note the passing of a man dedicated to his community who made

a significant contribution to the study of the history of Middlesex county: George DeKay.

NORTHERN TRANSPORTATION

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to take this opportunity to inform the House that the government is currently wrapping up the consultation part of the northern Ontario multi-modal transportation study. Since this consultation wasn't held in my riding and I have been unable to attend meetings outside my riding, I'd like to take this opportunity to talk about it here.

Some of the things they're talking about are rail, road, air and marine. I'd like to thank them for taking the time to consult because, when our only passenger train in northeastern Ontario was cut by the Liberal government five years ago, there was absolutely no consultation—none. So I'd like to put on record, on behalf of the residents of northeastern Ontario, that we need to look at bringing back some type of passenger rail service because, the way it is now, the only public transportation service to northeastern Ontario is the bus. There are a lot of people who cannot take the night bus: seniors, people with medical conditions. Bus travel is almost impossible. It's time to look at bringing back some type of viable rail service to northeast Ontario, especially from a government that claims to be spending all this time and money talking about increased public transportation. Our part of the world needs it as well. If you want to develop northern Ontario, people need to know that they have public transportation that is viable not only for themselves but for their children, for their parents and their grandparents. Bring back the train.

GRAND RIVER HOSPITAL CANCER CENTRE

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Recently, our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care came to the Grand River regional cancer centre to mark the start of construction on enhancements to the centre. Grand River Hospital is currently the largest provider of treatment and cancer surgery in our region. This new project means that about 400 more patients can be treated each year. That's an impressive 24% increase. Improving cancer care for patients is part of our Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care, and this \$5.5-million investment in technology for the hospital speaks to our dedication to that commitment. Grand River Hospital has provided radiation therapy to more than 7,300 patients in 104,000 visits and chemotherapy to more than 9,200 patients in 65,000 visits. These investments help the hospital continue the vital services that it provides to so many in my region.

Officials at the hospital share the sentiments heard from patients who are pleased with the expansion, especially those who are no longer needing to travel outside our region for cancer treatment. The expansion not only allows patients to be treated faster, but also allows for the

introduction of new, more complex and sophisticated techniques that Grand River wasn't offering previously.

Speaker, like so many people in my community, I look forward to the completion of the expansion and thank our minister for visiting our community.

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

REPORT, INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that the following report was tabled: the report of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario concerning the review of allowable expenses to September 2016, under the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability Act, 2002, section 14(b).

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 37, An Act to amend the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007 and the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 37, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les éducatrices et les éducateurs de la petite enfance et la Loi de 1996 sur l'Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Carried.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 20, 2016, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LEBANESE HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE LIBANAIS

Mr. Fraser moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 60, An Act to proclaim the month of November Lebanese Heritage Month / Projet de loi 60, Loi proclamant le mois de novembre Mois du patrimoine libanais.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, the bill recognizes the rich cultural heritage of Lebanese Canadians and their contributions to Ontario and, indeed, Canada. By recognizing the month of November, we can put that as part of the larger cultural mosaic of this province and the country.

RESPECT FOR MUNICIPALITIES ACT (CITY OF TORONTO), 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE RESPECT DES MUNICIPALITÉS (CITÉ DE TORONTO)

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 61, An Act respecting the City of Toronto and the Ontario Municipal Board / Projet de loi 61, Loi portant sur la cité de Toronto et la Commission des affaires municipales de l'Ontario.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

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Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The bill changes the relationship in law between the city of Toronto and the Ontario Municipal Board.

Currently, under various statutes that govern land use planning, certain municipal decisions can be appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board. Amendments eliminate those rights of appeal with respect to decisions of the city of Toronto. Amendments also eliminate a right to make certain other types of applications to the board with respect to the city. The city is authorized to establish one or more appeal bodies to hear any of these matters, and to hear such other matters as the city considers appropriate.

The OMB is undemocratic and unelected. Toronto city council has voted 35 to 4 in favour of this action.

Mr. Speaker, it's time.

CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND LOW-CARBON ECONOMY AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ATTÉNUATION DU CHANGEMENT CLIMATIQUE ET UNE ÉCONOMIE SOBRE EN CARBONE

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 62, An Act to amend the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, 2016 / Projet de loi 62, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2016 sur l'atténuation du changement climatique et une économie sobre en carbone.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The bill introduces targets for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions that would put Ontario in line with the commitments made in Paris, and it introduces a mechanism for establishing carbon budgets along the lines of legislation in place in the United Kingdom.

ALL ABOUT WATER LTD. ACT, 2016

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr52, An Act to revive All About Water Ltd.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Bills.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(b), the following changes be made to the ballot list: Mr. Fraser and Ms. Malhi exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Fraser assumes ballot item number 19 and Ms. Malhi assumes ballot item number 70; and

Mr. Baker and Mrs. Martins exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Baker assumes ballot item number 60 and Mrs. Martins assumes ballot item number 21; and

Mr. Crack and Mr. McMeekin exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Crack assumes ballot item number 35 and Mr. McMeekin assumes ballot item number 24; and

Mr. Sergio and Ms. Hoggarth exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Sergio assumes ballot item number 72 and Ms. Hoggarth assumes ballot item number 31; and

That, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notices for ballot items 19 and 23 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Naqvi moves that, notwithstanding standing order—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispensed.

Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AND FISCAL REVIEW

PERSPECTIVES ÉCONOMIQUES ET REVUE FINANCIÈRE

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I rise to present the 2016 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review.

All of us in this chamber seek to improve the lives of people across Ontario.

To respect their ... work.

People across our province got up this morning ...

Went to school or work or volunteer ...

They're making a difference.

And they're doing their part to make our province stronger.

Mr. Speaker ... people from all over our great province are building Ontario up, but not alone.

They expect government to do its part, too.

Our role in this Legislature is to foster more opportunity for them.

When we support one person, it makes their life a little bit easier.

And when we do that ... in the lives of 14 million Ontarians ...

It makes our economy stronger—it makes our future more prosperous.

Mr. Speaker, our plan is about helping everyone to succeed.

It's about helping moms and dads get to work and back home, safely and quickly ...

It's about helping businesses to grow our economy and create jobs.

It's about offering kids a promising future with great schools, colleges and universities.

It's about ensuring that everyone has high-quality health care at a hospital or at home.

Mr. Speaker, all of us share a desire to improve Ontarians' quality of life.

It is why we support the public services and programs that they rely on.

And, Mr. Speaker, in order to afford those critical services and programs, we must remain on track and be disciplined in balancing the budget next year ... and thereafter.

Mr. Speaker ...

Our role is to help create the conditions for our businesses to be competitive.

To enable them to create an innovation-driven, entrepreneurial economy.

To help Ontario firms become global leaders and exporters.

To continue to advocate for free trade as others call for protectionism, ensuring open borders for our goods and services, both internationally and within Canada.

To help companies take advantage of expanding export markets and the emerging low-carbon economy.

Clean tech is one of many sectors of Ontario's growing and diversified economy.

Many of our clean tech companies got their start when Ontario cut coal and switched to clean electricity, becoming a world leader in emissions-free power.

Ontario's climate change action plan will invest proceeds from cap-and-trade directly to green projects ... helping more businesses and households save on energy.

From advanced manufacturing to food processing to mining to biotechnology ...

Ontario has many great success stories, and we want more of them.

So today, in keeping with our Business Growth Initiative, we are announcing \$32.4 million over four years to help more small and medium-sized enterprises grow into larger, export-oriented firms under Ontario's scale-up voucher program. It is tailored to support high-impact companies.

Because we know that strengthening our companies results in more jobs and more opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, we are also staying at the forefront of financial technology. It is reshaping Ontario's traditional financial services sector, our second-largest industry.

By embracing fintech and its disruptive technologies, we can maintain our position as a global leader in the financial services sector.

We recognize that our regulatory bodies need to evolve to ensure companies are not unduly burdened, while protecting consumers and investors.

So today, we are also announcing further details of our plan to establish the new Financial Services Regulatory Authority.

This will be an independent regulator that will modernize regulation of financial services and pensions. It will be more consumer-focused and offer improved protection for customers, investors and pension plan beneficiaries.

Mr. Speaker, Ontarians lead busy lives.

Parents rush in the morning to get their kids ready for school or child care.

And many fight traffic on their way to work.

We want to help them get to work and back home faster and safely.

Some start their commute on local roads or at their neighbourhood bus stop.

Many rely on the 400-series highways.

In a few years, many Ontarians will have easier commutes thanks to our investments in Moving Ontario Forward.

In the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, they'll be able to use new subways, LRT and expanded GO services—all closer to home.

1330

In the meantime, new construction continues to improve the 401 ... the new 407 extension is under way ... and Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound is being expanded.

In small and rural communities, we're building and repairing roads, bridges and other critical infrastructure.

Helping goods get to market quickly is key.

It's part of our plan to make the largest public infrastructure investment in our province's history.

More than \$160 billion is being invested over 12 years ... supporting more than 110,000 jobs on average each year.

From Windsor to Stratford to Cornwall.

From Thunder Bay to Sault Ste. Marie to Niagara.

This morning, 260,000 kids went to full-day kindergarten—right across our province.

My three kids are older now, but I remember how at times it was not always easy to get them out the door.

I'm sure it wasn't easy for some parents today.

No doubt, someone didn't want to get up.

Or felt that their sweater was too itchy.

Or worse ... one of them forgot their item for show and tell.

But when they got to school ... and saw their friends ... and their teachers ... their day got better.

And so did their parents' day.

Full-day kindergarten is giving them a stronger start in school and in life.

And to help even more families give their kids a great start in their early years, we will be creating 100,000 new licensed child care spaces within the next five years.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, we're proud to announce today that \$65.5 million will be invested in this school year to support the creation of 3,400 spaces to get it started.

Mr. Speaker, we're committed to supporting all children.

That's why we increased support for families living with autism in the 2016 budget.

Ontario's new autism program will provide all children, regardless of age, with more flexible services based on their unique needs.

As well, Mr. Speaker, over 150,000 students will head to college or university next September without worrying about tuition costs.

Whether at La Cité collégiale in Ottawa or Lakehead University in Thunder Bay.

From St. Clair College in Windsor to Queen's University in Kingston ...

Thanks to the new Ontario Student Grant, their tuition will be more affordable ...

And for many, it will be free.

This is an investment in our future, building opportunity for more people.

Monsieur le Président, francophones are an integral part of Ontario's culture. C'est pourquoi nous avons renouvelé récemment notre programme d'échanges culturels avec la province du Québec. Cet hiver nous mettrons en place un projet pilote d'échanges culturels pour des élèves des deux provinces.

Mr. Speaker, we choose to invest in our children and in our schools.

That's why, just this year, we are opening 29 new schools ... creating stronger communities and serving the needs of Ontario families.

We choose to prepare people of all ages for success in a changing workforce.

It's critical to Ontario's growth and competitiveness.

That includes Ontario's new Highly Skilled Workforce Strategy to help our people get the skills and credentials they need for the jobs they want ...

And further attract more businesses to invest in Ontario, confident that we have the best and the brightest.

Mr. Speaker, one of Ontario's strengths and a priority for families is our publicly funded, high-quality health care system.

We introduced our Patients First legislation to ensure that our health care continues to improve.

We are supporting our dedicated teams to tackle mental health and addictions with increased resources.

We are proud of our caring practitioners who are helping to expand immunization protection and extending support for pregnancy and infant loss.

We understand the importance of specialized care for families in need.

That's why we improved access to high-quality cardiac services through a \$162-million investment in the University of Ottawa Heart Institute.

Universal health care is critical to all of us.

And that's why ... today, Mr. Speaker ... we are announcing that Ontario's public hospitals will receive an additional \$140 million in funding this year.

That means that every public hospital in the province will have more resources to better support patients and reduce wait times.

This is above the \$345 million we announced in the 2016 budget for hospital operating costs.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, we are building new hospitals.

To better serve local communities right across the province, we are building, expanding or renovating 37 hospitals on top of the 20 projects that have been completed since 2013.

Mr. Speaker, building modern hospitals is key to meet the demands of today and tomorrow.

Tens of thousands of young people across the province, Mr. Speaker, are at the beginning of their careers.

Many are on contract or at small businesses and they don't benefit from a workplace pension plan.

For many, it's hard to start saving for the future.

That's why we are strengthening retirement security.

And taking steps to modernize existing pension plans.

Our work on the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan was the catalyst in reaching a national consensus to enhance the Canada Pension Plan this past summer.

This extraordinary national agreement would not have been possible without the inspired leadership and the tenacity of our Premier, Kathleen Wynne.

The Premier's efforts will significantly improve retirement security for future generations.

While retirement may not be top of mind for many young people today, their ability to own a home is becoming a concern in today's real estate market.

Purchasing your very first home is one of the most exciting decisions in a young person's life.

But many are worried about how they will be able to afford their first condo or house.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're announcing today that, as of January 1, 2017 ... we are proposing to double the maximum land transfer tax refund for first-time home buyers to \$4,000.

For many, this will mean no land transfer tax on the purchase of their first home.

We will also be modernizing the land transfer tax system for the first time in a generation.

The housing market is an important source of economic growth and employment in Ontario.

And improving housing affordability will help more Ontarians to participate.

Changing times are impacting how Ontarians work, live and conduct business.

Our commitment to building a fair society is also about inspiring growth that is more inclusive.

To lift people out of poverty ...

And ensure we all reach our full potential.

That is why we are developing a basic income pilot ...

As well as addressing the gender wage gap.

It is why we are helping refugees settle in Ontario.

It is why we support reconciliation with indigenous peoples.

Taking action to help people in their everyday lives is important to all of us, Mr. Speaker.

We are all concerned about rising costs.

So we took action.

Starting in January 2017, we will rebate an amount equal to the 8% provincial portion of the HST on residential electricity bills ... helping five million families, small businesses and farms.

Mr. Speaker, those are just some of the aspects of our plan to grow the economy and create jobs.

Our plan is working.

Over the last two years, our economy has grown by 5.3%.

Last year, our growth was double the national average.

In fact, for the first quarter of this year, Ontario's growth was faster than that of the United States and the G7.

More than 641,000 net new jobs have been created since the depths of the 2008 global recession.

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The majority of these jobs are full-time, in the private sector, and in above-average wage industries.

The unemployment rate is at an eight-year low.

These are positive signs of economic growth, but we know global challenges continue to exist.

And we must continue to be prepared.

But our goal has always been clear.

We have never wavered from our fiscal plan ... to balance the budget.

The 2015-16 public accounts of Ontario confirmed that the deficit improved by \$3.5 billion compared to the 2015 budget plan.

It was the seventh year in a row that we have beaten our deficit target.

Mr. Speaker ... I am pleased to confirm today that, consistent with the 2016 budget, Ontario's deficit for 2016-17 is projected to be \$4.3 billion ... on target—on plan.

We will balance the budget in 2017-18 and remain balanced in 2018-19, as scheduled.

It's not going to be easy.

But we will continue to make strategic investments to grow our economy ...

And we will make the right choices to bring Ontario to balance.

Mr. Speaker ... I began this speech by talking about our common desire to ensure a bright future for all Ontarians.

I believe if we go around this room ...

Or go outside ...

And we ask the people of Ontario ...

What are your hopes?

What are your dreams for your children or your grandchildren?

What is most important to you?

I think we would hear a common theme.

No matter your faith ...

No matter your culture ...

Or your heritage, or your party ...

We all want the same things.

Jobs that fulfill us.

Universal health care when we need it.

Strong public education that enables us.

A good quality of life for our families.

We may disagree on the means ... and in this chamber, we often do, robustly.

But for each of us, the ends are the same.

People go about their business across this great province to better their lives.

And improve the lives of those they love.

So every day, in this place, we will work to support them.

To support each other ...

In building Ontario up.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good afternoon, Speaker. As we stand here in the Legislature to respond to the government's fall economic statement, I must say that it feels a whole lot like déjà vu. In 2014, we said this Liberal government's plan—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): With a few exceptions, it was respectful to hear the statement. I expect the responses to receive the same treatment.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. In 2014, we said this Liberal government's plan continues their "unrealistic and unaffordable path that puts front-line services in jeopardy and will hurt families in every part of this province...."

"The government is clearly spending beyond its means, but instead of a responsible plan, the Liberals

spun us a fairy tale of balancing the budget with more spending, higher deficits and bigger debt."

Does that sound familiar, Speaker?

In 2015, we said, "This government continues to refuse to admit that its promise to balance the budget by 2017-18 is a sham, despite that being confirmed by the Financial Accountability Officer...."

"There is also no indication in today's fiscal update that the Liberals plan to deviate from their pattern of wasteful and scandalous spending."

That was 2015. Again, Speaker, I ask, does that sound familiar?

Here we are in 2016, and the government still refuses to accept reality. Absolutely nothing has changed. They attempt to use distractions, but the facts remain. Ontario remains in a dire fiscal state, and life remains unaffordable under this Liberal government.

In his latest report, the Financial Accountability Officer confirmed the Liberal government's financial position is "deteriorating," and that Ontario will face budget deficits for the next five years. We already know there is a trust deficit in this Liberal government. The Financial Accountability Officer once again confirmed that there's a financial deficit as well.

He also confirmed what the Ontario PC caucus has said all along: There's a multi-billion-dollar hole in their budget forecast. The FAO indicated that the government would be unable to achieve a balanced budget as promised in the 2017-18 budget, and would instead have a deficit of \$2.6 billion.

The FAO confirmed the Liberal government is using one-time money from asset sales and contingency funds to artificially balance the budget in an election year before plunging back into deficit. He told us the only way they are going to balance after that is to raise taxes again or to continue to cut services further.

The FAO also indicated that the province's net debt is set to rise by over \$64 billion by 2021, to a record \$370 billion. This means Ontario will continue to be the largest subnational borrower on the planet, with no end in sight. At nearly \$11.8 billion this year, interest on debt is now a billion dollars a month. To put that in perspective, Ontario now pays more in interest than it does on post-secondary education and community safety combined, along with about half a dozen more ministries.

For taxpayers, this government's waste, mismanagement and scandals mean less funding for education and more cuts to front-line health care.

Regarding the province's economic outlook, the FAO's report states that "growth in business investment has been disappointing over the past four years." It's no wonder, given that they've raised taxes by more than 20% in the last five years.

Under this government, Ontario is both the most indebted and yet the most taxed province in Canada. We've lost 350,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs, and today's statement by this government does nothing to address this.

Today's fall economic statement confirms that they're creating a bleak future for Ontarians, where funding for

essential services such as education and health care will continue to be crowded out by this government's mismanagement and recklessness.

The latest fall economic statement is further evidence that this tired and self-interested government continues to put the interest of the Liberal Party above the interest of Ontario's taxpayers.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think today's fall economic statement really is the tale of two Ontarios: the one that the Liberals want to tell the story of, and the reality that exists outside of this building.

The fall economic statement is merely a distraction from a government and a Premier who just aren't what they said they would be or what they would do.

Last week, I was in my riding of Kitchener–Waterloo, and the number one issue that we heard on the doorstep was hydro prices and the cost of living. For one family in particular, seniors on a fixed income—her name is Beth, and her husband is on oxygen—their hydro bills have doubled to \$800 a month.

For this constituent of mine, I followed the advice of the Minister of Energy: “Tell them about the programs.” Well, those programs don't apply to these people, so they were quite despondent, Mr. Speaker, I must tell you.

The story of the sell-off of Hydro One continues to be the outstanding question of the citizens of this province, because there is no good rationale for the sell-off of Hydro One. Quite honestly, we actually have learned through the public accounts that this promise of the sell-off and reinvestment of profit from the sell-off of Hydro One—it was supposed to go to infrastructure. We've learned through public accounts that that is not happening.

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What do they get from this government? They get a speech last week from the Minister of Finance and some tidbits about big news to come on real estate prices. That message was soon dampened by the Premier, to lower expectations, and, quite honestly, she was right to lower the expectations, because what we see in this statement is neither new or profound or progressive.

Speaker, I'm sorry to inform you, but I've had a quick look at the fall economic statement—we just got it about an hour ago—and these documents demonstrate such a strong disconnect from the reality of the people of this province. The announcements made aren't going to help Ontarians looking to buy their first home, especially here in Toronto. Has this government looked at housing prices and the average costs to home buyers? Each transaction generates almost \$11,000. We know that home buyers contributed about \$11 billion to the Canadian economy in 2014, but the government is proposing a Band-Aid that won't really solve a problem affecting first-time home buyers.

I want to tell you why this is really important. It was really important to get this right in the fall economic statement, because in the FAO's fall update, he said, “The sharp rise in housing prices, particularly in the greater Toronto area, continues to represent a key risk for

the overall economy. A significant correction in housing prices, exacerbated by elevated levels of household debt, would negatively affect household spending and residential construction activity and could lead to broader, economy-wide impacts on growth and employment.” Not getting this right will put the economy of this province at further risk than failed policies that already exist in the province of Ontario.

