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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 28 November 2016

Lundi 28 novembre 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Todd Decker

Greffier
Todd Decker

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CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 28 November 2016 / Lundi 28 novembre 2016

Introduction of member for Ottawa–Vanier

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	1839
The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker)....	1839
Hon. Deborah Matthews	1839

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Steve Clark	1839
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	1839
Mr. Granville Anderson	1839
Mrs. Julia Munro.....	1839
Mme France Gélinas	1839
Hon. Helena Jaczek.....	1839
Mr. Robert Bailey	1839
Hon. Jeff Leal.....	1839
Mr. John Yakabuski	1840
Ms. Sophie Kiwala.....	1840
Hon. Charles Sousa.....	1840
Mr. Monte McNaughton	1840
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	1840
Mr. Yvan Baker.....	1840
Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn.....	1840
Ms. Ann Hoggarth.....	1840
Mr. Lou Rinaldi.....	1840
Hon. Liz Sandals	1840

Deb Stark

Hon. Jeff Leal.....	1840
---------------------	------

Wearing of scarves

Hon. Helena Jaczek.....	1840
-------------------------	------

Ottawa Redblacks

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	1840
------------------------	------

Visitor

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	1840
------------------------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Hydro rates

Mr. Patrick Brown.....	1841
Hon. Glenn Thibeault.....	1841

Highway tolls

Mr. Patrick Brown.....	1842
Hon. Charles Sousa.....	1842

Mercury poisoning

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	1843
Hon. Deborah Matthews	1843
Hon. Glen R. Murray	1843

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	1844
Hon. Deborah Matthews	1844

Highway tolls

Mr. Michael Harris.....	1844
Hon. Deborah Matthews	1844

Poverty

Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	1845
Hon. Chris Ballard	1845
Hon. Glenn Thibeault.....	1845

Violence against women

Ms. Sophie Kiwala	1846
Hon. Helena Jaczek	1846

Hospital services

Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....	1846
Hon. Eric Hoskins	1846

Hospital services

Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	1847
Hon. Eric Hoskins	1847

Health care funding

Mr. Arthur Potts	1848
Hon. Eric Hoskins	1848

Privatization of public assets

Mr. Todd Smith.....	1848
Hon. Charles Sousa	1848

Energy policies

Mr. Peter Tabuns	1849
Hon. Glenn Thibeault.....	1849

Infrastructure program funding

Ms. Ann Hoggarth.....	1849
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	1850

Hydro rates

Mr. Bill Walker	1850
Hon. Charles Sousa	1850

School closures

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky.....	1851
Hon. Mitzie Hunter	1851

Visitors

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	1851
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	1851

Janet McKenzie

Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	1851
-------------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Impaired drivers

Mr. Michael Harris.....	1851
-------------------------	------

Craft distilleries

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	1852
-------------------------	------

YMCA Peace Medal Awards	
Mr. Lou Rinaldi.....	1852
Refugees	
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	1852
Hydro rates	
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	1853
Anti-bullying initiatives	
Ms. Harinder Malhi.....	1853
Education funding	
Mr. Todd Smith.....	1853
Member's comments	
Mr. Shafiq Qaadri	1853
Osteoporosis	
Mr. Jeff Yurek.....	1854
Private members' public business	
Mr. John Vanthof.....	1854
Motion agreed to	1854

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Pathways to Post-secondary Excellence Act (Post-secondary Educational Report), 2016, Bill 76, Mr. Baker / Loi de 2016 sur les voies de l'excellence au niveau postsecondaire (rapport sur l'enseignement postsecondaire), projet de loi 76, M. Baker	
First reading agreed to.....	1854
Mr. Yvan Baker.....	1855

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Energy contracts	
Mr. Jeff Yurek.....	1855
Komoka Provincial Park	
Ms. Peggy Sattler	1855
School closures	
Mr. Bill Walker	1855
Hospital funding	
Mme France Gélinas	1855
Hydro rates	
Mr. Norm Miller	1856
Child care	
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	1856
Family Responsibility Office	
Mr. Jeff Yurek.....	1856
Domestic violence and sexual violence	
Ms. Peggy Sattler	1857
Hydro rates	
Mr. Bill Walker	1857
Soins de longue durée	
Mme France Gélinas	1857

Consumer protection	
Mr. Grant Crack	1858
Natural gas	
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	1858

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Building Ontario Up for Everyone Act (Budget Measures), 2016, Bill 70, Mr. Sousa / Loi de 2016 visant à favoriser l'essor de l'Ontario pour tous (mesures budgétaires), projet de loi 70, M. Sousa	
Mr. Jeff Yurek.....	1858
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky.....	1861
Hon. Liz Sandals	1861
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	1862
Mr. John Vanthof	1862
Mr. Jeff Yurek.....	1862
Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	1863
Mr. Yvan Baker.....	1866
Mr. Monte McNaughton	1866
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky.....	1866
Hon. Deborah Matthews	1867
Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	1867
Mrs. Cristina Martins	1867
Hon. Steven Del Duca.....	1868
Mr. Jack MacLaren	1871
Ms. Peggy Sattler	1871
Mr. Yvan Baker.....	1871
Mr. Norm Miller.....	1872
Mrs. Cristina Martins	1872
Mr. Bill Walker	1872
Ms. Peggy Sattler	1876
Mr. John Fraser	1876
Mr. Norm Miller.....	1876
Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	1877
Mr. Bill Walker	1877
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	1877
Burden Reduction Act, 2016, Bill 27, Mr. Duguid / Loi de 2016 sur l'allègement du fardeau réglementaire, projet de loi 27, M. Duguid	
Second reading vote deferred.....	1878
Putting Consumers First Act (Consumer Protection Statute Law Amendment), 2016, Bill 59, Mrs. Lalonde / Loi de 2016 donnant la priorité aux consommateurs (modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne la protection du consommateur), projet de loi 59, Mme Lalonde	
Mr. James J. Bradley	1878
Mr. Jeff Yurek.....	1879
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	1880
Mr. Yvan Baker.....	1880
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	1880
Mr. James J. Bradley	1881
Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....	1881

Mr. Paul Miller.....	1883
Mr. John Fraser	1883
Mr. Bill Walker	1883
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	1884
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	1884
Mr. John Vanthof	1884
Mr. James J. Bradley.....	1886
Mr. Toby Barrett	1886
Mr. Paul Miller.....	1886
M. Shafiq Qaadri.....	1887
Mr. John Vanthof	1887
Mr. Yvan Baker.....	1887
Mr. Jeff Yurek.....	1889
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	1889
Mr. Lou Rinaldi.....	1890
Mr. Norm Miller	1890
Mr. Yvan Baker.....	1890
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	1891

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	1892
Mr. James J. Bradley.....	1892
Mr. Bill Walker	1892
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	1893
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	1893
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	1894
Hon. David Zimmer	1895
Mr. Jack MacLaren	1895
Mr. Paul Miller.....	1895
Mr. Arthur Potts	1896
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	1896
Hon. Bill Mauro	1896
Mr. Norm Miller.....	1897
Mr. Paul Miller.....	1898
Mr. Shafiq Qaadri.....	1898
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	1898
Hon. Bill Mauro	1899
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	1899

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 28 November 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 28 novembre 2016

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have provided a moment for everyone to settle in. We have an official situation.