I have to tell you, today's report that came out on child poverty is an incredibly strong indicator of a government that has failed in their policies and failed in their implementation on their stated goals, which were promised by this Premier in 2014. Today, Toronto is still the child poverty capital of Canada. This report came out, and 133,000 children are living in poverty, according to this new report. *Divided City: Life in Canada's Child Poverty Capital*, released Monday by a partnership of local non-profit groups, describes Toronto as a “deeply divided city.”

Affordable housing is one of the key factors in stabilizing and recovering from poverty. Yet we have seen, just earlier this month, on November 3, a report that came out which indicated we have made so little progress in this child poverty capital of Canada. One long-time resident has been waiting for repairs for three years. She called the buildings that she lives in “a war zone. It's like we live in a Third World country,” she said. “The elevators never work. You see cockroaches and mice dancing all over the place.”

This is the child poverty capital of Ontario and of Canada. These are the policies that you have failed to implement. These are small, little Band-Aids that you think are good enough for the people of this province. We are going to call you on that, time and time again, and you certainly are giving us a lot of opportunities to do so.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order: the member from Dufferin–Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Speaker. I beg your indulgence. My brother and sister-in-law have come to visit us from Fort St. John, British Columbia, and I just wanted to welcome them here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

I thank all members for their statements. It's therefore now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

NIAGARA ESCARPMENT

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

“Whereas residents and municipalities across Bruce and Grey counties want meaningful consultations on the proposed expansions to the Niagara Escarpment Plan—

known as Niagara Escarpment Plan Area 2015 reference 012-7228; and

“Whereas owners of all lands affected should have the right to be fully informed of the merits of the objectives of any such significant proposal; and

“Whereas the proposed change is significant, impacting 45,000 hectares of land in Bruce and Grey counties, including Griffith Island on Georgian Bay; and

“Whereas the potential loss of revenue to local communities would be significant—\$700,000 every year in lost tax revenues (Grey county would lose \$293,700, Grey Highlands \$142,500, The Blue Mountains \$102,000, Meaford \$87,610, Georgian Bluffs \$53,000 and Chatsworth \$20,000); and

“Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry has been to date unable to articulate to area municipalities and people who live on this land the impact on future development from adding 45,000 hectares under the NEC jurisdiction; and

“Whereas the consultation period undertaken by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry concludes as early as October 31st, 2016, making it one of the shortest if not least meaningful consultations carried out by that ministry; and

“Whereas, having shared with the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry more than 1,000 petitions to date signed by local constituents, the minister has been made aware of the significant concerns and opposition from local residents and area municipalities to this proposal;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the government to make their NEC consultation meaningful by heeding the significant feedback from local respondents, municipalities and Grey county, which is to abandon the proposal known as the Niagara Escarpment Plan Area 2015 reference 012-7228.”

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

ALGO CENTRE MALL

Mr. Michael Mantha: “Petition Requesting Justice Regarding the Collapse of the Elliot Lake Algo Centre Mall in 2012.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas investigations from the June 2012 Elliot Lake mall collapse did not do due diligence.

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

“We the undersigned, as residents of the province of Ontario, do hereby request that the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, in co-operation with the Ministry of the Attorney General, immediately instruct the Ontario Provincial Police, in conjunction with the crown attorney for the district of Algoma, to reopen the investigation of the underlying lack of due diligence, neglect and indifference which allowed the captioned mall structure to deteriorate to the point of catastrophic collapse in June

2012. We request that all documents, exhibits and testimony from the Elliot Lake inquiry (all in the current public domain) be fully reviewed and all witnesses who gave testimony, predominantly during phase 1 at said inquiry, be re-interviewed with a view to determining who was ultimately responsible and subsequent laying of criminal charges against parties found to have failed to act on professional advice and instead ignored or failed to diligently exercise its authority to demand corrective action whether through blind ignorance to facts presented, or, blatant disregard for safety for the public, which subsequently resulted in the death of two Elliot Lake residents, and injury to numerous others.”

I sign this petition, affix my signature on behalf of the Aylwin and Perizzolo families, and present it to page Giulia to bring it down to the Clerks’ table.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Toby Barrett: This is an energy poverty petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas electricity rates have risen by more than 300% since the current government took office;

“Whereas over half of Ontario residents’ power bills are delivery charges, regulatory charges and global adjustment;

“Whereas the implementation of cap-and-trade will drive the cost of electricity even higher and increase the cost of living in Ontario;

“Whereas more and more Ontarians are being forced to cut down on essential expenses such as food and medicines in order to pay their increasingly unaffordable electricity bills;

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

“To take immediate steps to reduce the total cost of electricity in Ontario, including costs associated with power consumed, delivery charges, administrative charges, global adjustment, tax and any other charges on Ontario residents’ energy bills.”

I agree with the sentiments in this petition and affix my signature.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition, and I’d like to thank Monsieur Leo Paul Chenier from Hanmer in my riding.

“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

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

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement a minimum wage of \$15 an hour.”

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

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas once you privatize Hydro One, there’s no return; and

“Whereas we’ll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

“Whereas we’ll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

“Whereas we’ll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what’s happened elsewhere;

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

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

Of course I couldn’t help but agree. I’m going to sign this and give it to Helen to be delivered to the table.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

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

“Whereas many companies are moving to or have already implemented new policies applying expiry time-limits to rewards points collected under their programs; and

“Whereas such an action is unreasonably punitive to consumers; and

“Whereas consumers are effectively exchanging personal information in return for access to these rewards programs in a transaction-like exchange;

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

“To protect consumers by amending the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, to prohibit the expiry of rewards points, and to credit them back to accounts where expiry has occurred.”

I agree with this petition. I will sign it and give to page Sage to take to the table.

NATURAL GAS

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

“Whereas currently, 76% of homes in Ontario use natural gas for heat; and

“Whereas natural gas is a clean, reliable and affordable fuel source and is 68% less expensive than electricity and 59% less than home heating oil; and

“Whereas natural gas will help Ontario meet a lower carbon future by providing rural Ontarians heating their homes on propane with a 20% greenhouse gas emissions reduction, and those on home heating oil with a 25% reduction; and

“Whereas under Premier Wynne’s new plan, all homes and buildings built after 2030 will be barred from using natural gas; and

“Whereas making the switch from natural gas heat to electric heat will cost an average of \$3,000 extra per home and homeowners will be faced with at least \$4,500 in renovation costs; and

“Whereas the government’s misguided energy policies have already resulted in unaffordable business and residential energy rates that are forcing jobs out of the province; and

“Whereas the Minister of Energy is on the record recommending Ontarians switch to natural gas to escape exorbitant hydro bills;

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

“To immediately reconsider the plan to ban natural gas heat from Ontario buildings and new construction.”

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

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 give it to page Anne.

NATURAL GAS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas 76% of homes in Ontario use natural gas for heat; and

“Whereas many more people would use natural gas if it were available to their community; and

“Whereas natural gas is a clean, reliable and affordable fuel source; and

“Whereas the Liberal government’s leaked climate change action plan shows the government is set to place an effective ban on natural gas for homes and small buildings built in 2030 or later; and

“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; and

“Whereas the conversion from natural gas to electric heating will cost each household approximately \$4,500; and

“Whereas the cost to heat a home will increase around \$3,000 a year with the use of electric heat; and

“Whereas home heating is a necessity for families who cannot afford to continue paying for the government’s mismanagement of the energy sector;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately stop the government’s apparent intention to phase out, discourage and ban the use of natural gas to heat homes and buildings.”

I agree with this and I send it down with page Jackson.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have thousands of names that come from all over northern Ontario, and I want to thank Madame Roxanne Carrière from Hanmer in my riding. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

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

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

NIAGARA ESCARPMENT

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

“Whereas residents and municipalities across Bruce and Grey counties want meaningful consultations on the proposed expansions to the Niagara Escarpment Plan—

known as Niagara Escarpment Plan Area 2015 reference 012-7228; and

“Whereas owners of all lands affected should have the right to be fully informed of the merits of the objectives of any such significant proposal; and

“Whereas the proposed change is significant, impacting 45,000 hectares of land in Bruce and Grey counties, including Griffith Island on Georgian Bay; and

“Whereas the potential loss of revenue to local communities would be significant—\$700,000 every year in lost tax revenues...; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry has been to date unable to articulate to area municipalities and people who live on this land the impact on future development from adding 45,000 hectares under the NEC jurisdiction; and

“Whereas the consultation period undertaken by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry concludes as early as October 31st, 2016, making it one of the shortest if not least meaningful consultations carried out by that ministry; and

“Whereas, having shared with the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry more than 1,000 petitions to date signed by local constituents, the minister has been made aware of the significant concerns and opposition from local residents and area municipalities to this proposal;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the government to make their NEC consultation meaningful by heeding the significant feedback from local respondents, municipalities and Grey county, which is to abandon the proposal known as the Niagara Escarpment Plan Area 2015 reference 012-7228.”

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

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “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” now.

I couldn’t agree more. I’m going to sign this and give it to Adrian to be delivered to the table.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

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

“Whereas the Green Energy Act, 2009 has been a major contributor in recent years to the skyrocketing and unsustainable increases in hydro bills and has created an environment where large-scale renewable energy projects are becoming more prominent in all areas of the province;

“Whereas these large-scale renewable energy projects can have significant impact on property values, tourism, wildlife populations and the very landscape in the communities where they exist;

“Whereas there have been instances where local municipal councils have allowed large-scale renewable energy projects into their communities against the popular will of residents; and

“Whereas local residents will be the ones who are most impacted as a result of large-scale renewable energy projects being developed in their communities and hence should be the ones who have the final say regarding the issue;

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

“That members of the Legislative Assembly vote to support MPP John Yakabuski’s private member’s bill, Bill 150, Energy Referendum Act, 2015, which would mandate that local municipalities hold a referendum before large-scale renewable energy projects are approved so that residents are the ones who decide if these projects will go forward.”

I fully support this and will affix my name and send it with page Helen.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECTING STUDENTS ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 PROTÉGEANT LES ÉLÈVES

Ms. Hunter moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 37, An Act to amend the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007 and the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 37, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les éducatrices et les éducateurs de la petite enfance et la Loi de 1996 sur l'Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Education to lead off the debate.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Mr. Speaker, I’m pleased to stand in the House today and speak in support of the Protecting Students Act, which would, if passed, make important amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act.

We know that the vast majority of Ontario teachers do an excellent job supporting students. Over the past several months, I have had the opportunity to visit a number of schools across the province. During these visits I saw how hard educators and school teams are working to ensure that each and every student under their care is being supported. I know teachers hold in their hands the

power to shape the trajectory for a student and unlock the potential that is within each and every one of them. Educators are dedicated to students’ success and are passionate advocates for their safety and security. It is because of their efforts that we have seen so much progress in our schools over the past 13 years. We are pleased with our progress, and I want to thank educators for all they do for students.

The percentage of students in grades 3 and 6 who are meeting or exceeding the provincial standard in reading, writing and math has significantly increased since 2002-2003. In 2015-16, 71% of the EQAO assessments of student performance in reading, writing and mathematics in grades 3 and 6 combined met or exceeded provincial standards. This is an increase of 17% since 2002-03.

We’re also seeing more students graduating from high school than ever before. Back in 2004, only 68% of high school students were graduating within five years. Today, 85.5% of students are graduating within five years and moving on to their initial post-secondary destination: apprenticeship training, college, community living, university or directly into the workforce. This means that approximately 190,000 additional students have graduated than would have if the graduation rate remained at the 2004 level.

Students are entering a fast-paced global economy that is far more challenging and interconnected. That is why we need to support the development of a highly skilled workforce. We must prepare students for this changing world. This is a shared responsibility, and we will work with our partners, including employers and educators, to help build a strong and dynamic workforce.

Our progress is the result of a collective focus by the entire education sector to pursue ambitious goals for students. This focus has formed the foundation for our renewed vision for education, Achieving Excellence. Achieving Excellence builds on the good work that we have done in establishing four integrated goals: achieving excellence, ensuring equity, promoting well-being and enhancing public confidence. Mr. Speaker, we have been able to make significant progress on all of these goals because of the commitment, the professionalism and the dedication of Ontario’s teachers.

Our teachers have also been instrumental as we implement new and exciting initiatives that will take our education system to the next phase of student success. For example, all four- and five-year-olds now have access to full-day kindergarten, the most significant transformation in our education system in a generation.

Since the program began, Ontario’s full-day kindergarten program has enrolled more than one million students. This is an important milestone, one that we are very proud of. About 260,000 four- and five-year-olds are benefiting from full-day kindergarten annually in approximately 3,600 schools across the province, saving families up to \$6,500 per year in child-care costs.

Full-day kindergarten also makes it easier for parents to fully participate in the workforce, which helps increase opportunity and strengthen the economy. This innovative

program features the expertise of both a teacher and an early childhood educator in the classroom. This unique program represents one of our biggest investments and one of the most significant transformations of our education system in a generation.

We know that full-day kindergarten supports the continuum of learning and better prepares children for grade 1. We know that the success of full-day kindergarten can be attributed to the enthusiastic teachers who have embraced the goals of the program.

I spoke to a passionate kindergarten teacher on Saturday while attending the People for Education conference. Our kindergarten teachers have worked tirelessly to prepare their classrooms to accommodate their young students throughout the day, and they have worked closely with the early childhood educator in their classroom to build a cohesive and effective team environment designed for our youngest learners.

It goes without saying that everyone in this Legislature knows the incredible influence a teacher can have in the lives of our children. In fact, I am sure everyone here today can recall a teacher of their own who was instrumental in their life and helped them to find the path to success.

A great teacher can make the words of a good book come to life. A great teacher can show you how an abstract math problem can have a real-world application. A great teacher can see the potential and the success in every child. A great teacher can motivate you and help you to reach your goals.

I meet great teachers every week while visiting schools in this province. This describes the vast majority of teachers across the province. It is what sets our publicly funded education system apart from so many other jurisdictions. Whether our education sector thrives is based on the quality of our people, and we are privileged to have some of the best people right here in Ontario. Our teachers work hard every day, supporting all students, including students from indigenous and francophone communities and students with special education needs.

Along with quality, dedicated teachers also ensure that our students are able to learn in a safe and accepting environment. Students who feel safe, welcome and connected to school are more likely to succeed academically, and they cannot be expected to reach their full potential in a school environment where they feel intimidated.

As a citizen of Ontario and the Minister of Education, I want all children in Ontario to feel safe and protected when they walk through their school doors each and every morning. That is why our government has taken a number of steps to increase the safety and security of students. For example, we introduced the Accepting Schools Act nearly four years ago. The act requires all school boards to take preventive measures against bullying, consider tougher consequences for bullying in certain circumstances, and support students who want to promote understanding and respect for all. But more than any other legal requirement, the legislation sends a strong

message that respect and understanding for all students, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, disability or any other factor, are important components of a safe and inclusive school environment. We were incredibly pleased, as a government, that so many teachers were some of the first people to be enthusiastic supporters of the Accepting Schools Act.

We have had an ongoing commitment to student safety in Ontario. It is a commitment that continues today with the Protecting Students Act. While we know that the vast majority of teachers are committed to the success and safety of their students, we need to ensure that in those rare circumstances when disciplinary action is needed, teachers, students, parents and administrators can count on a disciplinary system that is transparent, fair and effective.

The Ontario College of Teachers is an independent regulatory body that is responsible for regulating the teaching profession in Ontario, including disciplinary proceedings. These proposed changes would help to give the college the tools it needs to ensure there is a transparent process in place when disciplinary action is required.

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It would also give the college an increased ability to protect our students when there may be an immediate danger to a student.

Most of the proposed changes in the bill reflect recommendations from a review of the college's investigation and disciplinary procedures conducted by the Honourable Justice Patrick LeSage. Justice LeSage's report contained 49 recommendations to modernize the Ontario College of Teachers' investigation and disciplinary practices. Since the release of the report, our government has been working closely with the college to address all 49 of the recommendations. We've continued to work with the college in other areas where they could take action to address the recommendations on their own.

I want to acknowledge the leadership at the college not only for asking Justice LeSage to conduct the review, but also for moving quickly to address his recommendations.

While the government and the college have been working hard to address many of the recommendations, some of the recommendations require legislative changes. As representatives of the government of Ontario, we have a responsibility to ensure the safety and success of our children and students. We believe that the proposed bill before the House does just that. The proposed legislation and subsequent regulations in the Protecting Students Act would improve the college's disciplinary processes, reduce the potential for conflicts of interest, and help increase the protection of students.

First, the legislation would, if passed, ensure that a teacher's certificate is automatically revoked if they have been found guilty of sexual abuse or acts relating to child pornography. This is an area, Mr. Speaker, where we are actually proposing stronger provisions than what Justice LeSage originally recommended. While LeSage did not

recommend mandatory revocation of a certificate, we don't believe there is any reasonable circumstance, where there is a confirmed case of sexual abuse or child pornography, where a teacher should be able to keep their teaching certificate.

There is also a provision in the bill that would prevent an individual from reapplying to the college for a teaching certificate for five years if they have been found guilty of sexual abuse or child pornography. While someone could reapply after five years, there would have to be a public hearing of the discipline committee to determine whether or not their certificate should be reissued. In addition, a notation of every revocation of a certificate of registration is kept on the college's public register forever.

Mr. Speaker, the five-year time period is an increase, compared to the minimum of one year as currently provided in the Ontario College of Teachers Act. The five-year time period is also consistent with other regulatory professions in the health sector.

Another component of the bill would allow the college to move swiftly and decisively if the college has reasonable grounds to believe that a child is at risk of harm or injury. If such a case arises, the college would have the ability to suspend a member's certificate and notify the school board immediately, so as to limit the risk of the teacher remaining in the classroom.

These are examples of the provisions in this bill that would improve the protection of our students and enhance the efficiency and transparency of the Ontario College of Teachers' disciplinary processes. These are processes that we know the vast majority of teachers will never experience, and only in rare circumstances do our teachers require a disciplinary action. But in those rare cases where they do, there needs to be a process in place that is fair, effective and transparent. Teachers need to know that if there are allegations made against them, the discipline process will not drag on unnecessarily.

And it is important for parents to know that the college has taken swift and appropriate action when discipline is required, especially in cases involving sexual abuse or child pornography.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share with you more details of the proposed bill.

If passed, Bill 37 will bring into law the obligation to publish the details of these cases, including the outcomes and the names of teachers who are disciplined.

The recommended amendments demonstrate our government's commitment to improving public confidence in Ontario's education and early years systems and will go far to protect our students and children.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to touch on a few of the important elements in the bill as they relate to protecting our teachers.

As already mentioned, if passed, the proposed act and subsequent regulations would help address any perception of conflict of interest at the college. Ontarians expect the college to govern the teaching profession independently, because even the perception of a conflict of interest

has the potential to erode some of that confidence that the public bestows. Ensuring public confidence is one of the four integrated goals of our government's renewed vision for education, and it is something that we take very seriously.

One way we protect our educators from the perception of conflict of interest is by restricting the ability of union officials to sit on the college's committee panels. The proposed bill would provide the regulatory authority for the college to implement this.

I want to emphasize that only a small proportion of teachers are found guilty of offences requiring disciplinary action by the college. The vast majority of our teachers are committed to the safety of their students and want to see them succeed in the classroom and beyond.

Our government believes that LeSage's recommendations strike the right balance between student safety, increased transparency and accountability, and also increased efficiencies within the process. We believe that the teacher federations, the college and our education partners can agree that these recommendations are intended to enhance and improve the existing practices of the college.

The bill, if passed, would also help improve communications between school boards and the college, particularly when a school board has restricted the duties of a teacher.

If passed, the Protecting Students Act would also allow the college to share information with the school board if the subject of a complaint poses an immediate risk to a student.

Also, if a complaint is made against a teacher by someone other than the school board, there is the risk that the board may not be aware of the complaint until the college has completed its investigation into the allegations. We think that is too great a risk to take, especially if the safety of a child is in question. By improving the communications between the college and the board, the school board can take the appropriate action locally to ensure student safety.

One example of this is that the proposed amendments indicate that certain acts of professional misconduct would result in a mandatory revocation of a member's licence. These include sexual acts or a prohibited act involving child pornography. If a teacher's certificate were revoked for some form of sexual abuse or misconduct, the proposed amendments would mean that the individual in question would not be eligible to apply for reinstatement for a minimum of five years. There would also have to be a public hearing. Currently, a person who has had their certificate revoked may not apply for reinstatement for a term decided by the discipline committee or, if no term is set, at least one year.

The proposed bill would also permit the college to disclose personal information to other regulators and to the police to assist in their investigations. We think that is a reasonable step that will ensure co-operation between agencies and better protect our children and the public.

Another way the proposed bill will improve transparency at the college is by publishing all decisions of

the discipline committee on the college's website. In cases where allegations have been determined to be unfounded, the teacher would have the option of including the decision in the college's official publication.