Mr. Jim Wilson: We're on warnings already?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No. I'll give us time.

INTRODUCTION OF MEMBER FOR OTTAWA-VANIER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received from the Chief Electoral Officer and laid upon the table a certificate of the by-election of the electoral district of Ottawa-Vanier.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): I have a letter bearing today's date and addressed to me which reads as follows:

"A writ of election dated the 19th day of October, 2016, was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario, and was addressed to Rachel Crête, returning officer for the electoral district of Ottawa-Vanier, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Ottawa-Vanier in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Madeleine Meilleur who, since her election as representative of the said electoral district of Ottawa-Vanier, has resigned her seat. This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Ottawa-Vanier on the 17th day of November, 2016, Nathalie Des Rosiers has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election dated the 24th day of November, 2016, which is now lodged of record in my office."

The letter is signed by Greg Essensa, Chief Electoral Officer.

M^{me} Des Rosiers was escorted into the House by Ms. Matthews and Mrs. Albanese.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and to the House Nathalie Des Rosiers, member-elect for the electoral district of Ottawa-Vanier, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take her seat.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let the honourable member take her seat.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, I want to introduce to you, and through you to the members of the Legislative

Assembly, a constituent from my riding of Leeds-Grenville. I would like to introduce Charlene Catchpole, who is the executive director of Leeds and Grenville Interval House. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Carolyn Stewart, the executive director of the Ontario Association of Food Banks, is here today to introduce her Hunger Report. We're joined in the members' gallery by Erin Fotheringham, who is the manager of operations and public education with the Ontario Association of Food Banks. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to introduce Bill Gartland, director of education at the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario, as well as chairperson Brent Laton. This morning we had a very productive discussion surrounding education in Ontario. I would like to extend a very warm welcome to them here at Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's obvious quite a few people want to introduce. I'm going to remind you again: just the introductions, please.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome and have you help me welcome Mary Watson and Muriel Leggett, who are visiting from my riding of York north—sorry, York-Simcoe.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That makes me feel better.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my great pleasure to introduce Natalie Mehra, the executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition, as well as a youth coalition from the OHA from Durham. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: We're very fortunate to have members of the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses with us in the House this morning: Charlene Catchpole, chair and executive director of Leeds and Grenville Interval House, as well as other members of the OAITH executive; Marlene Ham, provincial coordinator of OAITH; and executive directors and staff from violence-against-women shelters from across the province.

I invite all members to join OAITH on the main staircase for a photo following question period, as well as the OAITH lunchtime reception.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I would like to welcome, in the west members' gallery, visitors from the Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce—Shirley de Silva, Michael Kooy, Peter Smith and Monica Shepley—visiting Queen's Park today.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I actually have two this morning, but I'd like to do this one first, Mr. Speaker.

In the members' east gallery, I would like to welcome members of the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition to the House: Eric Schwindt from Ontario Pork; Matt Bowman, Beef Farmers of Ontario; Robert Scott from the Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency; and Judy Dirksen from the Veal Farmers of Ontario.

1040

I would like to also recognize Amy Cronin of Ontario Pork, whose son, Liam Cronin, is today's page captain. And, of course, OASC has a reception this evening in room 228 from 4:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would like to introduce, from my hometown of Barry's Bay and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Maddison Bloskie, who is visiting us today. Maddison's grandmother, Greta, was my grade 1 teacher.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to welcome to the gallery today Pam Havery, the executive director of Interval House Kingston. Welcome.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'd like to introduce the executive director of Interim Place, Sharon Floyd—Interim Place is a strong, outstanding community advocacy centre in our community—as well as Virginia Hughes, Susan McColl and Ruth Gade, who are joining us in the Legislature today.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome my wife, Kate Bartz, to Queen's Park today, as well as Corey Allison from the Women's Rural Resource Centre in Strathroy. Thank you.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'd like to introduce someone from my hometown, Mayor Jim Watson, who is here today. He's mayor of the Grey Cup champion Ottawa Redblacks, and he's here representing that great team and that great victory yesterday. He's also a former cabinet minister and MPP in my own riding, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yeah, thanks. Thanks a lot.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'm pleased to welcome to Queen's Park today the Canadian Exchange Traded Fund Association. I'm pleased to welcome a number of individuals: their chair Atul Tiwari, Pat Dunwoody, Voula Moran, John DeGoey, Ray Dragnus, Thomas Tyson, Yves Rebetez and Ron Ross. I'd like to encourage everyone to attend their reception, which is happening at 5 p.m. in room 230 today.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's my pleasure to welcome to the members' east gallery, from Women's Habitat in Etobicoke–Lakeshore to mark this day to prevent violence against women, executive director Silvia Samsa and Kathleen Howie and Sojie Tate.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Today I would like to welcome to Queen's Park Lynda Muir, the outgoing executive director of the Women And Children's Shelter of Barrie, and her successor, Teresa MacLennan.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I would like to welcome Victoria and Patricia Mink to the Legislature today. Welcome.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd like to welcome Sly Castaldi from Guelph, who is the executive director of Women in Crisis Guelph–Wellington.

DEB STARK

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I would ask you for a little bit of latitude when I make this last introduction.

In our members' east gallery today, I'd like to recognize one of the most remarkable people I've come across during my time in public life. I'd like to welcome the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Dr. Deb Stark, who is joining us here today in the members' gallery.

Deputy Stark announced this summer that she would be embarking on the next exciting chapter of her life: retirement with her husband, Howard. I'm delighted that she is joining us today in the House.

Deb Stark is a mentor and a trailblazer for women in the agricultural sector. From her thoughtful leadership to her innate sense of teamwork, Deb serves as an inspiration to everyone around her.

I want to take this opportunity to wish Deb all the best in her retirement and congratulate her on her outstanding achievements in over 30 years with the Ontario public service. Thank you, Deb. If we could all rise for Dr. Deb Stark.

Applause.

WEARING OF SCARVES

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that members be permitted to wear purple scarves to raise awareness of woman abuse in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Social Services is seeking unanimous consent to wear the purple scarves. Do we agree? Obviously. Thank you.

OTTAWA REDBLACKS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To follow the Minister of Infrastructure, yesterday was a significant day for the people of Nepean, the people of Ottawa and all of eastern Ontario as the Grey Cup champion, the Redblacks, hailed from our home city of Ottawa. They did us very proud.

With that, I'd like to seek unanimous consent that this House congratulate the Redblacks, and that those of us from Ottawa who may or may not have a jersey be able to wear that today in the presence of our mayor and former mayor.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean–Carleton is seeking unanimous consent to congratulate the Ottawa Redblacks and to wear jerseys if they're available. Do we agree? Agreed.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As it is the tradition of the Speaker to introduce former members, I shall endeavour to do so, even though someone stole my thunder: the member from Ottawa West–Nepean in the 38th and 39th Parliaments, Mayor Jim Watson. Welcome, Jim.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Minister of Energy. This morning, the Ontario Association of Food Banks released their annual Hunger Report. This year, it included a special feature called “Shedding Light on Energy Poverty in Ontario.” The report notes that “Ontario’s hydro rates are rising faster than any other province in Canada, or even the United States,” and an 8% government rebate isn’t stopping that. The report goes on to say, “Ontario’s food banks are seeing an increase in the number of clients who say that they simply cannot keep up with their rising hydro bills.” I fear this trend will only continue under these Liberal policies.

Given this astonishing report from the Ontario Association of Food Banks, their annual Hunger Report, my question to the Minister of Energy is, what will this government finally do to help?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I know the Ontario Association of Food Banks is an important partner, and they do extremely important work right across our great province. I know the Minister of Housing and poverty reduction will want to comment on this later.

Our government is committed to combatting poverty and food insecurity, and that’s why we’ve invested \$5 billion in affordable housing since 2003 and we’ve raised the minimum wage. And we’ve done more. But I get that there are families in this province that are vulnerable and are continuing to struggle. That’s why we want to ensure that we make this access to our clean and reliable electricity system also affordable. We introduced the OESP program back in January. That will provide up to \$600 on bill rebates for many of these families, and \$900 for seniors. There’s also the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program. There are many programs out there, and I know we’ve got more that we need to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again, to the Minister of Energy directly: The Minister of Energy mentioned the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program. Well, the report actually referenced that. It says that it is insufficient: “To put this simply—if you are a single person working full-time for minimum wage ... you are not eligible for LEAP in a rural area.” And where are the highest number of hydro customers struggling with their bills? It’s in rural Ontario, and they’re not eligible.

According to the report, insufficient rebates and inaccessible aid programs do nothing for struggling families. So the minister has just raised a program that has been highlighted in the report as being insufficient. What are you actually going to do to help families?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: The programs that we’ve brought forward are helping families. We’ve helped over 145,000 families get on the OESP program. We want to see over 300,000 families get on this program, but unfortunately, on that side of the House, they’re not promoting it the way they should to ensure we can get

every family on it as we can. We’ve got many, many programs that are out there. The 8%—

1050

Interjections.

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

Finish, please.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: The 8% rebate that we talked about in the speech from the throne will help five million families, farms and small businesses right across the province. The RRRP program is going to help over 330,000 families.

We know we’ve got more to do, and that’s something that the Premier has tasked me with since June. I will continue to work on ways. If it’s 50 cents or \$50, we—

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

Final supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Minister of Energy: He referenced this time the OESP program, the Ontario Electricity Support Program. Well, that was also referenced in the food banks’ Hunger Report. It said that “this program too is arguably insufficient...”

“With the cost of hydro reaching unprecedented heights, a credit between \$30 to \$50 per month is not enough to ease the burden already placed on low-income households.”

That’s a direct quote from the report.

These programs aren’t reaching people. I don’t need Liberal spin. I don’t need Liberal talking points. I don’t need you to say that it’s someone else’s problem or it’s the opposition’s fault for not promoting it. Give me a break. You blew the program on Liberal consultants.

Families are struggling. People can’t afford their bills, and this Minister of Energy doesn’t care. I don’t want spin. When will you help families?

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I’m actually very pleased of a party that is actually helping families. We’re the party that raised the minimum wage and didn’t freeze it. It helps thousands and thousands of families across the province.

We had to rebuild the electricity system that they left in tatters and that was affecting every family and business across this province—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Did you realize it’s our fault? My God, we’re going to have to apologize like the Premier.

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

Finish, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services, second time.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It’s in my office, Michael. Take a hike.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, second time. If you're not getting the message, we'll go to warnings.

Carry on.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: We've brought forward many programs that are helping families, but we recognize that more needs to be done and that's what we continue to do. We're bringing forward a plan that will continue to help families with what we have.

On that side of the House, they have no plans, and they could care less about the programs that are out there that are helping—

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

HIGHWAY TOLLS

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, since I can't get an answer on hydro, let's try something new. My question is for the Minister of Finance.

Life is already too expensive in Ontario. We have hydro rates going up, new government fees and taxes, all too high. Families are hurting, and the Liberals just can't do anything to help. Instead, they're doing the opposite.

Right now, we've heard that the Liberals have given permission to the city of Toronto to charge tolls on the DVP and the Gardiner. Two dollars every trip may not sound like a lot, but it could be thousands of dollars out of the pockets of commuters each year.

Mr. Speaker, a direct question to the Minister of Finance: Is it true that the Liberals are giving the city of Toronto permission to toll the DVP and the Gardiner?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition, who knows all too well how important it is for us to invest in infrastructure, I believe.

I believe he also appreciates how important it is to make life easier for the people of Ontario. Now he's asking about the people of Toronto and in the surrounding areas, where congestion is creating quite a bit of havoc, and we all know that.

That's why we're taking the steps necessary to invest in transit, to invest in the infrastructure necessary to improve everyday life and to ensure that we get products to market more quickly and ensure that we get people and families to and from home more safely.

The city of Toronto has put forward some suggestions and some requests. They're going to have it before council, and they'll have to debate the merits of those proposals. I would think the member opposite, who has a close affiliation to the leader—a past leader of the Conservative Party, no less—would have some ongoing dialogue with him as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Minister of Finance: Someone the Minister Finance has a close association with, the mayor of Mississauga, has a few thoughts on these Liberal tolls.

According to the mayor of Mississauga, these road tolls will affect the residents in Mississauga and all over the 905. Mayor Crombie said to “understand the ramifications of these actions on business and tourism” affecting Mississauga, not to mention the daily ramifications on commuters. These attacks on 905 commuters must stop.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is offside with his own mayor of Mississauga. If you won't do it for commuters, will the Minister of Finance do it for Bonnie and stop these Liberal tolls?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, there is as much traffic leaving the city of Toronto into the 905 and into Mississauga as there is going the other way. We recognize how important it is for us to make it fair and improve congestion in the system, so that everybody gets to and from work more quickly and more safely.

The member opposite also talks about toll roads. He talks a lot about how maybe it shouldn't be the case. Yet when we had an opportunity to have an outstanding highway system, which was the 407, they sold it for a song, Mr. Speaker. They gave it away, and now we're losing billions annually to a foreign consortium.

That's not what we're going to do here. We're going to ensure that we proceed carefully and ensure that we have the best interests of the people of Ontario in mind.

Interjections.

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

Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Minister of Finance: This answer, going back 21 years, when I wasn't even old enough to vote—what I want is a real answer on the tolls.

Why are they giving the city of Toronto permission to toll the Gardiner and the DVP? They didn't campaign on it in 2014. When they said they wanted to invest in infrastructure, they did not go to the people and say, “Let us toll the DVP and the Gardiner.” The reality is, they've had 13 years to invest in infrastructure.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Education, second time.

Mr. Patrick Brown: They've had 13 years to invest in public transit. They haven't done anything.

Now their solution is to tax people more. Their solution is to toll the DVP and the Gardiner. It's not the right thing for commuters. It's not the right thing for the city of Toronto. It's not the right thing for the 905 mayors. You tell me one mayor in the 905 who supports this attack on commuters—just one.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, there have been tremendous amounts of investments by this government—historic investments never before made—in order to provide for greater infrastructure and greater public

transit. We're committing \$160 billion over the next 12 years in infrastructure—\$30 billion just in transit.