The proposed bill would also ensure that the college resolves cases more quickly and efficiently while maintaining a rigorous investigation process. For example, the investigation committee would be expected to review and dispose of most matters within 120 days. Teachers as well as parents and administrators need to know that complaints will be addressed in a timely manner. This provision will help the college avoid unnecessary delays in resolving cases.

We also think it is important to recognize the distinct responsibilities of a principal or vice-principal, particularly in disciplinary proceedings. So the proposed bill would require, when hearing a matter related to the conduct of a principal or a vice-principal, that an investigation or disciplinary panel include a principal or a vice-principal. We believe it is reasonable to expect that if a principal or a vice-principal is a subject of a complaint, part of the disciplinary panel will include someone who is familiar with the role of a principal or vice-principal and will be able to offer that important perspective during proceedings.

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The proposed bill would also provide greater clarity for when the dispute resolution process should be used. Relatively minor complaints that might normally result in only a caution, reminder, advice or admonishment of the teacher could be directed to dispute resolution by the registrar of the college. This frees up more of the college's time and resources, allowing them to spend more time on more serious complaints, which would be sent through the normal investigation process.

There would also be greater clarity about what complaints could not go to dispute resolution, including cases of sexual abuse or child pornography. While all disciplinary cases require an open and transparent investigation process, cases of this nature quite rightly require even more.

Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage all members of this House to support Bill 37.

I want to thank former Chief Justice Patrick LeSage for the work that he has done in providing his recommendations to the Ontario College of Teachers, and I want to thank the Ontario College of Teachers for acting quickly to implement the majority of Justice LeSage's recommendations.

The legislation that we are putting before you today is enabling us to fulfill the remainder of those recommendations that require legislative changes.

I also want to say thank you to the committee for the work that they have done on this bill.

I look forward to all-member support.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: As the official opposition critic for advanced education and skills development, I appreciate

the opportunity to once again address Bill 37, the Protecting Students Act, an extremely important piece of legislation affecting the future leaders of our great province and the teachers, like my daughter, who each day play such a significant role in moulding the minds of young men and women in Ontario schools.

Why do we need new legislation and what was the reason for it? One of the single most imperative functions in society is to protect the most vulnerable in our society. Our children are our future, and we must do all we can to ensure that they have a chance to grow and prosper, and do so without fear of harm.

As I previously stated at second reading of this bill, in 2011 the Toronto Star published a series of articles which looked into issues around the disciplinary measures taken by the Ontario College of Teachers. Specifically, they found that there was less and less transparency around how these issues were being dealt with. In the Star's words, they found that "more and more, the identity of bad teachers is being kept secret." One case was the Hamilton teacher who verbally assaulted students for five years before being apprehended. He received a three-month suspension and was then cleared to teach again. Speaker, if this was your son or daughter's teacher, you would have no idea that his or her conduct had been under investigation. Worse, after a three-month suspension, after serious misconduct, he was cleared to teach again, with no one in the public being the wiser, and most certainly not the parents or the students who were affected by the outcome of this case.

In its series of articles, the Toronto Star cites many different examples of this type of behaviour and conduct. In many cases, the identity of the teacher who received discipline remains secret, and the way their case was handled was done with little or no transparency. More and more, the Star found that those who broke the rules were shielded from the public. Of the 38 cases published in 2008, five did not identify the teacher. Of the 43 cases published in 2009, 20 did not identify the teacher. And, Speaker, of the 49 cases published in 2010, 35 did not identify the teacher.

Let's turn for a moment to August 2011. The Honourable Justice Patrick LeSage was retained by the Ontario College of Teachers to conduct a review into their intake, investigation and discipline procedures and practices. Further, he was also asked "more specifically, to examine and consider issues including communication and publication practices, impartiality and timeliness of adjudication, training and legal support, appropriateness of disciplinary outcomes, confidentiality and the handling of concerns about its members."

Speaker, Bill 37, the Protecting Students Act, seeks to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act and the Early Childhood Educators Act in order to continue to implement the recommendations stemming from the LeSage report, released in 2012.

The government is right to point out that the majority of the 49 recommendations are made to the Ontario College of Teachers on how it conducts its affairs as a

self-regulating body. However, what is clear is that there are still many recommendations that deal with legislative and regulatory matters that must be handled by the Minister of Education. And this is the third time, Speaker, the Liberal government has brought forward this bill.

As we've said countless times in this Legislature, when this bill was first introduced in 2013, as Bill 103, the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus did not feel it went far enough. At the time, my caucus offered support for the bill as a good first step, though we certainly felt there were elements missing from the bill that needed to be entrenched in the legislation. Now, however, we're pleased to see that Bill 37 will ensure a teacher's certificate is automatically revoked if he or she has been found guilty of certain forms of sexual abuse or acts relating to child pornography.

This addresses perhaps the most alarming of the outstanding recommendations in the LeSage report, of course, being recommendation 32: "The penalty for sexual abuse or sexual misconduct by a teacher involving a student should almost invariably be revocation of the member's teaching certificate." Sexual abuse and exploitation of children are unacceptable crimes on one of the most vulnerable populations of our society, and there should be zero tolerance for these types of acts. There is no place for child exploitation in this province—or any part of society, for that matter—and we expect all individuals, regardless of profession, who engage in this behaviour to be brought to justice.

We've now arrived at third reading for Bill 37, and in so doing this bill has reached its final hours of debate. Once again with this government, you have to wonder whether they have a comprehensive legislative agenda. This government has moved time allocation on this bill, claiming that it is a priority for them to pass it. While I agree that the subject of the bill is a priority, it makes you wonder why it's been more than four years since Justice Patrick LeSage detailed his recommendations in his report and this government is only now getting around to bringing this bill to its conclusion.

We know the Protecting Students Act has been tabled before—three times, in fact—and this is the third education minister to bring this bill forward. And now that they've finally brought forward the bill for debate, they bring down the guillotine of time allocation. As we know, this government uses time allocation to stifle debate and ram through pieces of legislation. We saw it at second reading. I know that a number of my colleagues would have wanted an opportunity to speak on this important legislation, some of whom are here this afternoon.

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And, Speaker, we most certainly saw it at committee when the government referred the bill to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, which, with all due respect to that committee, would not normally deal with this type of legislation. The government referred it there because they knew it was a good way to rush it through.

Then we only had one day—one day to hear from witnesses and one day to examine amendments to this important bill.

Witnesses came to testify to the bill and they only had five minutes to put comments on the record—five minutes for important stakeholders like the Ontario College of Teachers or the College of Early Childhood Educators to outline the areas where this bill could be improved and strengthened. Then, we had three days to consider this important and compelling testimony before tabling amendments that affected such an important bill.

I'm not sure in what world the government judges that the finance and economic affairs committee sitting for just two days on this bill is an acceptable time frame to get this legislation right. In fact, we know they don't.

In an earlier speech on this bill I quoted the member of provincial Parliament for St. Catharines and the chief government whip. I have another quote from him with respect to his thoughts on time allocation. Speaker, when in opposition, he said, "Each of the time allocation motions which close off or choke off debate in this House seems to be more drastic as it comes forward, seems to be more sinister as it relates to the privileges of members of this House and as it relates to healthy, democratic debate for the people of this province."

Further, the member for Eglinton—Lawrence once had this to say about time allocation: "That's what this government is doing. It's saying, 'We got elected. We are now going to rule by edict. We're going to rule by closing down debate. We're going to cut off debate....' That's the type of thing people are getting pretty fed up with."

The member for Thunder Bay—Superior North and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines characterized time allocation this way when he was in opposition: "It's just stunning that the way they choose to deal with it at the end of the day is to put time allocation on debate. It's wrong. I think everybody knows it's wrong and I think even the government members themselves know that it's the wrong way to approach it...."

"There will be no public hearings at all, and that is disgraceful. This is unbelievable. Once again we're seeing this kind of behaviour, and I suspect we'll see it again."

Speaker, one wonders what happened to this government. Their moral compass that was so prevalent when they were in opposition appears to have abandoned them upon becoming the government of this province. They were elected 13 years ago with a bevy of different promises, yet here we are, 13 years later, after years of Liberal scandal, waste and mismanagement, and Ontarians can't trust this government. Ontarians know that this government only cares about its own political survival.

We saw this with the most recent prorogation in which they desperately tried to reset the channel on their tired government. They introduced a new speech from the throne promising a new direction, but one has to wonder why they needed to take all of the legislation off the order paper just to reintroduce it again.

This government is desperately trying to preserve its own power, but the clock is running out. This government has a track record of failed policies, so one certainly has to wonder why they're not allowing for more time to examine the policy directions that they're bringing forward.

The people of Ontario have sent us here to do a job. They sent us here to be their voices on legislation that affects their families.

This government prorogued this House in a hurry this past September, killing all the legislation before this Legislature, including Bill 37, which was named Bill 200 at the time, so that they could reintroduce all the bills that were sitting before it and start counting again from zero. This government stopped the process of several important bills, affecting hard-working Ontario families, by proroguing the Legislature to offer Ontarians in a too-little, too-late attempt at changing the conversation from their failed record.

I raise the point about time allocation here because of the importance of getting this legislation, the Protecting Students Act, right. During committee deliberations, the Ontario Progressive Conservative committee members proposed several important amendments to the bill that would help improve openness and transparency and which responded directly to the testimony heard.

I was pleased to see, though, that the government adopted two of them. These two amendments will help to ensure consultation with stakeholders when the regulations in support of the legislation are drafted and before they're finalized. These amendments outline the importance of that consultation process, ensuring that no interested party or stakeholder is blindsided by new regulations that they deem to be insufficient or, conversely, poorly drafted.

However, the government also voted down a series of our amendments, amendments which, in my view, would have helped to improve clarity and understanding of legislative direction for all parties. Specifically, we proposed to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act in order to ensure that the college was providing information for its members regarding the definitions of "professional misconduct," "prohibited act involving child pornography," "sexual abuse" and "sexual misconduct." We brought forward this amendment because it would bring clarity around the definitions in the act and help to increase transparency around the process for all those involved. For a government that claims to be transparent, one has to wonder why the government members of the committee opposed this amendment.

We also brought forward an amendment that would have ensured that the College of Teachers was providing for the proper training of its members in recognizing and addressing signs of sexual abuse of a student, sexual misconduct or a prohibited act involving child pornography. The amendment would have ensured that proper policies for members around training were in place, which would have provided more clarity and transparency about the expectations around college members.

Once again, the government members of the committee voted against adopting this amendment.

The Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus also brought forward an amendment which would have ensured that information about the investigation and disciplinary processes were made available to students who are allegedly sexually abused or the subject of sexual misconduct or of a prohibited act involving child pornography, and that the information about resources and supports is made available to those students and their families. The reasoning behind this amendment was simple: It is about ensuring that the victim also has a right to know and be informed about the process and what the next steps are.

The London Abused Women's Centre brought up this point during their testimony at the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. They said that they "have found that in the bill what is missing is any provision to make services available to victims of teacher abuse." They added that they think it's "something that needs to be paid attention to and offered."

We can only imagine the horrors of going through this process as a victim and a victim's family, but to go through this process in the dark, without any idea of what is going on or what the next steps are, is unimaginable. The victim has a right to know and to have a clear understanding of what is involved in the process in order to bring the case to resolution. But, once again, the government members voted against adopting this amendment.

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Speaker, we also brought forward an amendment with respect to disciplinary panels. More specifically, the amendment would have ensured that experts were on the rosters for the panel, and proposed that the panel must include at least one person who is a psychiatrist, a psychologist, a registered social worker or a social service worker, an employee of a children's aid society or a lawyer. I know that this is an amendment my colleague the member of the provincial Parliament for Haldimand-Norfolk is very passionate about. This amendment would have ensured that investigation and disciplinary panels include relevant qualified professionals who have experience with these types of matters. The government voted this down as well. Why? The member of provincial Parliament for Davenport said: "I think what we are trying to do here, with this particular piece of legislation, is to make it more efficient in order to better help and protect students and teachers. This would only be delaying that and opening up that wound once again many years down the line, because there would be delays if we are going to wait for this to happen. That's why we have proposed to oppose this particular motion."

I'm not sure that we've seen any evidence that this is the case. As my colleague the member for Haldimand-Norfolk pointed out in committee, "I just don't buy the argument that by having a psychiatrist or a psychiatric social worker or someone like that sitting on this panel—I'm not sure how that delays things. If anything, it may

well speed things up to bring in an expert....” I agree with that. Putting an expert on the panel would help ensure that those who are dealing with disciplinary matters are experts in these particular situations. More broadly, it would help to ensure that those who are hearing these types of cases have a professional understanding of these types of situations.

Let’s turn for a moment, Speaker, to the Child Advocacy Centre of Simcoe/Muskoka, one of the delegations at committee. They said, “It is essential that a multi-disciplinary perspective be offered by a discipline committee. There is a great advantage to having a professional with advanced knowledge of the behaviours and the mindset of offenders who can best predict future risk. Without this specialized knowledge, one can misinterpret behaviours, displays of remorse and the intention of the offender. A discipline committee could be complemented by a clinician specializing in offender treatment, or a forensic psychologist.

“Because educators are trained in duty to report but not necessarily in recognizing grooming behaviours, it cannot be expected that they alone can determine the safety of this individual to return to a teaching role, or the steps required for remediation.”

This is further echoed in testimony we heard from the London Abused Women’s Centre who said they were “concerned that we’ve seen a judge who has admitted that he made his decision based on subjective information. It does raise some red flags around how a disciplinary committee of peers could make an unbiased decision. We would suggest that that committee be expanded to include victims’ rights advocates, survivors, parents and peers as well.”

This would help in two ways, Speaker. First, it would give assurances to the victim that those hearing the case have previously seen these types of situations and can understand what the victim is going through. It would also help to ensure that the accused is more protected from false accusations, at the end of the day ensuring that these types of decisions are handled in a professional way.

Finally, as we all know from Citytv news reports over the past week, the Minister of Education received a letter from the Ontario College of Teachers before clause-by-clause in committee earlier this month. The Ontario College of Teachers reported that there are 243,000 Ontario-certified teachers, and in any given year, fewer than 20 lose their licence to teach.

The college is the organization responsible for commissioning the LeSage report in 2011. The college adopted that report and its 49 recommendations, and the college acted quickly to implement those recommendations that it could. Generally, it applauds the direction of the Protecting Students Act, but I think we should also listen to the Ontario College of Teachers when it points out the weaknesses in the legislation.

For example, the act says that some of the disciplinary decisions that are currently available will have to be taken offline if the bill passes. Under current rules, teach-

ers receive a notation on their profile if the disciplinary ruling imposes conditions or involves a reprimand. Currently, those notations are removed from the profiles after three years have elapsed, but the original disciplinary decisions are allowed to remain in the online archive.

This would change under the new act. Should this legislation be adopted, the college would have to take down the original decision at the same time as it removes notations from the individual profile. The college reports that the current database of 834 decisions would shrink to 376 the day the bill goes into effect. It seems contradictory that a bill touting openness and transparency would have such an immediate, opposite impact.

It’s also concerning that without changes to Bill 37, teachers who marry their students would be exempt from allegations of sexual misconduct or sexual abuse regardless if the relationship began when the student was under the age of 18. We may think this is too remote a possibility to have it worthy of consideration, but I’m not so certain. Should a marriage of this type exempt what could otherwise have been sexual misconduct warranting discipline? We must be quicker to respond to those who need help, especially our most vulnerable.

The importance of this legislation cannot be underestimated. We owe it to our students, our children and our grandchildren to eliminate any risk to their safety. We owe it to our teachers to create a better environment for them through an improved system that will more effectively protect the great teachers and punish those who would harm our young people. I believe that every teacher in Ontario wants to ensure that students have a healthy and safe environment in which to learn. I know my daughter does.

We also must be cognizant of the simple fact that the vast majority of teachers are responsible adults who strive to maintain the very highest standards of professionalism every time they enter a classroom. Forging positive relationships that help students learn and grow is at the base of every decision that teachers make every day and should be at the forefront of our deliberations concerning this legislation.

Let us ensure, too, that we give this proposed legislation the examination it deserves. This is not a time to limit debate, to restrict presentation from those who care. Surely this is the time to give the Protecting Students Act the time needed to examine fully the ramifications of its enactment. It’s really too bad that the government decided to rush through this legislation after years of inaction on the file, because this bill, for the most part—and I said this in committee—is actually a good one. There are many important changes in this bill which will help to bring transparency and public accountability around the process.

As debate concludes on this bill, I want to say that we will be supporting the Protecting Students Act because it resolves, in the main, many of the issues that had been present at the time of the release of the LeSage report four years ago. At the same time, Speaker, we’re disappointed that it has taken the Liberal government this

long to bring the bill forward. The Liberals have had three different education ministers since the LeSage report and have tabled the bill three times. Only now are we seeing this bill move forward to becoming law. We could have had a fulsome debate at that time, no doubt—one that would have produced a piece of legislation that fully addresses some of the current concerns that I've outlined today. But now, when they've brought it forward, it is disappointing to see that the government once again brought down the guillotine of time allocation which prevented us from making many meaningful amendments to this bill. As I said earlier, they rushed this bill through second reading, rushed it through committee, and then only allowed for a few hours of debate here at third reading.

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In closing, my daughter is an early childhood educator, and I know that she, like many other teachers and educators in Ontario, took up that post in order to inspire the minds and community leaders of tomorrow.

Balancing the concerns of education stakeholders is not easy. In the end, however, legislative change, in my view, must honour the rights of teaching professionals to fair, open and timely treatment—but which also serves the public interest first and foremost.

Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on Bill 37 once again. I look forward to hearing the additional comments from my colleagues in the Legislature.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is a real privilege for me to rise today as the MPP for London West and also as the Ontario NDP caucus critic for women's issues, in particular. I welcome this opportunity to contribute some research and some of what we heard during the process of this bill as we enter the final steps of making this legislation become law in the province.

Bill 37, An Act to amend the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007 and the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996, is now in third reading in this House. Around the floor of this Legislature there has been a strong consensus that this is important legislation, and that it is critical that this bill move forward quickly.

There is no greater responsibility for MPPs than to ensure that the appropriate safeguards are in place to protect the most vulnerable citizens in this province. In this case, we are looking at legislation that will take steps to protect children from sexual abuse by those who are entrusted to keep them safe—and that is their teachers or their early childhood educators.

As we enter the first day of the final four weeks of the 2016 legislative session, I know I speak on behalf of all of my colleagues in the NDP caucus when I say that we welcome this opportunity, we welcome this debate that will move this legislation forward in the legislative process. I think I can, in fact, speak for all MPPs—not just those within my party—when I say how relieved we all are to see that this bill is taking this one step closer to becoming law.

As others have pointed out, however, it is unfortunate that it has taken as long as it has for us to be having this debate. Let's just recall, Speaker, the process that has informed this bill and that has taken us to the point that we are today.

In 1999, Justice Robins conducted a review of sexual misconduct by teachers, and that review was prompted by one particularly egregious case of teacher sexual misconduct. It really prompted a thorough investigation of how the educational system deals with sexual misconduct by teachers. Justice Robins conducted that review and released a report called *Protecting Our Students*. That was released in 2000. It contained 101 recommendations to prevent these kinds of crimes from occurring in Ontario's education system.

Speaker, 2000 was the same year that I was first elected to the Thames Valley District School Board as a trustee. I certainly remember the arrival of Justice Robins's report. Reviewing that report was one of my first duties as a newly elected trustee, to look at the implications of those 101 recommendations for our school board.

But of course many of the recommendations that were brought forward by Justice Robins required more than policy change at the school board level; they required legislative amendments. In 2002, shortly after Justice Robins's report, we saw amendments to the Child and Family Services Act. These amendments came into effect to require teachers to report any suspicion that a child may be in need of protection.

In his report, Justice Robins had very strong words for anyone who would commit a crime against children in Ontario schools. He identified sexual misconduct as "the ultimate breach of the trust reposed in a teacher." We have to remember that attendance in schools is mandatory for all Ontario children, so you don't have the choice of going to school, and you have the full expectation that when parents entrust their children to a school, the children will be safe.

Justin Robins said that the failure of the educational system to protect students had consequences beyond the trauma and the grievous harm that was inflicted on the victims. He said, "When a school environment is poisoned by sexual crimes or harassment, it is of fundamental concern to us all." But, at the same time, Speaker, Justice Robins was very clear that the perpetrators of sexual misconduct were very much the exception within the profession. He said, "The vast majority of teachers are unquestionably highly dedicated and caring professionals who seek to ensure a safe learning environment for their students. They are no doubt appalled by" improper conduct.

This is a key message that we have to keep in mind as we proceed through this debate on Bill 37. In particular, when we look at today, with all of the teachers who have come from across the province to participate in the Legislative Assembly teachers' forum, we are reminded that teachers are the reason that our children are performing as well as they are on EQAO tests. It is

teachers' commitment to the learning environment for students that has enabled Ontario students to achieve as much as they have. We know that teachers often take it upon themselves to purchase additional supplies for students who come to school without the family resources to provide them with enrichment opportunities in art and music classes. We know that teachers often will buy winter boots for students or provide lunches for students. The vast majority of teachers in this province have performed in exemplary ways to ensure that students have what they need to do well in our schools.

The provisions that are set out in Bill 37, because of what we have just noted, will in fact affect very, very few individuals in this province. The vast majority of both teachers and early childhood educators find it abhorrent. They are repulsed by the thought that anyone in their profession would deliberately cause harm to children, and they welcome strengthened measures to prevent sexual misconduct and to remove predators from the profession.

1510

But, Speaker, for that very reason, it's vitally important that there be strong procedural fairness included in this bill so that when those allegations of sexual misconduct are made, the processes that are in place to deal with the allegations are effective and they can achieve the outcome that you want to achieve.

It was, in fact, concerns about the ineffectiveness of the processes that led to Bill 37 coming forward in the first place, in particular what the Ontario College of Teachers was doing to deal with complaints against teachers. There had been a disturbing media exposé in 2011 that described secret deals that were being made by the OCT to keep teacher identities anonymous. In response to these media stories, the Ontario College of Teachers initiated a review of its own disciplinary practices.

To conduct that review, they hired retired justice Patrick LeSage to consider whether the college's communications and publication practices, prior to and following a hearing, met current standards of transparency. Justice LeSage conducted that review, and he released a report in 2012 that included 49 recommendations. Many of those recommendations are reflected in Bill 37.

Some of the key provisions of this bill include automatic revocation of a teacher's certificate if he or she has been found guilty of sexual abuse or of acts relating to child pornography.

The bill requires employers, including school boards, to inform the college when they have restricted a teacher's duties or dismissed him or her for professional misconduct.

The bill allows the college to share information with the school board or the employer if the subject of a complaint poses an immediate risk to a student or a child.

It requires the College of Teachers to publish all decisions from its discipline committee.

It improves timelines for the investigation and consideration of complaints.

It establishes limitations on how often and when a member of the College of Early Childhood Educators can apply to have terms, conditions or limitations varied or removed from their certificate. And it provides the registrar of the College of Early Childhood Educators with the discretion to determine when an employer report does not require investigation.

Even as he was releasing this report in 2012, Justice LeSage also raised concerns about the balance between the duty to report, the obligation to ensure transparency and the rights of accused teachers to due process, recognizing the possibility of vexatious or malicious false claims that are made. He said, and I'll quote from his remarks, "The issue of posting a notice of hearing containing lengthy and specific allegations, which are later withdrawn or on which the member is found not guilty, troubles me. It is important that there be a public record of the discipline committee and the matters that are dealt with. It is equally important, in my view, that a member, who has been either found not guilty or has had allegations withdrawn, should not be required to continuously face a public record of allegations on which he/she has been cleared."

Justice LeSage described this as a conundrum. He acknowledged that he did not have an easy solution. But, certainly, that is one of the issues that we are faced with here today with this bill: to ensure that that conundrum is addressed as fairly as we possibly can, and that the balance is achieved between effective processes, transparency and procedural fairness for those who are accused.

Speaker, one of the issues that I wanted to address this afternoon is around process, our own process, in this Legislature. We saw this bill be time-allocated after second reading. Only a very few of my caucus colleagues had an opportunity to comment on the bill, and certainly that represents what I think is a missed opportunity for this Legislature to consider all of the issues that are associated with really protecting students and keeping students safe in our schools. The time allocation motion meant that people who wanted to provide input on the bill were only given a few days' notice to figure out if they could rearrange their schedules in order to come to Queen's Park to make a presentation to the committee. It meant they only had a few days to try to prepare a presentation.

When I went and read the transcript of the committee hearing where deputations were held, there were constant interruptions in the Hansard from the Chair. Oftentimes, the presenter would be in mid-sentence and the Chair would interrupt to say that time had run out and that they had to move on to the next presenter. Only eight presenters were able to come to Queen's Park to provide input. What it means is that there has not been an opportunity to really consider in a more fulsome way some of the input that was provided.

For example, the Child Advocacy Centre of Simcoe/Muskoka really emphasized the need for mandatory training. They said that "one of the most powerful

things that I think that we could do to keep kids safe in relation to the education system is to make a mandatory training opportunity for educators and administration with respect to exactly that: those grooming behaviours, the nature of a child sex offender and also the indicators of a child who may be groomed or who may be experiencing sexual abuse.”

This call for training was repeated by another one of the deputants to the committee, the law firm Borden Ladner Gervais, who made the recommendation that there be training developed by the College of Teachers for its members and others in the school community so that there would be greater recognition and awareness of the forms of misconduct that are contemplated by Bill 37.

Another very valuable recommendation that was made by Borden Ladner Gervais was with regard to follow-up, the kind of follow-up that is taken in the workplace and the steps that are taken when there is an allegation of sexual misconduct. They talked about the provisions of Bill 132, the Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act, and recommended that there be similar changes incorporated in Bill 37 to what was put in place with Bill 132. They talked about the need for the college to develop policies for training its members and others in recognizing and addressing signs of sexual misconduct and sexual abuse, as well as familiarizing these individuals with the disciplinary processes that follow from reporting these offences.

I wanted to also highlight the feedback that was given to the committee by the London Abused Women’s Centre. The presenter, Megan Walker, talked about the absence in the bill of any provision to make services available to victims of teacher abuse. She said that is “something that needs to be paid attention to and offered.” She goes on to comment on the fact that one day of hearings with very little notice is not enough to provide a comprehensive plan or comprehensive feedback. She asks, “I’d like to know how many student groups the committee has heard from. How many victims’ rights organizations have you heard from? Because if you’re not hearing those voices, you’re missing a huge opportunity to really act in the best interests of students.”

1520

This certainly has represented a gap for this Legislature in terms of our understanding of the kinds of actions that need to be taken in schools to keep children safe, to recognize the signs of grooming and other types of behaviour that occur before the abuse takes place, and also to really understand the impact of childhood sexual abuse on the victim and the kinds of supports that child victims need.

The time allocation has also meant that we don’t have the fulsome opportunity to talk about the range of other kinds of actions that need to be taken in our schools to protect students not just from childhood sexual abuse but from other kinds of violence that can occur in our schools.

I know several of my colleagues, in particular the member from Oshawa and our education critic, the

member for Windsor West, talked about a disturbing policy that is now in place in school boards across the province of asking teachers to wear Kevlar hoodies and shin guards when they are dealing with children with exceptional learning needs. Instead of actually addressing the staffing shortages that are causing some of these problem behaviours and that mean that children who have exceptional learning needs are not getting the adequate supports in the classroom, instead of doing the work that is needed to make our schools safe places, the government has just announced that school boards are now supposed to supply Kevlar hoodies to special-education teachers.

Speaker, that is not a solution to some of the needs in our schools. That is not the way that we want to support students who have exceptional learning needs and it is not the way that we want to protect our education workers and teachers in our schools.

With that, I will conclude by saying once again that we do support this legislation and we look forward to seeing this bill become law soon in this province.

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

Mr. Granville Anderson: It’s a pleasure for me to speak to this bill for the second time. I would like to acknowledge Minister Hunter, the member from Whitby–Oshawa and the member from London West, who provided presentations earlier.

In this House, we all want what’s best for our students. That’s a given. I do take issue with some things that were presented this afternoon, but one thing is certain: We want to do what’s best to protect our children.

The member from Whitby–Oshawa alluded to the fact that there was abuse of a child for some six or seven years. I would be the first to say, Mr. Speaker, that that’s a rare, rare exception. That doesn’t happen in our schools. That rarely ever happens. But once is once too many and, yes, we need to make sure that never happens, and that if it happens, there are consequences for that.

In this province of Ontario we have some of the best teachers in the country and in the world in general, Mr. Speaker. I know that for a fact. My parents are both teachers; they’re retired now. I served on a school board for some 11 years as a trustee and I have seen nothing but excellent teachers in the classroom. It’s a given and it’s something that they should be commended for.

I am going to address some key components of this bill and some of the components that will improve the safety of our children and give the college the tools it needs for those rare circumstances when discipline is required.

It is important for Ontario families to be confident that appropriate action has been taken in cases like these, and it’s important for teachers to know that there is a fair, transparent and effective process in place.

I believe the proposed provisions in this bill strike the right balance between student safety, fairness, increased transparency and accountability, while improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the process used by the college now.

In certain places, our government's proposed approach goes further than the recommendations of the LeSage report. For example, we are:

- recommending mandatory revocation of licences for specific acts of sexual abuse and acts related to child pornography;

- extending the mandatory revocation and reinstatement requirements to acts relating to children who are not students enrolled in schools;

- extending to all employers of college members the requirement to report teacher professional misconduct to the college;

- adding a provision limiting the risk of a member remaining in direct contact with a student when a complaint is made by someone other than the employer, if there is a reasonable possibility of a child being at risk during an active investigation; and

- working with the council to develop regulatory provisions relating to caucusing and holding positions with unions or associations, to be extended to all members of the college council and roster panellists and not only the elected council members on the committees for investigation, discipline and fitness to practise.

Further amendments that came out of the standing committee have been included in the proposed bill. They will ensure greater transparency but also fairness of process to the members—all areas recommended by Justice LeSage. For instance, a proposed amendment would ensure that the posting of information about current or previous criminal proceedings involving a member that are relevant to his or her membership is to be subject to regulation.

A second proposed recommendation would ensure that public consultation is held prior to the making of a regulation about complaints that do not warrant investigation or that do not serve the public interest to investigate further. This would ensure that interested parties are consulted on the matter. This amendment supports Justice LeSage's recommendation for increased transparency.

A third recommendation would ensure that the Ontario College of Teachers Act be amended to require school boards to provide the college with relevant information relating to complaints within a defined timeline. This is consistent with what Justice LeSage recommended: greater sharing of information between employers, the OCT, members and complainants—in essence, greater transparency of information.

Transparency is the key to this. Teachers want that, parents want that, and the school community wants that: a fair, transparent process in which everyone is treated fairly. That's paramount. That's what Justice LeSage has recommended, and Bill 37 will be doing just that. This bill is put in place to protect teachers as well as students. That's very important to understand, and for the public to understand.

During debate of this bill, and when we did line-by-line in committee, we mentioned and we dealt with recommendations from the public, recommendations

submitted by the opposition, and amendments to the bill, and there were some good amendments, Mr. Speaker. We took those into consideration, and those amendments were made in order to perfect this bill.

1530

It's not a perfect bill; no bill is ever perfect. But we are trying to make this right and as perfect as possible to benefit our students and to advance the quality of our education in Ontario, to make a great education system even a better one.

A fourth recommendation would ensure that public consultation is held prior to making a regulation about the process that must be carried out for the investigation stage complaint resolution process. This would ensure that interested parties are consulted on the matter.

An additional recommendation would specify the authority to make regulations about which criminal proceedings involving a member should be included on the register. This would make sure that only criminal proceedings that are relevant to a member's professional membership and professional standards would be included in the public register. Again, this supports LeSage's recommendation for greater transparency and fairness to members.

Several recommendations, while in favour of transparency, also supported fairness to members, as I alluded to earlier on, Mr. Speaker.

An additional recommendation would ensure that the public register does not contain more personal information, including personal health information, than what is necessary to protect the public's interest. This ensures that there are appropriate limitations on the disclosure of teachers' personal health information.

A further recommendation that was included would require the registrar of the college to remove notices of hearings from the register after a proceeding of the disciplinary committee has concluded. Justice LeSage, in his report, recommended greater transparency but not at the expense of fairness to the members. We believe that this recommendation strikes the right balance between sharing information in the public interest and ensuring fairness to the member.

While the recommendations from Justice LeSage were directed at the Ontario College of Teachers, they were also applicable to the College of Early Childhood Educators, as their mandate is to govern and regulate early childhood educators. Therefore, amendments to the Early Childhood Educators Act were included under the Child Care Modernization Act to align with the anticipated amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act. The amendments to the Early Childhood Educators Act were proclaimed into force in August 2015, and the College of Early Childhood Educators has already implemented these provisions under the act.

Further amendments to the Early Childhood Educators Act have been introduced in this bill to ensure a more complete alignment with the proposed amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act. If passed, the proposed legislation would ensure greater transparency, account-

ability and efficiency in the disciplinary practices at the Ontario College of Teachers and the College of Early Childhood Educators to increase public confidence, and child and student safety.

As I outlined amendments to the bill relating to the Ontario College of Teachers Act, there were also amendments that applied to the Early Childhood Educators Act. Two of the amendments supported great efficiency.

The first amendment supported increasing the roster of eligible panellists. By including this amendment, the College of Early Childhood Educators would be better able to manage investigations and hearings in a timely manner. This amendment would support greater efficiency in the administration of disciplinary hearings. The second amendment would allow the crown to identify persons to be included on the roster of eligible committee panellists. By increasing the roster of eligible panellists, the College of Early Childhood Educators would be able to manage investigations and hearings. This would ensure greater efficiency in the establishment of committee panels.

Three of the amendments to the Early Childhood Educators Act would provide a more complete alignment with the proposed amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act. The first outlines that any application for removal of terms, conditions and limitations imposed on the certificate must be made to the registration appeals committee. The second amendment ensures that the posting of current or previous criminal proceedings involving a member that are relevant to their membership is subject to regulation. The third amendment would ensure the public register at the College of Early Childhood Educators does not contain more personal health information than is necessary to protect the public's interest. Again, this would ensure that there are appropriate limitations on the disclosure of a member's personal health information.

Mr. Speaker, these are examples of provisions in this bill that would improve the protection of our students and enhance the efficiency and transparency of disciplinary processes at the Ontario College of Teachers and the College of Early Childhood Educators. These are processes that we know the vast majority of teachers will never experience, and only in rare circumstances do our teachers and early childhood educators require disciplinary action. But in those rare cases where they do, there must be a process in place that is fair, effective and transparent. Teachers need to know that if there are allegations made against them, the disciplinary process will not drag on unnecessarily, and it is important for students and families to know that the college has taken safe and appropriate action when discipline is required, especially in cases involving sexual abuse or child pornography.

By improving the disciplinary process for these rare circumstances, we can increase the already strong public confidence in the overwhelmingly majority of teachers who dedicate their lives to helping our student succeed every day. Mr. Speaker, I can attest to this. Over the break last week, I had the opportunity and the pleasure of visiting a number of schools. I went into Monsignor Leo

Cleary elementary school and spoke with a grade 5 civics class, and it was a treat. One of the questions they asked was what was my most favourite thing in doing this job. I said, "You're looking at it. It's visiting kids like you and watching the teachers and yourselves interact and ask very intelligent and important questions." Some of their questions are better questions than adults themselves ask sometimes. It was impressive, and the kids were happy. You could see how happy they were to perform in the school performance. It was a pleasure to see. It's always pleasurable to visit schools, and I encourage members on all sides of the aisle, whenever there is an opportunity to visit students, to do so. It's always a wonderful experience, for me, anyhow, and I'm sure it would be for them as well.

This proposed legislation, if passed, would strengthen the authority of the Ontario College of Teachers to take action while ensuring the process is open and transparent for everyone involved. This is one more example of our commitment to improve student safety and well-being so our children have every opportunity to succeed.

I look forward to the support of all members of this House on this very important piece of legislation. To underscore what has been said earlier, this is in fact a very important piece of legislation, and I am very thankful and very grateful to hear that all sides of this House have lent their support to this bill. This bill can do nothing but strengthen our school system and let our school system continue to be one of the best in the world, and produce some of the finest students and the best outcomes possible for students to succeed in life. Again, I am so honoured to speak to this bill, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

1540

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise today on behalf of my constituents of Windsor West and as the education critic for the New Democratic caucus to speak again to Bill 37, the Protecting Students Act.

The LeSage report was completed four years ago, but we have yet to see the legislative change at the provincial level that Justice LeSage had called for. This legislation before us today was first introduced as Bill 103 in 2013, then again in May of 2016 as Bill 200, and finally, once again this fall as Bill 37. Educators, school boards, principals and school communities have been anticipating this legislation for years.

New Democrats agree that legislation to implement the recommendations of the LeSage report is necessary. While the vast majority of teachers and early childhood educators are dedicated, hard-working professionals that will never see disciplinary action taken against them, we need legislation to govern those very rare circumstances where disciplinary action is taken against a teacher or an early childhood educator. We need legislation that is tough, protects children, provides a fair process for those accused of misconduct, and includes appropriate penalties for those found guilty of misconduct. This legislation

is a step in the right direction in achieving these goals, and New Democrats are glad to see it before the Legislature this fall.

As I've said several times over the course of the short debate we've had on this legislation, it's certainly worth repeating that the vast majority of our teachers and ECEs do not see disciplinary action taken against them. In this province, we hold professionals like teachers to a very high standard, and in almost all instances, teachers exceed our expectation each and every day. The same can be said for our child care workers. They are exemplary professionals that work tirelessly both inside and outside the classroom to deliver quality education and life skills to our next generation of leaders.

As a mother of two children, one a graduate of the public education system and one currently in high school, I have seen this dedication and commitment first-hand. From their early years to grade 12, teachers and education support staff shape our children into the curious, compassionate, generous, thought-provoking people that they become, and for that I personally want to say thank you. Whether it's the ongoing fight to reverse short-sighted cuts to education funding or fighting to ensure manageable child care ratios to keep children safe, our education workers and child care workers are leaders in the struggle for quality education and child care as well as for a safe working and learning environment.

I would like to continue informing my colleagues about all the amazing work that our professionals working in education and child care have done in Ontario, but my time here today is very limited. Yes, even though this legislation was discussed for four years, this is really the first opportunity we've had to discuss the provisions of this legislation in any detail.

Bill 200, the second iteration of this legislation, was introduced last spring, but rather than call it to second reading before the summer, this government decided it wasn't a priority. Then in September, Bill 200 died on the order paper and had to be introduced for the third time, as Bill 37, further delaying debate on this important and necessary legislation. In September, we finally had the opportunity to begin substantive debate on this legislation.

However, at the first opportunity, this Liberal government moves time allocation on this bill and begins the process of rushing it through the House.

I've always said that this legislation is necessary and timely, but rather than calling Bill 200 to second reading last spring, this Liberal government chose to prorogue the Legislature. They put their own interests first.

After introducing it for the third time, the Liberal government forced the Protecting Students Act through the chamber, limiting the voice of opposition MPPs and, by extension, the voice of the people that we represent. The time allocation motion only allowed for one day of committee hearings and one day of clause-by-clause. There was very little notice given to Ontarians that they could present to the committee, once again shutting out the voice of the people of this province.

Speaker, I think it would have been reasonable, after four years of stalling this legislation, for the government to allow appropriate debate on this legislation. My Liberal colleagues across the floor may have little to no respect for due process, but it's still something my New Democrat colleagues and I hold in very high regard.

After the very limited time we had for public hearings on this legislation, we shifted to one day allotted for clause-by-clause. New Democrats tabled over 30 amendments to this legislation. Each time I introduced and spoke to an amendment at committee, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education read from his script about why the government was not voting in favour of amendments New Democrats put forward. The parliamentary assistant to the minister was very zealous to stick to his talking points, even when they didn't answer the question I was asking. Many of the amendments New Democrats put forward would ensure that the legislation strikes a proper balance between disciplining education and child care workers who are guilty of misconduct and fair due process.

For instance, multiple clauses in this bill state that the registrar has 30 days to provide information they receive to the professional who is accused of misconduct. I asked the parliamentary assistant to explain why 30 days was necessary. It seems reasonable that a person who has been accused and is defending themselves have full and complete information of the case against them in a timely manner. I think the government can do better getting them this information than having to wait 30 days.

The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education couldn't really explain why the registrar needed 30 days; nevertheless, he recommended that his caucus colleagues vote against NDP amendments that would ensure all parties are reasonably provided with information when one party receives this information. In fact, the Liberal members from Etobicoke Centre and Davenport tried to assist the parliamentary assistant in explaining the 30-day time frame but fell short of clarifying their position.

Several presenters at committee stated that information-sharing is particularly problematic when ongoing information about an investigation is received by the registrar. At times, very little of this information is shared with members of the college who are preparing their defence. Speaker, the disciplinary process only properly functions when we can ensure that due process was followed. A critical element of this is ensuring that all parties are provided with full and complete information about the case, and in a timely, fair manner.

New Democrats moved amendments that would create prosecutorial viability assessments for disciplinary claims brought under the Early Childhood Educators Act or the Ontario College of Teachers Act. This means that claims against a member of either college would need to be secured to ensure there was a reasonable prospect of finding guilt before the disciplinary committee moved forward with processing the complaint.

Our reason for advocating for this requirement was because, at times, several claims brought against the

member are actually dropped before the hearing. In order to ensure disciplinary committee hearings move forward in a timely and efficient manner, it's best to ensure that the claims against the member won't be dropped at the last minute. The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education again read from his talking points and recommended that his colleagues vote against this amendment. Of course, they followed suit.