We take pride in enabling that to happen, recognizing that although he wasn't born, or maybe he doesn't remember, it was the mandate of that government not to build transit. Had we taken that effort then, we would have had a better opportunity today. So we'll do our part to invest in transit.

Mr. Speaker, it also begs the question: What is their plan? Because they haven't provided any solutions whatsoever on how to fund it and when they would build. They are sitting on their hands. They're putting their heads in the sand.

We're going to do what's necessary to provide for transit and then make the investments that are necessary.

MERCURY POISONING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Acting Premier. Last week, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change committed to cleaning the English-Wabigoon river. However, that's something the Premier has yet to back up and confirm.

Instead, the government indicates that there is money for testing the water, but there isn't actually a plan to clean up the mercury which has been poisoning people and the fish in the river for more than 50 years.

Will the government put a commitment to clean up the mercury in writing?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I do want to, first of all, welcome the new member to this Legislature. Welcome.

The issue that the member opposite has raised is a very serious issue. I really want to emphasize that we are listening with and working with Grassy Narrows First Nation. We take those concerns very, very seriously. We are committed to working with them on this issue. We are committed to working with the federal government on this issue.

1100

I have to say that, given the historical contamination of the river system, officials have worked with the community to provide information on the safe consumption of local fish. The ministry also continues to provide an alternative supply of safe fish to eat, free of charge to the community.

Speaker, there are options there. Dredging can make the problem worse. We are absolutely committed to doing the right—

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, that was a very disappointing answer. There was no commitment in that answer to cleaning up the river.

People in Grassy Narrows have been living with mercury poisoning for more than 50 years. The impacts are devastating. People lose their vision, they lose their hearing, they lose their balance and their ability to speak. Something has to be done.

After 50 years of uncertainty, the people of Grassy Narrows deserve a clear answer. Can the Acting Premier give a date when the cleanup will begin and when they plan on finishing this cleanup?

Mr. James J. Bradley: What did Howard Hampton do?

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

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to be very clear that the Premier and I, who have both visited Grassy Narrows, have committed, not to a vague commitment, but to a very specific commitment. Dr. Rudd—we financed through the First Nations under the leadership of Chief Fobister—undertook a study. He did not say, “Go in and remove the methylmercury right away.” What he proposed was over half a dozen different possible measures.

We are now doing exactly what the chief and the First Nations band council wanted and Dr. Rudd wanted, which is \$600,000 worth of research looking at which measures may work and which ones could cause further problems, to put options before the community, which is what everybody in Grassy Narrows would like to see happen.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The government has been studying mercury contamination in Grassy Narrows for generations. Cabinet has had a plan to clean up on the table since 1984. It's time to act, plain and simple. There's no time for further studies. We need to act. We need a plan that will actually clean up the river.

Chief Fobister of the Grassy Narrows First Nation has asked the Premier to put a promise in writing, “so that we can know it is real.” They don't believe that this government is actually going to follow through on anything.

The Premier is back from Asia on December 2. Will she meet with Chief Fobister and put a promise to clean up the river in writing so the people have some confidence that this government will actually do something?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It would be an interesting question to ask the member opposite exactly what measures his party thinks should be implemented ahead of completing the work plan—which will actually tell us which measures may work, which ones won't and what the risks are associated with that.

It is not simply a matter of going in and cleaning up methylmercury and being able to take it out in a week. This will involve probably months and maybe years of work to identify.

It is already under way. Scientists have been out there with First Nation leadership on the river every week since Minister Zimmer and I were there. Letters have gone back and agreements have been signed. I've got one right here, where we agreed to do exactly this. We spent a day.

I'd like to know why the NDP sleepwalked through five years, when they knew this was a problem when they were in government, and they didn't even have a conversation with the First Nations for five years—

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

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Acting Premier. On Thursday, 24 Liberal MPPs stood up and voted for a bill that would make it illegal for someone to accept a bribe in exchange to run for office. Can the Acting Premier tell us why the Liberal government thinks it's okay that the Minister of Energy is accused of accepting a bribe when they think that very behaviour should be illegal?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we will allow this bill to proceed through the normal process. It's a question that is directly related to a case that is before the courts. It is the responsibility of this government to ensure that we don't influence the outcome of that case in any way. It's inappropriate for any member of this Legislature to comment, question or speculate on any matter of this case, including the legislation.

On this side of the House, we respect the courts and the sub judice rule. The member opposite, as deputy leader of the third party, is fully aware of the procedures of this House. He is a lawyer. He knows how the law works, Speaker. We do not make up legislation on the fly without analysis or to score cheap political points.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The government has the ability to weigh in on what's appropriate or not appropriate in terms of behaviour. That doesn't require the government to weigh in on the specifics of this case. Ten members of cabinet voted, also, to make sure that it should be an offence, that it should be illegal to accept a bribe. They voted to say that what their colleague is alleged by a federal prosecutor to have done should be illegal.

If they think it should be illegal to accept a bribe in exchange for running for office, then why is the government still allowing the Minister of Energy to remain in cabinet?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think there are questions that need answers. Let me pose one of those questions. It was widely reported that the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton was considering leaving the Ontario Legislature to run for the federal leadership, Speaker. There was broad speculation—and more than speculation—that this was under consideration, and then all of a sudden, in some unexplained turn of events, the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton landed on the front bench as deputy leader of the NDP party. I don't know how that happened. It's a bit of a mystery. We sure would love to have some light shone on that particular turn of events.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: People across this province expect and believe they need a government that has

integrity. They want to have faith in their government. But what they see is a cabinet minister and Liberal MPPs voting to say that it's illegal to accept a bribe, at the same time as they have a sitting member who is accused of the very same actions. He is the alleged recipient of a bribe. He's directly involved in this matter, directly related to what the members and the cabinet ministers of this government voted to make illegal.

To maintain integrity, there's only one option: The minister should step aside. What we're asking the government to do is, to maintain faith in this government, to maintain the integrity of the government, the Liberal government must act.

Will they ask the Minister of Energy to step aside, pending the outcome of these allegations?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, maybe we need to have another walk down memory lane here. Let's go back to 2013, where another mysterious turn of events happened. The NDP decided that Adam Giambrone should be their candidate even though he was, in fact, in charge of the nomination process in that particular riding and there were, of course, other candidates running. So he was parachuted into the riding, and the party hierarchy allegedly stacked the nomination meeting. That was with the apparent backing of the NDP leader, the party brass. Giambrone decided that he would like the nomination even though riding association insiders confessed he was not well known to them. So I do think that there are some questions that need answers, and only the NDP can provide answers to those questions, Speaker.

HIGHWAY TOLLS

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Deputy Premier. The Ontario Liberals can't seem to stop finding new ways for the hands of the government to dig deeper into the pockets of motorists. Whether it's for licence fee increases, peeling plates, the transport minister's HOT-lane bling, or allowing photo radar anywhere a municipality chooses, motorists are paying the price for the Ontario Liberals' war on the car. And so when it comes to paying road tolls for the privilege of driving on roads we've already paid for, Ontario motorists know it's time to slam on the brakes. Speaker, questions surrounding the introduction of tolls on the DVP and Gardiner provide an opportunity to draw a line in the road and stop the government's use of motorists as cash cows.