In one instance, the parliamentary assistant claimed that the requirement for prosecutorial viability assessments went against the spirit of the LeSage report. I would ask that the member take another look at recommendation 19 of this report, which states, "The investigation committee should in most cases obtain a prosecutorial viability assessment from the college's external counsel when considering whether to refer a matter to the discipline committee." That was on page 37.

New Democrats brought forward amendments that would clarify several key clauses of this legislation and ensure it is both strong and transparent.

Interjections.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The members of the government side may want to heckle me because I'm reading notes from my prepared speech here, but I actually prepared the speech myself, unlike the parliamentary assistant and your members at committee, who read exactly the script they were given, regardless of whether those talking points were relevant or not—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm sorry. I would ask the government members to please refrain from heckling the member for Windsor West, because I need to hear her. She has the floor and she has the opportunity to speak.

I'll give you some extra time, if you need it. The member for Windsor West.

1550

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Speaker. New Democrats brought forward amendments that would clarify several key issues of this legislation and would ensure that it is both strong and transparent. Some clarification was required on the extent that previous criminal proceedings will be published. Will this provision be applied retroactively, meaning that a senior teacher who was involved in a criminal proceeding 20 years ago will now see these proceedings published on the public register? What about instances where a pardon was granted? Is it fair to publish the proceedings even though a pardon was given?

Speaker, clarity is key. For instance, is a criminal conviction related to the possession of marijuana considered relevant under this act? What about after this government's federal counterpart legalizes the substance? Will it do more harm than good to publish a teacher's previous marijuana conviction when possession becomes legal in Canada? Rather than deal with these issues at a committee and improve this legislation, the government opted to address these issues in regulation, unilaterally and without the oversight of members of this chamber. This

is a disturbing trend that we're seeing more and more under this government. We had the opportunity to strengthen and clarify this legislation right here and right now. Instead, we'll all now have to wait and see.

Overall, New Democrats are glad that this legislation is before us today and look forward to supporting Bill 37. It's unfortunate, however, that several provisions of this bill will not be clarified here today. Rather, the government is going to unilaterally introduce regulations with no legislative oversight and, Speaker, I cannot stress enough the importance of the amendments that New Democrats brought forward. What we were asking for is a fair process for not only the person, this child who's coming forward and accusing a member of either of the colleges, but also for the person who is accused. We simply asked that when a member is accused of misconduct, when the College of Teachers receives that information—any information pertaining to the accusations—that that information be shared immediately with the person who's accused.

The government side argued that they actually thought that was unreasonable and that 30 days, although they couldn't argue their position on 30 days and why that's relevant—they felt that 30 days was fair and they said they're not sure where the 30-day recommendation came from. So the government side couldn't even defend their own position on the 30 days of sharing information.

I don't think that it's unreasonable to say that if somebody stands accused of something, as soon as the information is shared with the side that's going to look at disciplining them, the person who is accused receive that information in order to be able to start putting together a case for their defence. We also ask, as information comes forward—so not just when the initial complaint is made but when more information comes forward through the process of investigations—that that information is also shared with the accused. There have been many people who have come forward who said that that information was not shared with them through the College of Teachers. A person cannot put together a fair defence—a fulsome defence, really—when they don't have all the information about the case against them.

Again, I'm not a lawyer; I'm not a judge. But I'm pretty sure, when we're talking about our court system, that when somebody is accused of an offence, it is their right to receive any information that's being used against them so that they or their counsel can put together a fair defence. How can someone defend themselves when they don't have all the information about the accusations against them? How can they then be able to explain?

The other issue was that someone who is accused has to respond to the accusations within a certain timeline. We asked that that clock doesn't start ticking until the accused has received all the information in the case against them. The government side voted against that. Again, the parliamentary assistant read his talking points. He's a good soldier that way. He read exactly what was put in front of him, whether it was relevant or not. I don't see how the government side can think that it's fair that

someone is supposed to enter a response to an accusation when that person doesn't have all the information about the accusation before them. That time, that clock, should not start ticking until the person who is accused, the member of the college, has all of the information about the case that's against them. I don't think that's unreasonable. I don't think our court system finds that unreasonable. I'm not sure why the government side finds it unreasonable that a person who's accused would have all the information provided to them in order to defend themselves.

We also asked, in line with Justice LeSage's report—so when the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education argued with me that it wasn't in line with Justice LeSage, I was actually able to read a quote from Justice LeSage showing the opposite to what the parliamentary assistant was saying—that there should be prosecutorial viability done to ensure that an accusation brought before a member of the college is actually going to see it right through the process; that there's a very good chance that the person who is accused is actually guilty of what it is they're being accused of and that that's going to go through the disciplinary process. Many times, in many cases, accusations against a member of the college are withdrawn. They're found to have no merit or the person who has brought those accusations forward, for whatever reason, has decided to withdraw them. I don't think that it's right that somebody then has their information published—that the accusation is made public and is put on a website for everyone to see—when in fact the accusations are going to be withdrawn and that person is going to be exonerated of the accusations against them. The government side, however, thinks that it's fair to put it out for all to see that somebody has been accused of something, whether legal counsel feels that those charges are actually going to stand and that there is a very good chance that that person is going to be found guilty of the accusation before him.

Although we like to think that our justice system is fair and transparent for all people, whether it's somebody being accused of a crime or someone making the accusation, the government side feels that they have the right to make all of these types of proceedings one-sided, that when it comes to our teachers and when it comes to our early childhood educators, that doesn't apply to them. They run by a different set of standards for teachers and for early childhood educators, and that it's fair to basically put up information, whether it's found to be truthful or not, and damage that person's reputation.

Speaker, just to be clear: I by no means am saying that if somebody is indeed guilty or has been brought forward for discipline and it is found that it is very likely they will actually be charged with what they're accused of—that there's a very good chance that those charges will stand because they have done something wrong—I'm not saying that we need to protect those people. What I'm saying is that those people need to be prosecuted, that they need to have very strong penalties in place for professionals who do behave in a manner that is un-

becoming of their profession. But as I started off saying, it is in very, very few cases that we will ever see a teacher or an early childhood educator being accused and found guilty of something this serious.

We need to look at it from a more balanced approach. We need to make sure that the process is fair not only to the accuser, but it's also fair to the person who has been accused, because as we know, in the world that we live in, once something is out there for public consumption, you cannot take it back. We need to ensure that when there are allegations against a teacher or an early childhood educator, we're not putting up information that's going to damage their reputation and potentially their career when there is no chance of those charges against them standing or there's a very good chance they're going to be withdrawn.

We want to talk about fair process, but unfortunately, the government side shut down all the amendments that would actually—although they talk about fair process and openness and transparency, they shot down every single amendment that would actually provide a fair process for both sides, whether that's someone who is coming forward and making an accusation or someone who is being accused.

In fact, many times when I mentioned, for instance, sharing the information with the person that's accused, as soon as the College of Teachers gets it, they should, by the end of the day, be able to forward that information—by fax machine; there's email now. There's all kinds of ways for them to get that information out to the accused or to the accused's counsel. The government side suggested that that would actually slow the process down. I'm not sure how that would happen, because this would actually start that clock ticking because that person is getting the information they need in order to start their time. They would be able to enter their response, and it would be a fairer response.

We support the legislation. We don't support the way the Liberals have pushed it through, but we certainly think this is a step in the right direction.

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

Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 20, 2016, I'm now required to put the question.

1600

Ms. Hunter has moved third reading of Bill 37, An Act to amend the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007 and the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I wish to inform the House that I have received, from the chief government whip, a request for a deferral on this vote

until tomorrow during the time of deferred votes, pursuant to standing order 28(h). Therefore, the vote is deferred.

Third reading vote deferred.

AGGREGATE RESOURCES AND
MINING MODERNIZATION ACT, 2016
LOI DE 2016 SUR LA MODERNISATION
DES SECTEURS DES RESSOURCES
EN AGRÉGATS ET DES MINES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 3, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act / Projet de loi 39, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ressources en agrégats et la Loi sur les mines.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I'm pleased to recognize the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, home to a considerable number of pits and quarries that help build this province, I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act.

Most people—and me included, before we really started to look into this—probably don't realize just how much aggregate materials are required every year to support our economy and industry in building this great province.

Aggregate materials include such things as sand, gravel, crushed stone, building stone and shale. Some 160 metric tonnes are produced in Ontario per year to build our roads, bridges, homes, hospitals, schools, parliamentary buildings—everything you can think of, Mr. Speaker. It's a foundational industry.

It is estimated that on average, each one of us here uses somewhere between 10 and 15 tonnes of aggregate per year. That's equivalent to one full truckload. Clearly, we are very dependent on it. We all use it, we all need it and we all benefit from it.

Billions of dollars proposed in infrastructure means an increased need for aggregates over the next decade. The GTA consumes about one third of it. You can reference that by the 228 construction cranes, at last estimate that I heard, here in the city of Toronto alone. There's a lot of building going on, and we have to realize we need those aggregates to come, primarily from rural Ontario, if we're going to get there.

One of the things I find somewhat interesting is that the government comes out and boasts about its infrastructure plan but, at times, actually has legislation, particularly in the area of aggregates and how quickly we can get aggregates approved, to make sure there's a ready supply of those building materials to make sure that that infrastructure can go forward.

Local infrastructure is crucial to improving our economy and creating jobs. My riding, the great riding of

Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, is home to 117,000 residents, who utilize 148 bridges and culverts and 650 kilometres of roads in Bruce county alone, and 189 bridges and culverts and 877 kilometres of roads in Grey county. As such, we in Bruce and Grey have huge, huge infrastructure needs.

I was quite shocked, when I went to my first meeting, almost after I got elected back in 2011, to hear those astounding numbers: 148 bridges, all built many, many years ago, that are all going to require repairs and replacement; and 189 bridges in Grey county. Those are phenomenal numbers. Just to replace those is a huge undertaking that we have to address in collaboration with the provincial, municipal and federal governments.

According to the most recent figures, Bruce county has \$90 million in bridge and culvert replacements on the books. Next door, Grey county is facing similar challenges with its infrastructure deficit.

Consider that in West Grey, a municipality of about 5,000 people, the infrastructure deficit is determined to be \$10,275 per person, which is above the national average and very serious for the municipality. There are big challenges to make sure, because without roads and bridges functioning and safe, it really prohibits and limits the ability of the economy to thrive in those communities, for people to maintain their jobs and, again, to get those resources—not just aggregate resources, but, as we all know, many of the agricultural commodities that all of us depend on, particularly in the urban areas, come from rural Ontario. So we need to maintain that infrastructure.

One example is the reintroduction of the Connecting Links Program. I applaud the government. The reality, though, is that the Liberals cancelled that in 2013. There are examples in Warton and West Grey and my municipality—again, they put that huge challenge back on to the municipality. They were very concerned. They wrote to my office, and we've lobbied the government. Thankfully, they came forward and reintroduced that Connecting Links Program. Municipalities always have needed and always will need assistance in maintaining Ontario's highways and roads.

Other infrastructure examples in my backyard—and these are from the most recent announcement from the government:

- rehabilitating a local well in Hanover to ensure the safety and reliability of the local water supply;
- replacing and upgrading the sanitary sewer services in Owen Sound's northeast quadrant to reduce flooding;
- upgrading the Oliphant water treatment plant in south Bruce Peninsula to improve the quality and reliability of the local water supply; and
- the Markdale hospital, which I have mentioned numerous, numerous times in this House, which will require the use of about 2,000 tonnes of aggregate.

Just last week, during our constit week, I was in Owen Sound and I had the privilege to attend, along with the mayor of Owen Sound, Ian Boddy, the Owen Sound water treatment facility, a \$48-million project that's

being funded by all three levels of government: the federal, the provincial and, of course, the municipal. It was great to see that, but I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, from standing on the roof of that building and looking out over the expanse of all the other associated buildings for that infrastructure, that aggregates play an absolutely critical role. Our job is to make sure that we have policy, legislation and regulation that allows for the timeliness of those to be approved and in-process to be able to have those other resources in a timely manner, when we need them.

The aggregate industry is worth over \$1.5 billion in gross domestic product, GDP, to the province every year and directly employs over 16,000 people in Ontario. My riding—Bruce and Grey—produces almost six million metric tonnes and employs hundreds of people directly in aggregate production and the spinoff industries. In addition, aggregate processing operations such as concrete and asphalt plants account for a further 800 jobs between the two counties. Based on this, it's estimated that another 1,600 jobs are dependent on the region's aggregate industry.

Mr. Speaker, we are home to Owen Sound Ledgerock, Shouldice Designer Stone, Bruce Peninsula Stone Ltd., Wiarton Stone Quarry and Limberlost Stone. There might be some other smaller ones, but those are very predominant. They provide a lot of jobs. In fact, a lot of these companies not only produce jobs locally, but they export a lot of products to things like embassies and parliamentary buildings in the States and across the world. So they play a significant piece of our economy. They provide employment to a sector that is very, very critical—and, again, is one of those natural resources that I believe is having a very positive impact on our local economy, providing jobs. I think there's actually opportunity to go off and manufacture some of those in specialized products, which will be huge for an area like ours, which is challenged in regard to job creation. It's a natural resource at our disposal, and I think we need to use strategy and balance when we're planning those types of industries and make sure that we have those resources that we do have in our backyard available to help both the local and our international economy.

In spite of the many positive benefits to local economies, pits and quarries often encounter opposition when they file for expansions and new projects, so aggregate reforms have to increase transparency and build relationships between proponents and their communities. I have one right now. I got a call a couple of weeks ago that is already creating controversy. What I tried to assure the people calling me who had big concerns is that there is a very stringent process to go through that takes into account the impacts of potential water use to safety of the residents and people going by, and that there is a very stringent policy and that that will be followed. The challenge, I think, on the opposite side, for the proponent who is investing a lot of money is that it has to be done in a timely manner and it has to be consistent across the board. When they make an application, it has to stay

there. I'm going to talk about that a little bit more as we go along.

Some of the concerns I've heard from individual constituents, municipalities and counties—and we're now moving to address the needed changes; namely, including higher royalties to repair roads, improved oversight of land rehabilitation, and better environmental analysis of quarries operating below the water table. Again, in my five years here, what I've been able to learn is that a lot of the companies that are out there that have been around for a long time, Mr. Speaker, are very proud of their rehabilitation projects. They've turned land where they've extracted a lot of those assets back into very viable uses, and it's actually a benefit to the community now, whether it be a walking trail and ponds and those types of things or back to reforestation and to all of the wildlife in the area.

1610

I sometimes think the industry doesn't get much positive accolades. I try to go to their conference every year and see the people that are getting the awards for doing those rehabilitation projects. I want to commend the industry for making those efforts. Maybe 100 years ago that wasn't a big priority and wasn't a focus, and maybe there was some negativity back in those days, where people just came in and extracted and left. But I think, again, over time, we've come to realize the value of that rehabilitation, and I do have to commend the industry for taking a very proactive partnership in those efforts.

The bill doesn't address everything. Certainly there are some challenges, but overall, I think what I'm hearing from the industry and the people who are really going to be impacted is that there's a good balance. They've actually looked at some things and made some changes.

One of them that I want to talk about is the approvals process, which is only supposed to take a few years maximum. In some cases in my riding, the ones that I've been very hands-on with and that I inherited after becoming the MPP, one was nine years and one was over 10 years. That's a lot of time, a lot of resources, a lot of energy, a lot of money to go into something that could, again, be providing jobs and could be providing a lot of spin-off benefits to our economy.

Frankly, as I referenced in my earlier remarks, we need these resources. With 228 cranes in the air just in Toronto alone and building going fairly significantly in a lot of municipalities—a housing development, a large infrastructure development—we need those aggregates to be there and be available if we're going to make sure that that opportunity can be leveraged and maximized for the benefit of all Ontarians.

It was for this reason that, back in 2012, I called on the Minister of Natural Resources of the day to implement clear guidelines and deadlines with regard to permit applications. I'm not going to reference the name of the quarry, but one of those—both of them, really—went into it thinking, "Here's what we have to do." They had developed other quarries and pits over time, so they felt

they knew the process. But what happened was that every time they would kind of take a step forward, someone would come in and ask them to do three or four more new studies. They were completely unable to move forward without doing these, obviously, but it was an expense that they didn't know about, it was a time delay they didn't know about, and it was employment that they weren't able to create in that time. I think we have a huge opportunity for employment, and to sustain and actually increase those levels, if we make sure that we have balance in the system.

Many of these people that are proponents of the quarries have huge investments. They bought the land. They know what's there. There's a lot of money, there's a lot of engineering, and there's a lot of studies that they have to invest in just to get through the approvals process, and a lot of opportunity to create for many, many years good employment. But we have to make sure that they're treated fairly; we can't just keep springing new things on them. This bill aims to fix some of that, but it is not clear for sure if it will help totally clear the backlog.

I believe the approvals process should be scientifically based, open and transparent. It should also ensure that people have a meaningful say and that the adjudication of disputes is independent, impartial and not cost-prohibitive. The government should be improving the process by following on many of the recommendations made by the Standing Committee on General Government in its review of the Aggregate Resources Act.

One of the things I've certainly encountered is that people can put in frivolous and vexatious objections. They don't have to put really any money on the table; they have nothing really invested. They have no consideration, in many cases, for the company or the business or the individual, in some cases, that is carrying the freight for these large investments. They just want to hold it up, and they know that they can do that by putting a concern forward. Certainly, I don't want to ever discount people who can't necessarily afford to put something in writing and put in a valid objection, but when it's frivolous and vexatious, there has to be something to limit that. As I say, in both of the cases that I have, those things did happen. I witnessed it myself. There was nothing substantive that was going to be of a safety or an environmental concern, yet those delayed those projects from going forward for considerable amounts of time. It has to be done in balance so that the process for legitimate concerns are always addressed, but those vexatious ones have to be limited significantly.

Other concerns are the way this bill deals with reporting—the government wants less of it—recycling the aggregates, the extraction levy, and indigenous and broader public consultations for the issuing of licences and permits.

Mr. Speaker, I can share with you that, since the day I arrived, I've gone to subsequent Ministers of Natural Resources in regard to First Nation concerns and their ability—and certainly, they have the right to be involved

in those on lands that are within their jurisdiction. But one of the concerns is, simplistically, the definition of what “consultation” is. The First Nations community continually comes along and says, “You have a duty to consult. We're able to ask for this, this and this.” Just as some of the proponents are trying to move forward with their project, another new request can come forward.

In my local area, I met with the regional representative of the Ministry of Natural Resources. I invited the First Nations, I invited the quarry proponent, I invited all of the other associated ministries, and I said, “We all need to be in one room. We all need to develop one set of rules that everyone follows, and the word ‘consultation’ has to be clearly and concisely defined, as any good legislation requires, so that everybody knows exactly the game we're playing.”

I can share with you, Mr. Speaker, that it became one of the challenges of this nine-year process: Just as the proponent thought they had met all of the requirements to get a valid and legitimate licence and permit approved, yet another requirement would come in, which could cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, could delay the project's ever getting started, and could create a lot of challenge for that investment. The original proponent thought they knew the game they were playing, and the rules kept changing.

This is significant for all people involved, because everyone is negatively impacted if we don't have those resources at our disposal that are actually then impacting the building of whatever infrastructure we're talking about and the associated jobs. It's something I continually go to each of the ministers to ask to make sure is there, and I think it's fair for all parties involved that we clearly define what “consultation” means in regard to the First Nations community. It's fair to the First Nations community so they know exactly what the requirement is, it's fair to the proponent, and it's fair to all people who are going to be impacted in any manner.

Reporting: We support the requirements for annual reporting, as do the industry and environmental stakeholders. There was some thought in the bill, I believe, to kind of do it on a discretionary basis, as a one-off. But again, minimum annual standards for reporting make sure that everyone is in the loop, they know what's going on, and we maintain a balance in regard to what our knowledge is.

Recycling: We want extraction tonnage to apply only to new aggregates. The bill wants to continue the current practice of including recycled aggregate in the approved extraction tonnage permit at site.

As a side note, I want to commend my colleague and Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones for championing the increased use of recycled aggregates. Her bill, Bill 56, guaranteed that we recycle more and extract less by allowing contractors to use recycled aggregates when bidding on construction projects paid for with public money, and, most importantly, that at least three million tonnes of recycled aggregate is put to use, not left sitting in stockpiles across Ontario. We recycle all kinds of

things. I can't understand why we wouldn't embrace this and ensure that we're doing that wherever it's legitimate, safe and good use of a product that's sitting there, as opposed to having to go in and extract new when we have it there. How we maintain that, how we manage it, the resources that are required to continually monitor all of that recycled—it only makes good sense to me.

I'm going to talk a little bit more about consultations. The bill says that "the minister will consider whether adequate consultation ... has been carried out" before making decisions regarding licences or permits if those licences or permits affect established or credibly asserted aboriginal or treaty rights. Mr. Speaker, as I shared earlier, what is "adequate consultation"? It is not defined in the legislation and is left to interpretation. That's not fair to any party involved, when you rely on interpretation and don't make it clear and concise.