Can the Deputy Premier tell us if her government will say no to the Gardiner/DVP road toll cash grab?

1110

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, I do listen to not just this set of questions, but other questions that have come from the opposition, and I'm always asking myself, "I wonder what their plan is." We do not have any idea what their plan is.

What I can tell you, Speaker, is that investments in infrastructure are important investments. We know, when they were in office, they did not make any investments in infrastructure. We're doing something different, and the

city of Toronto must make investments in their infrastructure as well.

So we do understand. Governments have to make difficult decisions. We do understand that road tolls are the subject of conversation in Toronto. If the city of Toronto comes forward with ideas that are backed by their council, then of course we'll take a look at that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Harris: Well, our first plan will be not to waste billions like you have. You take the prize for that one.

Forcing people to spend more on roads they've already paid for is highway robbery, plain and simple, especially since the Conference Board of Canada told us that GTHA motorists already pay 100% of area road costs. New road tolls on the Gardiner and DVP mean that they would be paying more than 100%. In fact, a recent CAA report indicates that policy-makers have many tools at hand, and should make road pricing a last resort.

With 905 residents already paying full costs for GTHA roads, can the Deputy Premier explain why her government is refusing to speak out against this last-resort cash grab on the Gardiner and the DVP?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This government has made investment in infrastructure a very, very high priority. We are working to build Ontario up. We're working with our partners across the province to invest in projects that reduce traffic congestion, that get people home to their kids more quickly. I think that's a priority everyone shares.

The difference, though, between them and us is that we know how we're doing that. So let's talk of some investments that we're making in Toronto: \$3.7 billion for GO RER that forms the foundation for John Tory's SmartTrack program; another \$10 billion for Toronto's LRT projects; the Scarborough subway; the Toronto York-Spadina subway extension; and we've also increased our gas tax contribution to the city year over year. Last year, it was \$169 million for transit. Speaker, we're investing.

POVERTY

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Earlier today, I bumped into the new member from Ottawa–Vanier in the hallway.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Who for, please?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I welcomed her to Queen's Park. I would like to do so again on behalf of us all.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question is for the Acting Premier. Ontario's food banks are feeding more than 335,000 people a month, Acting Premier—good morning, by the way.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Good morning.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: That's more than when the recession first hit eight years ago. This year's Hunger Report from the Ontario Association of Food Banks shows that the rapidly increasing cost of hydro is making it even harder for people to put food on their table. In

fact, Ontario's food banks say the rising cost of hydro is having a direct and devastating impact in the lives of struggling Ontarians.

When will this government do the right thing and stop the privatization of Hydro One and stop pushing people across Ontario into energy poverty?

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

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you to the member opposite for such an important question. I would also like to thank the Ontario Association of Food Banks for their report and for the helpful recommendations contained in it. I'm pleased that the association recognized the efforts that the province has undertaken on housing and the basic income pilot.

We've seen in a number of reports that food bank usage has actually decreased between 2015 and 2016. The Ontario Association of Food Banks report, however, reminds us that food bank usage has not returned to a pre-recession level, right?

This is one of the reasons that Premier Wynne has instructed me to develop a food security strategy. It's going to focus on improving access to nutritious food across Ontario. We know that there's more to do, and we're going to continue to build on our progress to improve the everyday lives of Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Interesting spin, Speaker.

Hydro rates are out of control. You're pushing families and seniors into poverty. Since 2008, there's been a 23% increase in the number of seniors relying on food banks. This government just isn't doing enough to help people who are struggling and falling further behind on their hydro bills. The Hunger Report, Minister, says: "The help that currently exists from the provincial government is not comprehensive or inclusive enough for the majority of Ontario families struggling to make ends meet."

When will this government take real action to get hydro rates under control, stop pushing people into poverty and stop any further sell-off of Hydro One?

Mr. Chris Ballard: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: First off, as we are all aware in this House, the broadening of Hydro One does not have an impact on the rates. The OEB sets the rates, and that's been very clear.

But what I do understand is that families are suffering. I do understand that there are vulnerable families out there that do have a hard time paying their bills. I get that. When I was part of the United Way, even back in 2003, there were programs in place—to help the food banks, to help the United Way, to help the Red Cross—by places like Union Gas and other electricity utilities to help families pay their bill. But we get that there are still families having difficulty. That's why we brought forward the OESP program, the Ontario Electricity Support Program. That will actually help seniors with up to \$75 if they heat their homes with electricity.

There are many things we have out there, and there are many things that we will continue to do.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Today we are pleased to have the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses with us in the Legislature. The OAITH is a coalition of first-stage emergency shelters, second-stage housing and community-based organizations who work tirelessly every day to end violence against women. I'm proud of the tireless work being done by Kingston Interval House in my riding, and I want to acknowledge once again Pam Havery, the executive director, for her work and steadfast commitment to women's safety.

We know that the prevalence is staggering and that one in three women has experienced some form of violence in their lives. We know that women will return to their violators eight times before being free.

Can the minister please inform the House of the important work that OAITH does to support victims of family violence, and how the ministry supports them in this?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the member from Kingston and the Islands for the question and for her advocacy on this important issue.

The work of OAITH and VAW shelters and agencies touches thousands of women and children, and makes the lives of those they serve better. Every November, OAITH launches their Wrapped in Courage campaign to increase awareness of women abuse in Ontario. I know I speak for all members in the House when I say that we are extremely proud to be wearing this purple scarf to let women and their children know that they are not alone.

In July of this year, I was pleased to announce \$100,000 in funding to OAITH, to help deliver training to the violence-against-women sector across the province. The training will include online resources and modules that cover a broad range of issues, including domestic and sexual violence. This will ensure that workers in the field are able to provide even better service.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you to the minister for her answer. Clearly this government recognizes the great work organizations such as OAITH do in our province.

Speaker, unfortunately the members in this House are well aware that violence against women remains prevalent in our society. More than 10,000 women and over 6,900 of their children were served by an emergency shelter last year. Violence against women affects us all, not just the women who are the victims; it's their children, their families and also their communities.

Our government has increased spending on programs to reduce violence against women by over 60% since 2003. However, we know there is more work to be done. The province has initiated several other programs such as the It's Never Okay action plan, which aims to stop sexual violence against women in Ontario. Women

deserve to live in an Ontario free from violence. Could the minister please outline how we continue to support OAITH and the violence-against-women sector?

1120

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'm proud to say that my ministry invests \$147 million every year to support the violence-against-women sector. Some of these investments include:

—\$1 million to the Rural Realities Fund to help rural, remote and northern agencies develop local solutions that address the unique challenges in serving their communities;

—\$1.5 million in aboriginal-designed-and-delivered community services, including the development of an expanded province-wide counselling help line for aboriginal women; and

—\$17 million over three years through the Ministry of Housing for a portable housing benefit pilot which will support up to 3,000 survivors of domestic violence across 22 municipalities.

I'd like to thank OAITH and all the shelter EDs and staff with us here today. Your work makes a real difference in the lives of women and their children who have experienced domestic violence.