This can open doors to prolonged and costly consultations. For example, right now, one of the ones I referenced took nine years. We went through every hoop, every loop. I was very hands-on involved. We finally had the minister sign off on it. The proponent actually has the permit in their hand that says that this has been approved to move forward by the Ontario Liberal government, and yet we now have an objection raised by the First Nation, SON, many months and years after this process went through. Now the proponent is standing there, saying, "Where do I go from here? I was prepared to open." He had signed contracts to actually move forward in the spring to be able to start the extraction. He was going to provide many jobs in an area of our province where there aren't a lot of other opportunities for employment for many people. It was a win-win for everyone, and as I referenced in my very early remarks, this is aggregate that is needed to help our construction, our building and our infrastructure industries.

Here is a situation where the proponent did everything, at considerable expense—a nine-year process, if you can imagine, to get that investment even to the first shovel in ground. Yet because of the word "consultation" not being clearly defined, he's now held at ransom until that can move forward. We have no idea how quick and timely that will be.

I implore the minister of the day, the current minister, to ensure that she looks at this file and moves it forward as timely as she possibly can to limit the anxiety for all parties involved. We need one set of rules, a clear expectation at the outset for all parties involved so they know the game they are playing and it can't change after they start the process. It's fair to everyone. It should be acceptable by all parties if they're in the room and they are able to clearly define the word "consultation," and we move on.

1620

Technical studies: We want the government to legislate specific areas where the ministry can require a peer review of technical studies. The bill changes the act to allow the minister to require peer review of technical studies at the cost of the applicant. It does not, however,

give specific areas of studies where the minister can compel an expert review, instead leaving that to regulation. Again, this is a challenge. When one purports to be an expert and says, "I'm going to hold this up," it can't all be on the back of just the proponent. If there are people raising, as I said earlier, vexatious concerns, there has to be some skin in the game and some accountability.

The levy: We believe that any increase to the extraction levy should go to municipalities to aid in road and bridge construction, the sustainability of those municipalities and the ability to sustain that infrastructure. It's what the municipalities, for many years, have been asking for. The bill wants to leave the amount and recipient of the aggregates levy up to regulation. This means, if the levies are increased, there's no guarantee that the additional fees will go to municipalities where the pits and quarries are located. Mr. Speaker, we need that certainty and that clarity.

Bill 39 will allow the government to order existing sites to conduct additional studies and to provide additional information on operations. Existing operations may be required to implement a source protection plan under the Clean Water Act. Again, it's reasonable: We want to protect our water, but there needs to be balance for the actual proponent.

We want to ensure that the modernization—and, something like the Ring of Fire. What we need there, Mr. Speaker, is to simply see action, not just more talk and, really, empty announcements that we're moving forward.

Other provinces have done this. What we want to ensure is that we actually have an aggregates act that is timely, clear and succinct, and fair to all.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: As always, it's a pleasure to follow my good friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. He knows what he's talking about. He's very hands-on in his part of the province, a part of the province where they have quite a few quarries and aggregate—what do you call it?—harvesting, I guess you could say.

The funny thing about aggregates, Speaker, is there's a lot of NIMBYism that goes on. A lot of people don't necessarily want quarries in their backyard. So you can't live with them, but you can't live without them, because we need the aggregates no matter where. If we're going to do any construction at all, we need aggregates.

I remember listening the other day when the member from Dufferin-Caledon was up speaking about a major quarry that was proposed up her way a few years ago. A big conglomerate bought up thousands of acres and wanted to—initially, they said—put in a bunch of potato farms, but then they tried to open up a mega-quarry. What was it? Speaker, you would know this better than I—about 2,300 acres, 60 metres deep, five kilometres wide, truck traffic 24/7, pumping 600 million litres of water in and out and back into the ground each and every day. Fighting that kind of development is a full-time job. You talk about an environmental disaster that's waiting to happen for the people in that area. They're very

fortunate to have fought that. They opposed it and were quite successful. I commend the member for her work on that environmental file, just as I commend the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for everything he just said in the past 20 minutes.

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

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: It's a pleasure, again, on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge, to be able to add a couple of minutes here to address the comments made by the member opposite from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound as well as the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

I would agree with the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound: This is really timely. This is a very important piece of legislation. I know that there has been keen interest from stakeholders, from municipalities, from the industry and from the public regarding this bill, Bill 39, and some of the proposed changes that we are looking at for the aggregate act moving forward.

I know that the changes that are proposed are here as part of the first phase to really create that legislative framework, but it's intended to be nimble enough to be able to address some of the future concerns or unique concerns that come from applications into the future. So not only is it the first time that this has been introduced, but it really does capitalize on and bring forward some of the recommendations from previous public consultations, as well as some of the previous background information, when we're looking at what has come forward today.

One of the things that I really wanted to point out, too, which is a great concern to many of the municipalities, is looking at progressive rehabilitation as the pits go along. This is something that my municipality is quite excited about, because if you're providing a licence for many years, it means that operator can get some of the resources out of the ground but ensure that that piece is put back and rehabilitated before they do the rest of the pit.

Mr. Speaker, I am listening quite intently to what's coming forward. I really look forward to having this bill in committee and being able to have more public consultation on it.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I listened intently to the speech by my colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. One of the points that he brought up: Sometimes the biggest obstacle to the success of any company in this province—it should not be the government.

Any legislation that is drafted, especially with something like this, because he did point out he knows someone who's been waiting nine years and even had a permit in his hand and got stopped again—that costs a lot of money. You can't continue to change the rules as you go because it's frustrating for companies that want to do business in this province when those things happen. I do believe that any permitting process should be fair. The rules should be in place and those rules are what you go by. When you have situations like this happen with his friend in his riding, it's very frustrating. The money involved is very high.

I have friends in Listowel, in Perth–Wellington where I'm from, who are in the aggregate business. They say, quite frankly, that when the rules change, it does a couple of things. Not only does it hold up the project but it also costs them a lot of money.

So I think you have to have these rules in place. You have to have them clear and concise, and let everybody have their say in the permitting process. Everybody deserves a right to come to these meetings and talk about their concerns. But it's the change of the rules and the change of the process and things like that that drive these people in the business to be frustrated with what's going on.

I'm glad that the member brought those concerns up. Hopefully that will help with this process.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from the official opposition in Huron–Bruce. He is very informed.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Paul Miller: Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound; I know.

He has had a lot of exposure to these types of facilities. I, myself, have had exposure to after-use on quarries. We run into some problems sometimes because after the quarry is done and everyone has left and the money has been made, they have a tendency to make them into landfills. When they make them into landfills, sometimes the landfills are supposed to be non-hazardous waste and they end up being hazardous waste, as witnessed in the Taro landfill in upper Stoney Creek. We've had nothing but problems, off and on, with complaints about smells and things that have gone in there. There is even stuff that was brought up from Michigan that Michigan wouldn't take. So we've had some real stories around the after-use of these quarries. That's my main concern.

Of course, they have the EA process. In the last few years they've weakened the EA process. It's not as good as it used to be. There are a lot of ins and outs that some of these companies play. Right now, they're trying to raise the level in the Taro landfill, bring it closer to the road and put more questionable fill in there. All the residents are upset about it and we're going through that process right now.

My biggest concern on any of these types of things is the inspections. The inspections of any quarries or landfills are grossly understaffed. They might come in there once or twice a year. Even in a hazardous landfill, they're supposed to come in more, and they don't. I think that should be really looked at. After-use is a very important item when it comes to quarries.

1630

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments for this round, and I return to the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure. Thank you to all the members who have spoken.

Hamilton East–Stoney Creek just brought up a good one: the after-use of quarries. As I think I alluded to in my remarks, I think the industry has moved forward considerably. Some of those might be very outdated and old, and they didn't put as much stringency on them. But now I think they're doing a much better job, with a lot more of the stakeholders around the table making sure that we have those things built into it.

He talked about the environmental assessment. One of the other things that I didn't have time in my remarks to get into a lot but that I don't see covered in the bill is the jurisdiction of things like conservation authorities on some of these things. Some people are saying to me that these have way too much ability to restrict and control, and I think that's something we would need to review, going forward.

My colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh talked about the Nimbyism, and the need for those quarries and those products from quarries to come forward for the benefit of all. I think it speaks to what I tried to say on the bill: You need clarity, you need balance and, as my colleague from Perth–Wellington said, one set of rules so that everybody knows exactly what they are at the outset, everybody plays by them, and they can't be moved and shifted.

The NEC is another one that's currently on our docket, so with the minister in the audience, I'm just going to suggest that that's another one that wasn't as well communicated as it could be. There's a lot of challenge out there, because it wasn't done well on what's the benefit for all Ontarians. I've implored her to slow down the process, to not make any snap decisions, like with quarries, and that we need to make sure we have balance but use the science, know it's good for all of us, and have a good clear, debate on that.

In her comments, she talked about the importance of timeliness of legislation and that it's nimble on unique concerns. I want to say again, and reiterate what I said in my main point, that that word "consultation" needs to be clearly defined. I hope she'll take that under her leadership and do that. I have asked former ministers to do that, and it hasn't happened. It has been there for a lot of years. I'm not certain why we can't find that. If we bring all the stakeholders to the table, it would be fair to all if everyone knows the definition of "consultation." We'd just make it that much clearer for everyone, and I think then our timeliness, our ability to have that balance of need and want, can certainly be achieved.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and one-half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader or one of the members of the executive council specifies otherwise.

I recognize the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: Continue debate.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker, and good afternoon. It's always an honour to stand here in Ontario's provincial Parliament and speak on behalf of the residents of the city of Windsor and the town of Tecumseh.

I find it interesting that this bill, Bill 39, has been five years in the making. You wouldn't think that sand and gravel would be that complicated, Speaker. "Like sands through the hourglass, so are the days of our lives." Well, actually, Days of Our Lives, that long-running television soap opera, was on at 1 o'clock this afternoon, and it was probably a lot more exciting than this discussion about sand and gravel—although I must say that sometimes it seems that we in this House are but a reality TV show, a long-lasting soap opera, but that's a topic for another day, I'm sure.

Sand, gravel and aggregate piles may not look nice along our waterfronts, but we need this material for our infrastructure. We need it when we build roads, sewers, septic beds, high-rises, subway tunnels, airport runways, you name it. In other parts of the world, they are actually running out of good-quality sand for their construction projects. Sand poachers are smuggling sand out of places that are supposed to be protected. Poor-quality sand, used by shady contractors, is failing and buildings and roadways are collapsing—not so in Ontario.

Aggregates play a key economic role in my part of the province. We have several aggregate sites along the Detroit River. We seem to be getting another one. I was reading recently where they came up with a way to get rid of all of those controversial girders built for the Herb Gray Parkway. You know the ones, Speaker, where the Ministry of Transportation tried to inspect them before they were installed. Infrastructure Ontario wouldn't do that because it would cause a slight delay and they were afraid it might alarm the funders of the project. So, instead, dozens of faulty girders were put in place, eventually found to be defective, built without proper training and supervision. They had to be hauled out, hauled away, dumped and then replaced at great cost and inconvenience.

These huge cement girders are wrapped around tonnes of steel rods and iron mesh, and now the guy who was storing them plans to break them into smaller chunks and dump them in the Detroit River, supposedly to create a fish habitat as well as the base for a new shipping dock. He'll create a new aggregate site on Windsor's west side adjacent to the proposed Gordie Howe bridge. The girder-chunk-based dock would extend 40 metres into the water. It's the company's plan B. The family that owns the land bought it back in the 1980s for a gravel dock that was never built. It's like the case elsewhere, where, years ago, permits were taken for quarries that were never opened.

For a while, the federal government was considering buying the land and using it either as a safety and security zone or as part of the customs plaza for the new bridge. Then, after keeping the family on the hook for quite some time, Ottawa decided it was no longer inter-

ested. So now, tossing girder chunks into the water for a dock has caused quite the stir in Windsor and Essex county. It has alarmed our local environmental community, for sure. My friend Tom Henderson is the chair of a public advisory group called the Detroit River Canadian Cleanup committee. He was quoted in the Windsor Star last spring as saying, "I'm not an expert on corrosive materials like putting steel in fresh water, but it strikes me that it doesn't sound good. Certainly this is not natural materials that generally go into a river stream."

As I was saying, the environmental community was hoping the federal government would buy this company's land and, instead of more towering piles of aggregate or a parking lot or a customs plaza, we could convert the property back to its natural state, and then that's what we could see when getting onto or coming off the new Gordie Howe bridge. That bridge, of course, is the new international border crossing between Windsor and Detroit. It will create hundreds of good-paying jobs and take a few years to build.

You may be interested in knowing, Speaker, that just last week, they finally launched a request for proposals for a private sector partner to build and operate the bridge. I know, I know, it's yet another P3 project, despite what Ontario's Auditor General uncovered about the waste of tax dollars when we build big projects in this fashion. Local suppliers and subcontractors can now bid to join forces with the three international consortiums which have been shortlisted for the project. These global companies will finance, design, build and operate the Gordie Howe bridge.

As I say, this is a multi-billion-dollar project. It will use a lot of aggregate and be a major boost to Ontario's economy. They're still acquiring property in Delray, Michigan, downriver from Detroit. They have about half of what they need so far for the plazas on the American side and the connecting ramps to the freeway system over there. At this point, anyway, no one expects President-elect Donald Trump to interfere with the project, since, as you know, he is a big guy on trade and the Windsor-Detroit border crossings are where most of the trade goes back and forth between our two countries.

We're probably a year and a half away from the actual start of the bridge. Construction will begin—although, as I say, work on the plaza on both sides of the border has already started to some degree, and, as I said earlier, Speaker, like sands through the hourglass, so are the days of our lives.

We had an important visitor to the Herb Gray Parkway last week, somebody you know well. That's right: Transportation Minister Del Duca was in Windsor to officially open the parkway trail system. We'll have 17 kilometres of walking and biking trails over pathways, bridges and tunnels. Eventually, there will be better linkages with our city of Windsor trails and those in the towns of LaSalle and Tecumseh as well. Members of the local biking community have been calling for that for quite some time now. They see it as a big boost to recreational tourism, so I don't know why we haven't recognized that and done something about it up till now.

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I must say, Speaker, how proud I am to have been part of a city council at the time that fought the province for years to have such an enhanced trail system. We fought for the traffic to flow under bridges and through tunnels so we could have the biking and hiking trails overhead. Initially, the former McGuinty government just wanted to create a flat, multi-lane roadway, similar to what we'd see today, perhaps, along the 401 near Pearson airport, for example. As you know—and you can check with the minister if you have doubts—what we have today is a vast improvement and something we can all be proud of. It really is Ontario's front doorway for our American visitors. Think about that for a moment, Speaker. When Americans cross the border into Ontario, most of them enter through Windsor's front door.

It took a lot of aggregate material to build the Herb Gray Parkway and the biking and hiking trail system. In fact, I was just looking at an earlier annual report from the Windsor Port Authority. They own the waterfront land where the aggregates get unloaded for many of the local construction projects. We had a banner year in 2012 and 2013, tapering off as the parkway neared completion in 2014. In 2013, we unloaded more than six million tonnes, and they tell me they may hit near that number again when the bridge construction gets under way. Here's hoping.

This bill makes changes to the Mining Act as well, so let me just mention at this time that mining is a key component to the overall economy in the Windsor area as well. No, we don't mine gold and we don't have diamonds on the soles of our shoes, but your table salt may be from Windsor and your road salt for sure. We average between 1.5 million and two million tonnes of salt. It depends whether we have harsh winter weather, of course, but in 2013-14 we hit nearly 2.5 million tonnes. That's the total of salt that was shipped through the port authority and doesn't count the salt that was trucked from the mine to various municipal storage areas in southwestern Ontario.

Windsor salt: There's nothing quite like it. You can toss a little over your left shoulder for good luck. It seems to work for me. They say it blinds the little devil that may be lurking on your shoulder. I like to think that angels on my right shoulder are there keeping an eye on me because as a member of the opposition, I feel I'm always on the side of the angels.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: As a bill, the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act can get down into the weeds and we can talk about a lot of the local impacts. In fact, it lends itself to some interesting, particularly bad puns. We can talk about it as being a concrete measure, as paving the way to the future, as definitely an infrastructure building block and one that will cement our inter-regional relationships.

But as the member from Windsor just noted, he talked about salt as one of the products of aggregate resources.

Of course, the others that we're most familiar with are sand and gravel. They're just simply vital to everything that we do. In fact, all of the products that we've been discussing are not ones that travel well. So as long as you want to progress, as long as you want to use concrete, as long as you want to build something or pave a road or maintain a road, we're going to need aggregates.

Although municipalities, to varying degrees, do recycle aggregates; for example along the Milton GO line, one passes both the city of Mississauga's yard where they grind up used buildings and turn them back into road aggregates, as well as near Kipling station, where the city of Toronto grinds up concrete that it has removed and uses it for, probably, road building. These are the things that are used to build roads, subway tunnels, hospitals and schools and all of the things that are essential for the renewal of our urban infrastructure.

This Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act is a series of measures that modernizes how the province oversees, regulates and manages aggregates in Ontario. There's not much more to it than that.

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

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I want to thank the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for his 10 minutes and for giving us information on a lot of how this is going to be affecting Windsor and how he fought for trails. I think that's a great fight for anybody to put up. The more trails we have, the healthier we are and the more we can enjoy our environment.

I'm glad this government has come forward with this bill. It has been a long time coming. I hope that at the end of the day we don't just see more red tape locked onto both the aggregate act and the Mining Act in order to stifle growth.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, we need to ensure that there's balance out there. There is going to be a lot of opposition to any new projects coming forward and/or expanding a project. We need to ensure there's full transparency, and not make it too hard for those community groups to get together and bring their concerns forward.

I have a pit being proposed for Thorndale in my area. There is quite a bit of opposition from the local community, just because of the location of the pit and the class of farmland it's going to be affecting. Their concerns are that it costs so much money to even start to put up any types of opposition, and they feel left out of the whole process. I'm hoping this bill will put something forward to ensure that local communities will have a say and that local municipalities will have a say.

In addition, any extra money this government is going to charge for extracting anything from the pit, the land, probably should go back into the municipality that's being affected so they can work towards their own infrastructure inside the community. Hopefully, this isn't going to be seen as a money grab on the side of the government, at the cost of local communities and/or municipalities.

The other thing we need to ensure is that our water is protected, the different water tables, and that, going forward, any type of aggregate does not inhibit or hurt our local water supplies.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand in this House, and today it's to follow my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh and his remarks on Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act.

He focused on his riding—which is a really good thing to do—and how aggregates help, and how aggregates are a must-have. You can't really build a modern society without aggregates.

I'm hoping to have some time later to spend some more time on this bill, but I might not.

One thing that is kind of odd about this bill: It would work better as two bills. You say, "Why?" Because most people focus on the aggregate part, but there are actually two parts to this bill. The mining part is equally as important in an area like mine, where there are more mines than there are megaprojects regarding road building. Given the fact that you're actually dealing with two ministries within the same bill, it would make more sense to have two bills: an Aggregate Resources Act under the Ministry of Natural Resources, and a mining modernization act under the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: It would make a bit more sense. It would also make more sense to the companies who have to deal with these acts. It would put a focus specifically on mining, because mining is one of the cornerstones or backbones of this province, and, in my opinion, it deserves more than half a bill where it really doesn't fit.

Specifically, deep-shaft mining is considerably different than anything that people perceive here as aggregate resources. I'm sure some people think, "Well, what's the difference between an open pit mine and an aggregate and a gravel pit?" But there is a difference, specifically how they're sited and how they are viewed environmentally.

So I think it should be two bills.

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

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: It's a pleasure to get up and add a few comments on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge to the very creative member from Windsor–Tecumseh—and a lot of puns. It's a very gritty subject, is aggregates.

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In saying all that, I think there's recognition amongst all the members around the House today that aggregate resources are important to so many things. I was really delighted, as well, to hear of the 17 kilometres of trails for walking and cycling that were built using aggregate resources in the great riding of Windsor and that have helped connect so many things.

If you look around us, Mr. Speaker, playgrounds, makeup, buildings, culverts, bridges, roads—they all use aggregate resources. The municipalities that are wealthy in aggregate resources do have to balance the needs of their own community with the need for aggregate resources. Even sanding roads in the middle of winter to prevent slipping on the roads is very important.

It's why I'm very excited to see that the oversight will be strengthened here and that during the regulatory process there will be that much more public consultation that will be undertaken around not only the regulatory piece, but really an improved information and participation in the application process. I think certainly municipalities are hungry for this, as is industry. I know the good actors in my area, for instance, will host public information sessions and then work with the community to make sure that the pit licence they are after will really help to address not only the needs of the industry, but the needs of the public that's around them.

I'm proud that our government is taking this balanced approach to managing our aggregate resources with all these different interests at heart.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. We return to the member for Windsor—Tecumseh to reply.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to thank the members from Mississauga—Streetsville, Elgin—Middlesex—London and Timiskaming—Cochrane, and the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry for her very gritty and balanced response as well.

I think we have about 40 mines operating in the province today. Besides salt, they're mining for everything from gypsum and talc to zinc and platinum, as well as gold, nickel, copper, and of course diamonds. Ontario is a huge province. The mining operations only take up about 0.5% of the total land area, yet last year the value of mineral production alone in our province was nearly \$11 billion. We're talking about 300,000 jobs in the mining sector, as my good friend from Algoma—Manitoulin said when he was speaking to this bill a couple of weeks ago. He should know; he's an expert. He has been dealing with mines and quarries for a good part of his life. My, how time flies around here. Like sand through an hourglass, so are the days of our lives. I love that line, Speaker, I've just got to tell you.

Did you know, Speaker, that the Beatles were originally called the Quarrymen? You knew that. See? We're talking about quarries and you do a bit of research and look what you come up with. Right? Look that up in your Funk and Wagnalls. Now, there's a line from Laugh-In that we haven't heard around here in a long time, but those of you with an encyclopedic knowledge and memory would know of which we speak.

We have quarries down my way; they've been there a long time. I hope they continue. I know one started out as a tobacco farm. Then the aggregates from there were used to build Highway 18. That's where they still harvest granulars, clear stones, screening, gabion stone, rip rap and armour stone today. So it's a very big industry, no

matter where you go across the province, and we need aggregate no matter where we go and whatever we want to build.

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

Hon. David Oraziotti: I'm pleased to rise today to discuss Bill 39. First of all, I want to take a minute to just commend my colleague Minister McGarry for her leadership on this very important issue. I have been listening to the debate, and I know that many of the members have spoken very passionately about this particular issue and how important it is to their communities, because this is an issue that touches most of us in Ontario. If we are to continue building Ontario up, we need the valued resources from the province. In fact, the industry supports about 9,000 direct jobs and 9,600 indirect jobs in the province of Ontario and contributes almost \$1.4 billion to Ontario's gross domestic product. So it is a very, very significant part of our economy. Again, I want to commend Minister McGarry for her leadership on this bill.

We know that this has been a topic of public debate for many, many years and there is, I think, broad recognition in the Legislature and among stakeholders that there need to be changes and there needs to be modernization with respect to this legislation, whether it be with regard to royalties, whether it be with regard to public consultation around noise issues when aggregates are being extracted or support for municipalities. Obviously, municipalities weigh in very heavily in this debate and in this discussion because they are often first and foremost impacted by the extraction of aggregate resources.

We know that these resources are incredibly important for our roads, our tunnels, our hospitals and our schools and are really necessary for the renewal of our infrastructure and have broad application. Our government introduced the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act to modernize how we oversee, regulate and manage aggregates in the province of Ontario.

The bill would create a modern regulatory framework that will help companies and communities use this important resource to continue building vital infrastructure. One of the things, certainly, that I heard while I was on a committee that travelled the province a number of years ago and as a former Minister of Natural Resources was around certainty with respect to this industry. The application of rules and regulations that have been strained and pressed because of various issues that have arisen over the years needs to be clarified. That's why it's so important that we move forward with this.

In fact, if this is passed, the bill will strengthen oversight and management of aggregate operations. There will be greater certainty in the province of Ontario.

We will increase and equalize fees and royalties. The issue of consistency and fairness in application is obviously very important as well.

We would move to enhance environmental protection for aggregate sites, something that continues to be top of

mind for us here at the Legislature and for many residents in our communities that see these areas that have been impacted, their landscape that has been impacted. Concerns around the remediation and the protection of the environment continue to be a high priority.

It would also improve information and participation in the application process. Notifications, registry and other data collection is also important in relation to aggregates, and we can always, in these areas, do more to improve transparency and accountability when it comes to data and information.

Once passed, Ontario will move forward with regulations to set specific fees and requirements and will consult with the public, stakeholders and of course aboriginal communities, who are significant stakeholders with respect to this issue. That's so very, very important. I know that we have had a number of consultations on this issue. Members from all sides have participated. I know the minister has been very actively engaged so that we shape a piece of legislation that we all want to see and it has as few challenges with it as possible.

Our government is taking a balanced approach to manage our aggregate resources, recognizing the need for economic growth and job creation, as well as the responsibility to protect vital resources like farmland, of course, and our groundwater.

Some of the proposed changes to oversight with respect to aggregate operations and environmental protection would include broadening MNRF's ability to require information related to aggregate operations, and enhanced fines. It's something that is a reality in the sector and in many areas in a number of ministries. There need to be enforcement abilities with our legislation to effect compliance and the necessary change that we're seeking. This would have the effect of increasing penalties and fines up to a maximum of \$1 million, plus \$100,000 each day if the offence continues, as well as the offence of providing false reporting, demonstrating that we're taking this issue very seriously.

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We're also proposing a custom planning approach for unique applications, such as those in the bed of a lake or river, or a mega quarry, for example—and we've heard the conversations about these areas in the past.

Our government has also proposed to make changes that would require new applications to identify a cap on the amount of area that could be disturbed at any one time, as well as performance indicators for rehabilitation monitoring and reporting.

With regard to fees and royalties, the bill will support updated and equalized fees and royalties by setting a framework for equalizing fees between crown land and private land; charging royalties on sites that also have ongoing mining leases; changing fee allocations; indexing fees and royalties to ensure that they remain current into the future; and requiring the existing fees and applications—this sounds very bureaucratic and legalistic to some extent, but those people who work in the sector and the individuals who are impacted by this legislation

understand and know very well the implications of these provisions in the legislation. It speaks to the ability to be fair and consistent and respectful of the work that is done by individuals in this sector.

So we need to continue to modernize legislation. Many pieces of legislation, Speaker, as you're well aware, have not been updated for a number of years. We've been making every effort in government to do that, and we have done that with numerous pieces of legislation, quite frankly. This is another example of a piece of legislation that is in need of modernization.

Should Bill 39 pass, future aggregate sites that also have a mining lease would be subject to royalty payments as well. This change would take place immediately for new sites. In consultation with other ministries, MNRF is working with municipal organizations to discuss an increase in the municipal portion of annual fees. This would better address infrastructure costs resulting from aggregate operations.

We continue to hear our municipalities talking about those added infrastructure costs and burdens to them—that they're not really recovering the full cost. That has been a really important issue. The good news is that this bill will help to move significantly in that direction, to address that issue.

Increased participation and information available to the public: This is important. If passed, the bill would support improved information in aggregate operations by enhanced participation, creating a clearer process to change existing approvals, allowing for customized consultation plans on specific applications, and enhancing record-keeping and reporting provisions by making them digital.

Bill 39 also includes a provision that acknowledges the province's obligation to ensure that indigenous communities are consulted when their rights may be impacted. We continue to do everything we can to effectively engage our First Nation communities when it comes to these types of issues and other issues across government. They want to be heard on these issues—they have important concerns and, frankly, legitimate concerns—and it's incumbent on us to ensure that there are opportunities for that to take place.

Also, Speaker, I just want to mention briefly—because my time is nearly up—the importance of modernizing the Mining Act. This is obviously another industry that is so incredibly important to the province as a whole, to our economic livelihood. I see it as very fitting because many of these changes that we have been talking about, we have been talking about for quite some time.

I would urge all members of the Legislature to support the changes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I want to thank the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for his remarks.

I now ask for further questions and comments.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: The bill considers allowing for reporting, which is currently done on an annual basis, to be done less frequently, on a case-by-case basis. The

industry as well as environmental stakeholders have called for maintaining annual reporting schedules, so we would ask that there be an amendment made to the bill calling for annual reporting.

The bill wants to continue the current practice of including recycled aggregate in the approved extraction tonnage permitted at a site. We would ask that an amendment be made to the bill saying that the extraction tonnage should apply only to new aggregates.

The bill wants to leave the amount and recipients of the aggregates levy up to regulation. This means that if the levies are increased, there is no guarantee that the additional fees will go to the municipalities where the pits and quarries are located. We would recommend that there be an amendment to require that any increase in the levies must go to the municipalities.

The bill changes the act to allow the minister to require a peer review of technical studies at the cost of the applicant. It does not, however, give specific areas of studies where the minister can compel an expert review, instead leaving that to regulation. We would ask that an amendment be made to legislate specific areas where the ministry can require a peer review of technical studies.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is my pleasure to comment on the remarks from the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services around Bill 39, the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act.

Speaker, it has been five years to get to the point where we are today, to the point where we can actually discuss legislation like this. And although on the surface it looks like a really good, very supportable bill, there are some concerns about the fact that a lot is left up to regulations. As we know, regulations are not set in stone. They're actually kind of wishy-washy. It's uncertain what will be in the regulations. It's a wait-and-see approach. So the MPPs in the House have to trust that the government is going to have good, solid regulations in place—things that are fair and equitable to the industry that we're discussing today. We've seen in the past that you can't always leave it up to good faith.

Many of us would be much more comfortable, as those that are affected by this bill would be much more comfortable and reassured, if things weren't left up to regulation, left up to the Liberal government to define at a later date and change as they will—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: At their whim.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: —at their whim. I think it's really unfortunate that quite a bit of this bill is left to regulation, especially since it has been five years in the making. Lord knows there has been enough time for them to come up with some concrete steps to put into this bill, and yet they choose to leave a lot to regulations.

The minister also got up and talked about consulting with indigenous communities. I would put out there that, although it's important to consult with indigenous communities, consulting is not enough. You actually have to put into action what you hear from those communities.

Often, in the bills that come forward, the legislation doesn't accurately reflect what it is that they've asked for and what would support their communities. So I would ask that they actually put what they hear into place.

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

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you, sir. It's good to be here again. It's good to have you in the chair. I just wish to make—

Applause.

Mr. Bill Walker: Now you get extra time, Joe.

Mr. Joe Dickson: That's twice you owe me.

I just wanted to speak briefly to the people who were good enough to address the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act. I do appreciate your comments. It is a wait-and-see thing. But if you're like me—and there are members from each party. We all did that bus tour—the little, short school bus that went bumpy-bump all across Ontario. We learned a lot and they have presented a lot in this presentation and the new legislation that is coming forward.

Certainly, I acknowledge Minister Oraziotti from Sault Ste. Marie. I realize I shouldn't mention his name, so I won't mention it again. Certainly member MacLaren as well, the opposition member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills—some excellent points. And the young lady, Lisa Gretzky, from the New Democratic Party, Windsor West—I won't mention your name again, Lisa, because that's illegal, I believe.

If you think about it for a moment—everything to do with the environment, rehabilitation of the sites, mining, aggregate, the trucks, the roads. Where would we be without schools? Where would we be without roads? Where would we be without hospitals? We have to have industry to go to work, to keep this economy so buoyant and doing so well in Ontario. The commercial aspect as well goes hand in hand with that. When you think of it, I look around the Legislature and I realize we are a devout—almost a congregation, because I doubt there are many people here who don't go to a church or temple or mosque. Realize that we couldn't build churches or mosques or temples unless we have aggregate. So we are in a win-win situation. I thank you very much for the opportunity to say thank you to you.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to provide comment to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

While I've been here my five years, we've had Ministers Gravelle, Oraziotti, Mauro and now McGarry in the Ministry of Natural Resources. I want to commend the three—Gravelle, Oraziotti and Mauro. They've all been very willing to hear me out and to address my concerns. There is some unfinished business, though, under that administration as well—now with Minister McGarry—and she has, obviously, opened her door to me as well.

That definition that I spoke of in my comments, in regard to defining “consultation” as it pertains to our

First Nations communities: If it's clear, everyone knows the game we're playing, everyone knows what the expectation is at the outset, there's no changing of the rules going through, the people investing in these very crucial facilities, assets and resources know what they are getting into, and the stakeholders all know the game we are playing. I implore all the ministers that have been there before to work with Minister McGarry to come up with that clearly defined definition so that we can all move forward.

I also want to ask them to work with the current minister, Minister McGarry, to expedite and find a resolution to the approved permit for the Hayes quarry. It has been given to him. He has it in his hand. And yet, there's another stumbling block, there's another suspension of that permit, and he can't move forward. That's impacting our ability to get those resources for our much-needed building and infrastructure industry.

He also spoke about—respectful, fair, consistent. He talked about the need for these things—the Ring of Fire—about mining. The Ring of Fire: As I said in my remarks, I want to see something happen with the Ring of Fire; I don't want to just have more press conferences and more announcements. We need to actually get shovels in the ground and utilize that resource that could have a huge impact on our whole province. He talked about infrastructure needs.

My colleague John Yakabuski from Pembroke has brought up, I think, at least eight times that the gas tax should go back to all municipalities. That government has voted against it. There's a way to actually help all of our infrastructure needs along with our aggregate resources that we all so greatly need.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): A quick reminder—of course, not to single out any member, but—we refer to each other by our riding names or our ministerial names, not necessarily our surnames or personal names.

Further debate?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, I'm sorry. Thank you.

I return to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. David Oraziotti: Thank you, Speaker. I'll pick up right where we left off.

I want to thank the members from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, Windsor West, Ajax–Pickering and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for their comments.

This is an issue that we are all seized with. It has been a long-standing issue that Ontarians have been grappling with, especially the individuals who work in this sector. It is very, very important that this legislation pass because we know how important the modernization of this legislation really is. The fact that it does encompass both the modernization in the mining sector as well as aggregate resources makes it doubly important.

The Ring of Fire, granted, is a multi-generational economic development opportunity estimated at about

\$60 billion. So we think that is a very, very positive opportunity that Ontarians have. We continue to work very hard to see that resource developed in northern Ontario.

As part of the Mining Act modernization process through Bill 39, the province would implement an online mining claim registration and a modernized integrated mining land management system as part of our plan to help build a dynamic business climate in the mining sector. But, in this piece of legislation, encompassed in the legislation, are issues around royalties and issues around supporting municipalities—municipalities that, for too long, have not had the benefit of the revenues for infrastructure and repairs that they need to see in their own communities. That has been an added burden to local taxpayers. That's something that needs to be remedied.

The environmental protection aspect of the legislation is incredibly important as well. Addressing issues like groundwater and vital farmland and protecting those resources is also equally important—and, of course, the certainty, and we've heard members talk about the certainty as well.

I encourage everyone to support the legislation.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words about Bill 39, proposed legislation, as we know, amending the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act. It's a topic that hits pretty close to home for me. Our farm is kitty-corner to a gravel pit. I guess it would only be a couple of hundred yards away, really. They've been blasting limestone out of there for at least 60 years. You can certainly feel the blast; you can hear the blast. It's important with blasting, with issues like dust, for example, to have regulation.

I am concerned about this legislation. I'm just not sure how far it's going down that road of over-regulation and a lot more unnecessary paperwork, bureaucratic rules and what have you. But it is an industry that, for those of us who live next door to a gravel pit, we welcome a modicum of oversight with respect to what's going on there, recognizing the importance of the industry.

The pit down my way is now owned by Norfolk Aggregates. It was bought out by Waterford Sand and Gravel. They serve the construction industry. They provide gravel, natural stone, sand, washed limestone, recycled asphalt and ready-mix concrete as well.

Another big player in my riding is Lafarge, a gigantic—probably the largest cement company in the world. They've got three locations. The stone quarry in Hagersville has been running since 1888. It has been a long-term boon to the area, a long-term boon to the trucking industry. You can't move this product without trucks, unless you can use rail haul or, oftentimes, lakers. But it's a gigantic hole in the ground. Every summer, they hold a rock concert down there called Hagersville Rocks. It's really stunning when you come over the brow of the quarry and see this quarry that runs, gosh, it looks

like at least a mile, a gigantic hole in the ground just north of Hagersville.

In 1929, my great-grandfather built his house and he had Hagersville stone trucked down to Port Dover. He had decided to build a wall. It took six men one year to build a limestone rock wall around my grandfather's house, Clonmel. It's named after our home seat in Ireland. The building is now known as Clonmel Castle. I guess if you put a stone wall around a house, you call it a castle.

Lafarge is also in Cayuga and Waterford. With respect to Lafarge, I spent some time one summer up on Manitoulin, down in the east end, Meldrum Bay. I took my family on a tour of their limestone quarry down at that end of the island. As I mentioned, Lafarge is a gigantic company. They merged with Holcim recently to create the world's largest cement producer. They've got something like 900 locations in North America and main offices in Chicago, Calgary and Toronto—again, ready-mix concrete, aggregates, asphalt and so many related products, as we've heard in debate this afternoon. It has had a big influence on our environment.

Visiting that quarry in Manitoulin, I remember seeing—gosh, I think there were three lakers lined up, loading up. They can run the rock by conveyor from the quarry right into a laker, and obviously from there it can go virtually anywhere in the Great Lakes or, for that matter, anywhere around in the world.

1720

It just suggests to us—we know the importance of the US economy to the cement industry and, in this case, to the aggregates industry. There are something like 29 ports on the Great Lakes moving 62 million tonnes of cargo, and a lot of this consists of aggregate.

Because of that very close relationship—and I'll make mention of an organization. It's the National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association. Like a number of organizations representing US business, we noticed in our research very recently, they put out a very positive response. This came from the president and CEO. As he indicated, if you're an NSGA member and are concerned about the issues we've been active on with our advocacy, last Tuesday night was a very good night for you. They've put the message out.

Obviously business in North America has watched the change in the administration to the south of us. Much of their indication was the concern with poorly developed regulations and laws that have inhibited the cost of aggregates. I can only hope this legislation isn't adding more rules and more regulations that we really don't need.

We know the president-elect voiced support for increased infrastructure spending. I understand that leaders in the House and the Senate said that maybe this isn't quite their top priority, so this organization has probably got some more advocacy work to do.

Actually, making mention of what happened south of us, the next morning I used social media to congratulate the president-elect and I would like to congratulate Donald J. Trump again on his election. It goes without

saying that Canada has no closer friend, partner and ally than the United States. We look forward to working very closely with President-elect Trump, his administration and with the United States Congress in the years ahead, including on issues such as trade, investment and international peace and security.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: You didn't say anything about Obama.

Mr. Toby Barrett: No, I didn't mention Obama, and I don't know whether I congratulated him eight years ago, but I wish to go on.

I want to stress that the relationship between our two countries serves as a model for the world: "Our shared values, deep cultural ties and strong integrated economies will continue to provide the basis for advancing our strong and prosperous partnership." And obviously the gravel association and the aggregates understand this. I did receive some heckling from Liberals across the way, but I just want to point out I was quoting Justin Trudeau, who happens to be the Prime Minister of Canada.

Just to change gears here, in September I received an expedited Canada Post parcel. It came to my Queen's Park office, a very large binder delivered from Nichols Gravel. I regret—well, we had the minister here up until recently. I just want to quote in part:

"Please find enclosed with documentation our exposé of the criminal corruption enforcements for the last 13 years, six months for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and the Minister of the Attorney General.

"This family"—referring to his own family; it's a family-owned business, Nichols Gravel—"needs your help with this complicated government corrupted mess, which will require a legislative order in council for the following orders." I just want to put into the record the request from a local aggregate producer, a well-known company, Nichols Gravel:

"(1) To the MNR to reinstate licence 103717, subject to the remaining operational conditions to be completed when and if required.

"(2) To the MOE to issue a permit to take water without pre-dewatering conditions with monitoring existing wells and at the sump.

"(3) To Haldimand county to direct the drainage engineer to make the land drainage assessment for dewatering the quarry to the Harrop drain as ordered under the OMB order 1194.

"(4) To the courts to withdraw and" strike "from the record all court decisions, orders and cost awards directed to Nichols Gravel Limited and shareholders," which, basically, much of the shareholders are his family, actually.

This is an issue that goes back 14 years that arose from complaints about the gravel pit getting an approval in the first place. It is farmland, and there is concern. We see this with some quarries that may have an effect on the water table. This issue has cost the Nichols family a fortune. Unfortunately, this happens elsewhere with the little guys, perhaps because of overzealous enforcement of the rules and regulations, and then the big guys walk in and buy them out.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise again to offer a few brief comments to Bill 39, the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act, and to add comment to the member from Haldimand-Norfolk.

The member had mentioned partnership between Canada and the US and the important partnership that we have in representing a riding that has border crossings in it, whether that be by bridge or by tunnel. I couldn't agree with him more on how important that partnership is, and we need to make sure that when we have products such as aggregate that are moving in and out of our province and into the United States, they have significant infrastructure in place in order to be able to do that in a timely manner.