Mr. Speaker, let's make this a transformative time for women in Ontario and build a safer future for every woman and girl in this province.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Minister of Health. Last week, Ottawa patients, health care professionals and community leaders were shocked and very disappointed to learn that the unelected National Capital Commission overturned an eight-year decision by the Ottawa Hospital to rebuild across the street on the experimental farm.

Instead of keeping the Civic Campus and the heart institute together, the NCC picked the sixth-ranked Tunney's Pasture location, which isn't as accessible for patients and ambulances, will cost more because it will require demolishing existing buildings, and it will inevitably delay the much-needed rebuilding.

My question to the minister is, will he intervene with the federal government and demand that Ottawa patients come first in order that the Ottawa Hospital build on the appropriate site, its preferred site, across from the Civic Campus as it stands?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. I also appreciate the fact that the member acknowledged that it is a federal issue in terms of the ultimate decision with regard to the siting of the new Civic hospital.

What I'm proud of, however, is that there has been a significant community process and engagement of the residents who could potentially be impacted, of those who benefit from the services that are provided at the current hospital, and of those who have legitimate concerns with regards to the siting or the possible options for the siting of the hospital.

There has been a recommendation put forward by the National Capital Commission—that's all it is at this point; it is a recommendation following a process that they led. It's now up to the federal government and the federal cabinet to review that recommendation along with other considerations and make an ultimate decision.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The hospital rebuild will be funded by the provincial government. You are the major stakeholder. In fact, my constituents are major stakeholders as well, and they expect that you will follow what the Ottawa Hospital has recommended, which is the site at the experimental farm directly across the street.

The only Ottawa residents on the NCC—there are only three of them—did not support the change to Tunney's Pasture. The president and CEO of the hospital, Dr. Jack Kitts, does not support the new site; former mayors Jackie Holzman and Jim Durrell oppose the move; and former CEO Ray Hession has opposed the move.

The physicians and community leaders I have spoken to over the weekend resoundingly reject the interference of where our hospital should be located. The choice by the local health care experts is the experimental farm in Ottawa across the street from the existing hospital and from the heart institute. It's accessible, it's the right size and it's closer to shovel-ready.

Will the minister be on the side of Ottawa patients and against the federal government's recommendation and build that hospital on the preferred site?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm definitely on the side of patients with regards to the provision of health care services in the province of Ontario. The member does know, of course, that the hospital has a community board, which is representative of the community that benefits from that service as well as those who are residents there. My understanding is that the board is meeting tonight. They have not yet made a determination or recommendation based on this information that came last week from the National Capital Commission.

I think it's appropriate that we not insert ourselves in a community process aimed at siting a hospital within a jurisdiction. No more than with the Windsor hospital as well: There has been a long consultation process with regard to the siting of that hospital as well. I think the three members who represent that jurisdiction in Windsor would agree with me when I say that it's important that we let the community, in a community-led process, with appropriate safeguards, decide where they believe the best siting should be.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Acting Premier. My community is reeling from this government's decision to pull \$20 million more from health care in my community by saddling local hospitals with the cost of a forced merger of Ajax-Pickering hospital with Lakeridge Health. That will mean fewer hospital beds, fewer nurses, longer wait times and more cuts to patient care.

Thousands in my community have signed a petition calling on the minister to reconsider this decision, but instead of listening, the minister is plowing ahead.

How does this government expect our local hospitals to find \$20 million to pay for this forced merger without cutting patient care?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm very proud of the work that has been done over the past year, or year and a half, by community members right across Scarborough and across Durham as well. I referenced last week, I think, the \$20-million investment in the Scarborough Hospital, and the \$10-million investment, I believe, for a new emergency hospital at Rouge Valley.

When it comes to Ajax-Pickering, just last week I made the announcement that, quite the opposite of decreasing services, I provided guarantees in terms of the sustainability of the services that are there, like the shoulder program. I actually announced that there would be 20 new mental health in-patient beds at Ajax-Pickering hospital. Those beds that were taken away previously are coming back to Ajax-Pickering.

I also indicated that the name of the hospital is going to represent the local community. Those investments that they've made in assets, and that the foundation has generated the funds for, all of those things are going to continue and the services are going to continue to improve.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: The minister is talking about community and has talked about consulting with the community, yet the community doesn't feel like they've been consulted at all. In fact, members of the community are here today to make their voices heard.

Last week, the minister quietly signed the integration order for the merger, something he neglected to mention when I asked him during question period that same day. Did it slip his mind, or is it just another example of how this government has tried to ram this through as quickly and as quietly as possible?

This is death by a thousand cuts, or, really, it's more like death by almost 20 million cuts. Will the minister please listen to my community and prevent the damage he could be doing to our local hospitals?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I hardly see how issuing a press release announcing the integration is doing it quietly, Mr. Speaker, because that's what I did when I announced the 20 new in-patient beds, and when I talked about the importance of sustaining the services that are there.

I think the member opposite needs to speak to the community and the representatives of the community, including the Friends of Ajax/Pickering Hospital, who I met with two weeks ago, who I spoke to again last week as well, and who are very satisfied with the approach that we're taking and in agreement with the safeguards and the measures that took place.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: If she would stop talking and actually listen to my response, Mr. Speaker, she would understand that the community actually is confident that the steps that we're taking are going to preserve and in fact enhance the services at that important local community hospital.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is also to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. This is a question that I know is of intense interest to our new member from Ottawa–Vanier.

Speaker, if I could just take a moment to note: Not only was our new member dean of a prestigious law school, but she also is sporting her Order of Canada. Now, that's the kind of candidate we can attract to this side of the House.

My question concerns health care, Speaker. Providing Ontarians with timely health care is of course extraordinarily important. Just last week in Beaches–East York, I was able to make an announcement for almost a million new dollars to the Toronto East Health Network to assist with local health care.

I know the minister was in the Ottawa region last month to make a very important announcement, Speaker. I would wonder if the minister could update this House on the investments that we're making to improve access to care for patients in eastern Ontario.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member for this very important question, and for giving me the opportunity to talk about a great project that's now under way at Carleton Place and District Memorial Hospital.

In fact, a few weeks ago, I was in Carleton Place with my colleague across the Legislature the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. I want to commend him for his hard work and advocacy on behalf of that hospital. Together, we were able to announce that we're building a brand new emergency department at Carleton Place hospital, a new project that's going to be comprised of a 9,000-square-foot addition to the hospital. It will reduce wait times and improve care for patients and their families in eastern Ontario.

While visiting Carleton Place, I had the privilege of meeting with many patients and the hard-working health care professionals of Carleton Place. I know that these individuals, as well as the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, are excited about this opportunity to grow their hospital and improve health care at that hospital.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you to the minister for these incredible initiatives in eastern Ontario, and indeed for the hard work he is doing to modernize health care in the province of Ontario. It's great to hear of these significant investments the government is making right across our province.

I know our government is making reducing the time we spend in Ontario emergency rooms a priority. I also know that we have seen positive results since our government implemented the Wait Time Strategy. The Wait Time Alliance, the Canadian Institute for Health Information and the Fraser Institute have all found year over year that Ontarians have entirely better access to care in this province. And since 2008, Ontario hospitals have been able to decrease the time spent in emergency rooms by almost 16%.