I recently, along with my colleague from Windsor-Tecumseh, in the summertime had a lovely tour through the Windsor Port Authority along the waterfront, where they talked about some of the obstacles that they face moving items such as aggregate in and out of our area, whether that's into the US or beyond, throughout Ontario. One of the issues that was raised—and I'm glad the Minister of Transportation is here to hear this—is the importance of Highway 3 to our community and to trade, to being able to move things through from the United States, where it's brought in by ship and then off-loaded onto land in my riding and then put onto trucks or on rail and moved out of the riding into other parts of the province in order to be able to build major infrastructure projects. Currently, Highway 3 is a very dangerous highway—many accidents; many people have been killed on that highway—and yet the minister hasn't really committed to expanding Highway 3, which would not only save people's lives but would actually facilitate more of that trade that we need to see here in Ontario.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, while my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk is, of course, welcome to use his remarks to re-fight the US presidential election, one might note then, if it is indeed about the election, that walls actually require a lot of aggregate, and I would suggest to him that perhaps that will end up being Mexican aggregate.

But this is also an act about the modernization of the Mining Act, and I would like to talk about that, because Ontario has always been and remains to this day a global leader in exploration and development of mineral resources. If passed, this act, the Mining Act modernization, would provide a province-wide, online mining claim registration and a modernized and integrated mining land management system. You would think to yourself, "Well, don't they actually have that already?" The answer is, well, yes and no. The answer is yes if you're almost anywhere in the world except Ontario, and if you are in Ontario, the answer is no. And then you would say, "If you don't have a modern online claim registration system and a mining registration system, what do you have?"

The answer is a requirement for prospectors to go out and hammer a stake in the ground and make a notation on a map and then fill out a paper form to go and register it. If it sounds like it's madness, it's because it is.

So this act would encourage prospecting and staking and exploration. It would encourage the development of new mineral resources in a way that recognizes and also affirms existing aboriginal and treaty rights but also respects private landowners and minimizes the impact on the environment. So we do need this electronic mining lands administration system to administer mining lands here in the province of Ontario, and that's a reason that this act should get passed as soon as possible.

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

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Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have a couple of minutes to add some brief comments to the speech from the member from Haldimand-Norfolk on Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act. Certainly, in his 10 minutes I learned a few new things about his riding, as I usually do when he speaks. I had never heard about Hagersville Rocks before, so I learned a new, important piece of information today.

Mr. Speaker, he talked mainly talked about the quarrying part of this bill. I did have 20 minutes to speak to the bill earlier, as the mining critic. I talked pretty much only about the Mining Act part of the bill. But in terms of the quarrying aspects of the bill, as we run out of pits in southern Ontario, one of the options is to quarry more granite in northern Ontario. We have a lot of granite in northern Ontario, including, going far north, Parry Sound-Muskoka. In Parry Sound-Muskoka, there are companies like Weeks Construction, in the Parry Sound area, that is quarrying granite, or Hall Construction. One of the larger players in Muskoka is Fowler construction. There's Brent Quarries, which has a base in Port Carling. It has quarries all around Parry Sound-Muskoka. That seems to be what is being used for aggregate in the Parry Sound-Muskoka area—where there used to be a lot more material from pits, now it is quarried granite.

One of the aspects of the bill I did want to touch on quickly is the fact that the bill wants to continue the current practice of including recycled aggregate in the approved extraction tonnage permitted at a site. I think we should be encouraging recycled material, so I don't think that is the way to go. The tonnage should only apply to new aggregates, not the recycled material, in order to encourage using recycled material.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One last question or comment.

Mr. John Vanthof: I thank the member from Haldimand-Norfolk for his comments, but I would like to focus on one of the comments from the member from Mississauga-Streetsville. He was talking about the need for electronic staking. Do you know what? I think it is a step forward. But he described our old system, which we still use, where prospectors had to go in the bush and do

line work and actually had to know their business and know the geology—as he said, it sounds like madness, and that’s because it is. Well, that madness that we have had has been responsible for our major discoveries in the mining sector—all of them. Those people are a unique breed, who take risks, who work very hard. Quite frankly, many of them are very concerned about the electronic staking because it gives a huge advantage to big mining companies and big landholders who in many cases don’t have the on-the-ground knowledge about the geology that those people have invested their life in. Those are life skills. Those are skills you don’t learn from a computer. In all our resource sectors—whether it’s farming, forestry, prospecting, mining—there are certain things that you don’t learn from a book, that you learn from your life. There is a legitimate concern out there that the people who actually discovered our major mining motherlodes are potentially being excluded by this rush to this great thing, electronics. It’s a serious concern.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments for this round. I return to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk for his reply.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the feedback. I didn’t have time to talk about the Mining Act, and I appreciated the feedback from the two northern members. Perhaps the member from Mississauga–Streetsville lives in the north end of his riding; I don’t know. I can say that because I live about as far south as you can go in the province. I’m always struck by the commonality between rural southern Ontario and the north. We are dependent on resource-based industries, whether it’s the quarrying of limestone, sand and gravel—I made mention of the town of Hagersville. Both Hagersville and Caledonia are mining towns, mining gypsum. You don’t think of mining towns in the south. Forestry, farming—much of our wealth literally does come from the land, and I think I can speak for people in the south that I represent: We appreciate that, and we appreciate that in the north.

We are puzzled with what has happened with respect to the Ring of Fire. Hopefully, the legislation that’s coming in today isn’t going to add any unnecessary rules or regulations or ridiculous delay, as we’ve seen with that particular development, or lack of development. It’s unfortunate that one of the richest deposits of chromite in the world—there’s something like \$60 billion of chromite sitting up there, not to mention nickel, copper, zinc and platinum. And there’s a big question, and we don’t understand this in the south: What is the holdup? Why is this not going forward?

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

Mr. Paul Miller: Today we’re debating Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act. The purpose of schedule 1 of Bill 39 is to update the Aggregate Resources Act to strengthen oversight and environmental accountability, to improve information and participation, and to increase and equalize fees and royalties. Schedule 2 updates and amends the

Mining Act, primarily to modernize the province’s quite outdated claim process.

Aggregates are a vital part of our economy, Speaker, as you know. They’re an integral part of our roads, our buildings and many more critical pieces of our infrastructure. All of these condo towers you see in Toronto wouldn’t exist without aggregates. Your lunch and dinner wouldn’t have arrived today were it not for the aggregates in the roads they were shipped on. Aggregates are a coarse particulate material, like gravel, sand, crushed stone, waste slag and recycled concrete.

The legislation, it’s fair to say, is long overdue, particularly in respect of the amendments to the Aggregate Resources Act. We had the Melancthon mega quarry proposal some years back on prime farmland, not far outside of Orangeville, where there would have been a quarry about one third the size of downtown Toronto and a crater one and a half times as deep as Niagara Falls. The legislation wasn’t equipped to adequately deal with that proposal and respond to the very legitimate concerns of the local community and, indeed, people from around this province.

There was no requirement for an environmental assessment. That was one of the spurs for the review of the Aggregate Resources Act which was launched by the government in 2011. It has taken an awfully long time from then to now. The Standing Committee on General Government conducted a review of the act and released its report in October 2013. The committee consulted and travelled extensively, and made 38 recommendations to strengthen this act.

The government responded to the report in February 2014. That was almost three years ago. In the wake of those reports, the province has held further engagement sessions. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry issued a comprehensive document, A Blueprint for Change.

Today, we’re debating a bill that we can support in principle, but that does not live up to the promise of that blueprint. It’s a piece of enabling legislation that will not be especially effective by itself. Almost everything is dependent on the government introducing new regulations. There is very little substance in this bill, and I know that many of the stakeholders have expressed their disappointment. The legislation could have been considerably stronger in addressing the environmental concerns.

I will note that this legislation would still not require a mega quarry like Melancthon to undergo a full environmental assessment. The legislation does not enable regulations that would require new site impact studies—not quite the same as an EA, and the approval ministry would be natural resources and forestry, not the environment and climate change. You can see how communities that are anxious about these quarry proposals might have expected a little more in this bill.

Aggregate extraction can be a very difficult and contentious land use issue, especially when a community has grown up in the area. One of the things that we need to pay special attention to is the need for proper rehabilita-

tion of exhausted aggregate sites after all extraction is completed. Sometimes, those sites can be very valuable community assets if fully rehabilitated, but rehabilitation is not cheap. Post-industrial rehabilitation is a very costly process, and companies would love to avoid it if they could.

1740

Just look at the industrial lands in Hamilton, Speaker. No matter how much you invest in rehabilitation, if you build on prime farmland, it won't be the same again. That's a loss for generations to come. It is something we should be very conscious of and very serious about. We should never be so short-sighted as to sacrifice our local food sources or our water sources. We need to ensure that there are clear protections for prime farmland and soil, as well as our drinking water.

The bill falls short, because while it enables restrictions and protections, we will need to wait on the government's introduction of regulations to actually implement those safeguards. I think we should be doing a lot more to promote the use of recycled aggregates, and I would like to see some amendments that push the legislation in that direction.

I don't understand why Bill 39 is so timid on this. The government of Ontario is the largest consumer of aggregates in the province. It should be setting an example and taking the lead here. The Blueprint for Change made many suggestions to facilitate recycling and proposals to improve our ability to recycle those materials. Very few of them were incorporated in this bill. If we promoted recycling more aggressively, we wouldn't need as many new quarries and we wouldn't run into so many land use conflicts with communities that suddenly find themselves with a quarry proposal next door. As I said earlier, Speaker, the legislation still doesn't do enough to address those land use conflicts and offer remedies to local communities affected by noise and heavy truck traffic.

Turning to schedule 2, which deals with the Mining Act, it's primarily about modernizing the claims process. The amendments establish a process for carry-over provisions for historic but current claims to be grandfathered into a new claims system. It sets out ministerial powers for abandoned, cancelled or forfeited claims if the cells in the claim have not been reopened for mining claims registration.

There are updates to various definitions in the Mining Act, such as "mining claim," "mining lands" and "anniversary date."

The most significant substantive change is the creation of an electronic mining lands administration system. For the most part, the mining industry seems pleased with this. Instead of having to hike out and physically mark your claim, all the information will be available electronically. The new mining claims registry shall cover most aspects of mine development, from prospector licensing to mineral claims and site development.

People do have conflicting opinions about these changes, and I hope all the perspectives are given a fair hearing when the bill appears before committee.

One glaring omission from schedule 2 is any specific process for a duty to consult First Nations on mining claims. First Nations want more clarification on the process of engagement and whose responsibility it is.

The mining industry would certainly like the government to provide more certainty and to perhaps be more actively engaged in the process. We need the government to actually facilitate the duty to consult First Nations.

One final but important point I'd like to make is that the cost of energy is a huge factor in the mining and aggregate industries. They are heavy consumers of energy, and the government's repeated mishandling of the energy file, and the exorbitant increases in energy prices under its watch, have not helped Ontario's competitiveness. It's the same story as in manufacturing.

For all the talk about consultation, facilitation and promotion of these industries, we need to do everything we can to keep these industries here in Ontario. We need to ensure that this province is a competitive place for mining and for aggregates today, not just 10 years from now. If we drive parts of them away now, we'll expend a terrible amount of effort getting them back, if we do ever get them back.

Ontario should be the best province in Canada to run mining, aggregates or manufacturing businesses. The energy costs that these industries are facing under this Liberal government are unsustainable.

There are a lot of positive aspects of this legislation, but ultimately it won't be worth very much unless the government finally gets a grip on their energy portfolio. Energy in this province needs to be both affordable and sustainable.

Finally, Speaker, rehabilitation of these sites has always been a problem in communities. Over the years, I've watched many quarries and other mining situations where it's left almost like the moon when they're done—no vegetation; the water systems are a mess. They say this is part of the EA process, but the EA process over the last 12 years under this government has been weakened, not strengthened. The inspections have gone down 50%. The numbers of inspectors have gone down. They're just not watching what's going on in our province, and that's critical to keeping our lands, our water and our forestry in good shape.

I've seen, myself, with the Taro landfill in Hamilton, all the promises that were made by the company when they first got there. Half of them weren't fulfilled, half of them still aren't fulfilled, and now they want to pile it higher and expand it closer to the road. They're building \$400,000 and \$500,000 houses just across the street. This is supposed to be a non-hazardous landfill, but unfortunately, there's a lot of hazardous stuff in there that even Michigan wouldn't take.

They also cancelled the citizens' liaison committee and put their own company committee in there for a CLC. It's like the fox guarding the henhouse, so it's really bad that way.

The EA process has to be re-examined and certainly has to be scrutinized and has to be enforced. That's the key word: enforced. Frankly, Speaker, they don't enforce

the EA process in this province and haven't for many years. A lot of speculation has gone on and a lot of development has gone on without proper attention. I'm very concerned about that, and I don't see a heck of a lot in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Ajax–Pickering.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'll stand down to Mr. Bradley, if he—

Mr. James J. Bradley: Oh, no.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you, Mr. Bradley.

I'd like to acknowledge and thank the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

It should be noted that if this bill is passed, it would support improved information on aggregate operations and enhance participation by creating clearer processes to change existing approvals—so important—allowing for customized consultation plans and applications, and enhancing record keeping and reporting provisions by making them digital. So quickly, it's coming into the next century.

The bill would support improved information on aggregate operations and enhance participation by creating clearer processes to change existing approvals—and the list goes on. It's quite a list and quite a detailed bill.

I appreciate the “Miller time” story on this.

I just want to tell you that I was very impressed with the professional quarries that we did on the little school bus as we toured Ontario. I have to tell you that I was very impressed with the drivers in and out of the pits. They are indeed professional drivers, and they're very safety-conscious, so they do a good job. The couple on a weekend also can appreciate the roads, because the trucks are basically off it at that time.

It's easy to see in a couple of locations I visited this past weekend that a number of quarries are now paving the roads in and out, and you will see less dust and grime and nuisance, and it certainly makes the neighbours happier. Every day, you can see more improvements in this business that are very, very necessary.

With all of that going on, don't forget that most of the neighbours are farmers, and they appreciate each other as business people, going forward into the next generation.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to comment on my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. Even though he thought I was from Huron–Bruce, I got his right, I want him to know.

Interjection: And he's a Speaker.

Mr. Bill Walker: And he's a Speaker—not the Speaker, but a Speaker. Not nearly as good as our Speaker today.

He talked about gravel rehabilitation. I just want to commend the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association. As I say, I try to get out to their events when I can, to learn about this industry and how important it is to our economy. I think, actually, in the last number of years, they're doing a great job and are very proud and want to be stewards. They want to make sure we redevelop the

pits and quarries so that they're a benefit to all Ontarians. I just want to get that on the record.

He talked very early in his remarks about all the aggregates needed for the skyscrapers here in downtown Toronto, and agriculture, and the infrastructure that's necessary to ensure that all of that food and that concrete gets here so we can continue to build this great city of Toronto. Mr. Speaker, he couldn't have said it any more appropriately.

Again, I want to bring up that our colleague John Yakabuski from—

Mr. Paul Miller: Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I got that one right.

Mr. Bill Walker: —Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has brought nine times, I believe—eight or nine times now—a PMB to make sure that all gas tax is shared with all municipalities, not just those with public transit, so they can maintain and sustain that infrastructure. They voted against it. The Liberals have voted against that every single time, Mr. Speaker. I just want to put that on the record.

1750

He talked a little bit about inspectors for the MNR and really across all of the MNR—I hear this all the time in my riding, a rural riding—there's a lack of MNR people out on the ground who actually know what's going on. You used to have conservation officers and now you can hardly find them.

My colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London brought up again that the fees are not going into a lot of things in the MNR that they're actually charged for—a special-purpose account fund, \$70 million. We need the MNR to really be there to do the job. This aggregates act is very important if we're going to have a thriving and sustainable economy.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise for the third time today to add comment to Bill 39, the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act. This time, I have the privilege of following the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and the remarks that he made. I think there are some very, very important issues that he touched on during his limited time to speak. One of them is about the regulations and how regulations can be very problematic. They're very open-ended. They're not set in stone; they can be changed at the will of the government. Often, they're asking members of the opposition to support them when we don't even know what they are. So it's very difficult for the people of Ontario to have the information and be able to have a voice, when they—the members of this House and by extension the people of Ontario—don't know what those regulations are until the government makes them up, pulls them out of thin air or wherever they come up with them. That's of great concern.

The other issue that the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek brought up was the importance of environmental studies, the water systems and consulting indigenous people. I had mentioned in previous remarks

that it's not enough to just consult with indigenous people, and that the government really needs to listen to what they're saying and to enact the very items that the indigenous people bring up, their issues and their concerns. We've seen, historically, that that's not what happens. We've seen specifically, when you're talking about environmentalist studies and the protection of our water systems, that when it comes to indigenous people, often it is their water system that is affected the greatest by decisions made by the government, made through legislation, where you find mercury in their water or other items and therefore they don't have safe drinking water. I think it's really important for the government to address that.

Right before I run out of time, I wanted to add that I was neglectful and I wanted to correct my record. I neglected to mention two border crossings in my riding, which are the dangerous goods ferry and the rail tunnel as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Every member can correct their record. You can do it by a point of order, as well.

One last question or comment.

Mr. James J. Bradley: The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek mentioned what he perceived to be not a sufficient number of natural resources people out to do the inspections and to ensure that all of the laws and regulations put into effect were complied with. Then, I heard the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound say the same thing. Except the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek will remember that the party across was going to fire 100,000 people out the door. I don't know how they can possibly have more staff and fire 100,000 people out the door. I know the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek would probably be in sync with that particular issue.

The other thing I want to say is that I think there's an opportunity in northern Ontario for aggregate to be derived from the northern part of this country. It can be brought—and I think the member who represents Hamilton, a port city, would recognize this, that you can bring it from northern Ontario by ships, using Canadian ships transporting through the St. Lawrence Seaway and bring it to southern Ontario for use in southern Ontario. It creates jobs in the north, where jobs certainly are needed. It creates jobs in the shipping industry, and we have less disruption in areas that are highly populated, which tend to be in opposition.

One of the things I do like is watching the companies that know how to do this appropriately go through the environmental assessment process. They make sure that once they've gone through it, they comply with the provisions, and then they go, after that, and ensure that they comply with any of the inspections that take place. This

means that they are able to carry out the responsibility appropriately, their neighbours are relatively happy with what's happening and it's good business for Ontario.

So I really enjoyed the intervention, the speech by the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. We return to the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek to reply.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Ajax–Pickering, and I'd like to thank the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for complimenting his own member in the chair. That was good. I'd also like to thank the member from Windsor West. Obviously she was listening to the speech, and she picked up on some of the important things.

Most importantly, I'd like to thank the member from St. Catharines, because he's been around here a while and he knows the ball game when it comes to the environment. It's nice to tap into his knowledge occasionally, and I appreciate his compliments. We certainly have a bit of admiration for where we come from and what we deal with in the steel industry, and many of the middle manufacturing outfits that deal with all these aggregates. Thank you for that.

In reference to the overall picture of what I said, I can't emphasize enough once again that it's important, on the remediation and rehabilitation of these sites, that they fall within the criteria that affect all our areas, whether it be waterfalls, whether it be underground water or whether it be spring-fed. The location of it, for instance: The one they put in at Stoney Creek was a bad location because it was on fractured bedrock above the city, and that's not a good place to put an industrial landfill, above a city. We've had nothing but problems and we continue to have them—yet they thought people forgot about them, and they're building \$500,000 and \$600,000 houses right across the road from where they had problems, and some of the problems haven't been solved. They were even going to build a leachate treatment plant on the site and they never did. It goes right into our waterworks down on Hamilton bay.

There are a lot of promises that are made; companies make a lot of promises. But it's the follow-up, it's the finished product, it's our environment, our drinking water and our resources that are important and have to be taken care of.

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

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being very close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1757.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Hon. / L'hon. Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Ballard, Hon. / L'hon. Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	Minister of Housing / Ministre du Logement Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of International Trade / Ministre du Commerce International
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism / Ministre délégué à l'Action contre le racisme
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement économique et de la Croissance
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gélinas, France (NDP) Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Nickel Belt Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC) Harris, Michael (PC) Hatfield, Percy (NDP) Hillier, Randy (PC)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest Oxford Kitchener–Conestoga Windsor–Tecumseh Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB) Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Barrie Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Lalonde, Hon. / L'hon. Marie-France (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre Ottawa–Orléans	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
MacLaren, Jack (PC) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Malhi, Harinder (LIB) Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills Nepean–Carleton Brampton–Springdale Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP) Martins, Cristina (LIB) Martow, Gila (PC) Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin Davenport Thornhill London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development / Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle Minister Responsible for Digital Government / Ministre responsable de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique Minister of Municipal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires municipales
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB) McDonell, Jim (PC) McGarry, Hon. / L'hon. Kathryn (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry Cambridge	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McMahon, Hon. / L'hon. Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC) Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB) Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex Etobicoke–Lakeshore Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	Halton	Associate Minister of Education (Early Years and Child Care) / Ministre associée de l'Éducation (Petite enfance et Garde d'enfants)
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	Attorney General / Procureur général
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches-East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint de parti reconnu
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron-Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
		Premier / Première ministre
		Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
Vacant	Niagara West-Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest-Glanbrook	
Vacant	Ottawa-Vanier	

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Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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Peter Tabuns
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