Speaker, will the minister please inform all the House what other investments we are making at Carleton Place hospital and what it will mean for patients in eastern Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, this is, I think, a great example of legislators working together. Again, I want to give credit to the member from Lanark because he advocated strongly. He brought the mayor to see me and speak about the needs of the hospital as well, and we worked together over a reasonably short period of time, I would say, to actually arrive at the stage where the government is investing almost \$9 million to redevelop that emergency department at Carleton Place and District Memorial Hospital. It's going to have a big impact with enhancing the ability of individuals to get timely care through their emergency, providing a large number of diagnostic, technological and therapeutic tasks. This new emergency department will ensure that even more patients are able to receive emergency health services where they need them and when they need them, and the project will result in expanded services which are better for the local community.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question is for the Minister of Finance this morning.

I would like to quote a former member of the Legislature who said on Thursday that selling a major electricity utility wasn't necessary to build infrastructure in the city of Toronto. Mayor John Tory said, "The city is the sole shareholder of Toronto Hydro, and that is an investment I take seriously." That's more seriously, apparently, than the Premier of Ontario took her obligation to Hydro One customers.

Speaker, now that the mayor of Toronto has admitted that privatization isn't the right way to go, will the minister stop the fire sale of Hydro One shares?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Speaker, the broadening of that ownership—we've now had two tranches. It has been highly successful—anything but a fire sale—because we're receiving a lot more than was ever anticipated, and unlike what they did opposite, giving away the 407 all in one swoop, without an ability for the market to respond, taking the full risk and without the control measures necessary to control the pricing. All of that has been done. It's being done in a gradual way. Greater receipts have been now afforded to the province. We are still the largest shareholder, and will always continue to be.

We're investing dollar for dollar in new infrastructure, in new transit and in the ability to be more competitive long-term. The returns that we're going to be getting will be and are much higher than it was when we held Hydro One in its traditional way.

So we're going to invest and we're going to ensure that more money is made for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Todd Smith: Speaker, unfortunately nobody believes what the member is saying, and this is one of the members who cost us over \$1 billion in the gas plant scandal.

Over 80% of people in central Toronto oppose the sale of Hydro One. That's over 80%. The members on the government side should actually listen to that number. It's massive. The people of Toronto overwhelmingly opposed selling Toronto Hydro. The city council overwhelmingly opposed selling Toronto Hydro.

Hydro rates are the number one issue for all Ontarians, regardless of where they live.

Why is it that the mayor of Toronto is capable of listening to constituents when it comes to keeping hydro in public hands, but this government continues to ignore the will of the people of Ontario?

Speaker, will the minister simply admit that the mayor is right and stop the further fire sale of Hydro One?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We're making \$4 billion in that transaction, all of which is going to the Trillium Trust to ensure it gets reinvested. Mr. Speaker, it's evident that a dollar invested in these infrastructure projects provides \$4 in the long term. That's essentially what is happening here. The additional \$5 billion from that transaction is going to pay down debt.

As we proceed forward, we're going to create more revenue, and at the same time—this must be reaffirmed—we will always retain 40% ownership of Hydro One. We will always have that opportunity for improving those dividends and making certain that the company operates more efficiently, more effectively, and produces greater results for the people of Ontario.

As a further note, there are 72 competitors competing with Hydro One. It's essential for everyone to acknowledge that the more we put this in perspective, the greater the competitiveness—and the nature of Hydro One.

The OEB, which is the one that controls the pricing, did not increase pricing last quarter, Mr. Speaker.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Energy.

There is a newspaper report today showing that food bank use is soaring because families can't afford to pay their hydro bill and their grocery bill.

This past summer, the Minister of Energy refused to call energy poverty a crisis, even though 60,000 Ontario families have had their hydro cut off. We can expect the number of disconnections to soar next spring, when Hydro One will resume cutting off families who can't pay their bills.

The United Way of Bruce Grey has called for a moratorium on hydro disconnections in Ontario. Will the minister agree to this moratorium?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I know there are families out there who are having difficulty, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to electricity. It's important that vulnerable customers have the resources to help avoid the disconnection. That's why we've overseen enhanced consumer protection rules, including requiring a 10-day advance notice of disconnection, with accompanying resources that will go with this notice, to help customers in arrears. We also have that right now; we've given those powers to the OEB.

We do have a bill in front of the House right now, Bill 27, that I do hope they will all support—even unanimously support—that will ensure that there will be no disconnections during the winter months. That is in front of the House right now. I hope all parties will support that because we do recognize that more work needs to be done, and that's what we're continuing to do, Mr. Speaker.

We've actually got programs out there to help—the OESP program, the LEAP program—but there is more to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, the Premier has finally acknowledged that soaring hydro prices are a “mistake.” But the minister refuses to do anything to correct that mistake. He won't halt the sale of Hydro One even though we know that privatization is going to drive prices up even further. He won't direct the Ontario Energy Board to put the interests of consumers ahead of the private investors who will benefit from that privatization. Will he at least agree to a moratorium on hydro disconnections?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: As I said, there is legislation in front of the House right now that I hope they will actually support, Mr. Speaker. We would even take unanimous consent on it—Bill 27—that will actually put a moratorium on disconnects during the winter months. We've got that, plus we've got the 10-day notice. There are many, many things that this government has done to ensure that we actually help families who are struggling. We know there is more to do and we've been doing that.

When it comes to looking at the announcements that we've made just in the last two months, our government has put significant efforts in to ensure that electricity rates are kept affordable.

We will continue to work hard. If it's 50 cents in savings or it's \$50 in savings, we will look at all aspects that we can do to help families, because we understand that the OESP program is there as a program, the LEAP program is there as a program, but there is more to do.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. Minister, infrastructure is relied upon by

millions of Ontarians for everything from transportation to clean, safe drinking water. Our government is building Ontario up for people in every corner of the province by making an historic investment in public infrastructure—a multi-billion dollar job-creating program that the opposition opposes.

I know that positive partnerships between business and government are key to delivering larger projects, including in my riding of Barrie, where the expansion of the Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre resulted in the opening of a new cancer centre with space to serve 2,000 patients annually. I know that the minister oversees Infrastructure Ontario, the agency tasked with managing infrastructure projects all across Ontario, which is doing great work on behalf of the people of the province.

1140

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, could he please elaborate on the effectiveness of Infrastructure Ontario's efforts to build bridges between business and government?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question. She is correct. Our government is making the largest infrastructure investment in Ontario's history, including in each single riding of the opposition. The member knows that the opposition has no credible plan to build the infrastructure Ontarians need. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition was a member of a Conservative government whose anemic investments contributed to the infrastructure deficit we suffer today. We invest double the amount in infrastructure that the opposition leader did for all of Canada.

We want to be sure projects are delivered on time and on budget. The largest projects are delivered through a made-in-Ontario model called alternative financing and procurement. AFP has a track record of success. Some 98% of the first 45 projects were completed on budget, Mr. Speaker, and AFP is a success story that has saved the people of Ontario \$6 billion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thanks to the minister for his response. I'm glad to hear that Infrastructure Ontario is diligently supporting our government's commitment to create jobs and stimulate growth. I know that ridings across this province, including many ridings represented by the members opposite, will benefit from \$160 billion our government is investing in schools, hospitals and rapid transit.

With much more to be built, that investment will continue creating jobs and stimulating growth well into the future. That means our government will continue delivering good jobs for Ontarians in every corner of this province from Windsor to Waterloo to North Bay. Even if the opposition is opposed to the plan and projects, they create jobs.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, could he please elaborate on what the future holds for the alternative financing and procurement model?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Our government is announcing more important infrastructure projects every month. Infrastructure Ontario just released its annual Market Up-

date, outlining upcoming projects that include hospitals, courthouses and rapid transit, much of which will be built using our AFP public-private partnership model. These projects represent \$11.8 billion in investments, in addition to \$32 billion already invested in past projects.

The third party is ideologically opposed to P3s, Mr. Speaker. The third party can disagree but the facts are clear: AFP is a successful procurement model with broad support, not just in this government, but among the NDP's base, including trade unions who work on P3 projects and many union pension plans who invest heavily in P3 programs. Their friends are investing in triple Ps and the AFP model, in hospitals and all kinds of other infrastructure.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Bill Walker: To the Deputy Premier. Hydro hikes have trapped the public institutions into a Catch-22: Either cut services, or they run deficits. Meaford hospital is the most recent one to face the brutal consequences of hydro hikes. Either they shut down the emergency room or run a deficit to cover utility hikes.

Just to be clear, no emergency services means longer travel times for critically ill patients, it means patients have to wait longer and get sicker, and, frankly, it could mean the difference between life and death. This is wrong, and another mistake by the Premier. Sadly, it is why no leader in the history of the province has lost the confidence of the people so quickly and by so much as the Premier.

My question is this: Has the Premier gotten so tired and so out of touch that she won't commit to stopping the sale of Hydro One, another mistake, before it does any more damage to the health of Ontarians?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Deputy Premier is not available. Would you like to refer your question to somebody else?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'll go to finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite makes reference to the integrity of the leader of this party and this government, and the Premier of Ontario, who has taken every step necessary to make decisions in the best interests of the people of Ontario. I take great pride and value in the work that she has been doing, recognizing that we need to take a balanced approach to invest in our economy, invest in the people of Ontario, invest in their skills and training, investing in infrastructure so that we have a more competitive economy, and making certain that our dynamic business climate attracts even more investments from around the world. That's why we have become one of the top destinations for foreign direct investment, and more importantly—

Mr. Paul Miller: Samsung's going to do pretty good.

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: More importantly, Mr. Speaker, she takes every necessary step to create a fair society where no one is left behind, to ensure those most vulnerable are given the supports most necessary. Unlike that party opposite, she supports more minimum wage—

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

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the finance minister. I respectfully remind you, sir, and all of your colleagues that Ontarians don't approve of your government's hydro policies. In fact, they feel they're at war with you over it.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: Again, Mr. Speaker, hospitals are getting walloped by hydro hikes and patients' lives are being put at risk. First the hydro hikes were dictating how many surgeries would be cancelled, and now they're dictating emergency room closures and access. This is wrong, Mr. Speaker, and another mistake.

We want to know, since the finance minister won't stop the fire sale of Hydro One, how is he going to fix the mess that he and his government have created and ensure hospitals can provide the care people expect and deserve?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Indeed, this side of the House made the necessary investments to make our grid more competitive and more secure. We invested billions in more transmission, in new production facilities, and became emissions-free. Ninety-three per cent of emissions in this province are free of carbon. That means we've had no more smog days—zero last year. We'll continue to take those steps.

At the same time, jurisdictions around the province of Ontario are going to now have to make those investments, which we have made. While we're doing these, we're taking the necessary steps to provide programs to alleviate and support those hydro costs and rates, as we do with our programs, as we've just done in our throne speech, to reduce 8% of the provincial portion of the HST that is coming out and by reducing the debt retirement charge, a charge which was a legacy of that government on that side of the House, so that we could make it more affordable for the people of Ontario.

We know there is more to be done. We are taking those steps. Meantime, we've got clean air and we have integrity in our system.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Acting Premier. In Markdale, the closure of Beavercrest Community elementary school would devastate the community and hinder economic growth in the area. Chapman's went so far as to offer to buy the school. Even the mayor of Grey Highlands offered to offset deficit spending.

Hundreds more schools like Beavercrest may be on the chopping block, schools like Queen Victoria, Hugh Beaton and Prince Edward in Windsor. Rather than providing community schools with the resources to stay open, this government is cutting rural grants, eliminating base top-up funding and grossly underfunding renewal needs.

If business, local politicians, students and families can see the value of schools like Beavercrest and those in my community, then why doesn't this government?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member opposite for this question. Mr. Speaker, what was their plan for education? Their plan for education, in fact, was to implement a \$600-million cut—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Wow, \$600 million.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: A \$600-million cut, Speaker. So when it comes to our investments in education, we have increased the budget for education since 2003 by 59%. We have ensured that—

Hon. Jeff Leal: They would have taken a chainsaw into the budget, a chainsaw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: We have ensured that we make considerations for rural schools, \$199 million more for rural schools, taking into consideration the unique factors that exist. We're working with our local communities. We're working with our local school boards to ensure that they meet the education needs of the children of this province.

VISITORS

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I just wanted to welcome my friend Kiki Bamberger to Queen's Park for the first time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the cascade begins. Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, on a point of order. I just looked up in the stands in the gallery and noticed Diane Beaulieu is here from Halton Women's Place. Please welcome her to Queen's Park.

JANET MCKENZIE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I know that we all know Janet in the gift shop. She's retiring. At 1 o'clock today in room 228, there's a reception.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is that your new seat? If you have a point of order, it needs to be made from your seat.

Mr. Paul Miller: Okay.

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

The House recessed from 1150 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

IMPAIRED DRIVERS

Mr. Michael Harris: Just yesterday, MADD Canada's Waterloo region chapter launched their annual Project Red Ribbon campaign to raise awareness about

impaired driving during the holiday season. While I would like to spend my time telling you about motorists' dedication to the elimination of impaired driving here in Ontario, a shockingly sad fatal accident on Highway 7/8 last night reminds us all how far we have to go.

The same day that MADD Waterloo launched Project Red Ribbon, a 29-year-old mother from London was killed and her two-month-old sent to hospital in critical condition following a crash with an impaired driver in my community.

It's heartbreaking and it begs the question as to what more we have to do to get drunk drivers off our roads. The fact is, the threat of serious fines and suspensions are failing to prevent tragic, preventable accidents that are claiming innocent victims, tearing families apart and allowing perpetrators to walk away.

While our thoughts go out to the family and all families who have had to endure the inescapable lifelong impacts of fatal impaired collisions, we ask that more be done to get the message through. Impaired driving is unacceptable in our society and in our province—period—and I look forward to any further direction we can take to drive that message home before any more lives are lost.

Again, I thank MADD Waterloo region and all the chapters for their Project Red Ribbon campaign, and I thank our officers for their holiday RIDE checks. I remain dedicated to further steps to ensure that the heartbreaks tied to impaired driving no longer take their tragic toll on the people here in the province of Ontario.

CRAFT DISTILLERIES

Ms. Catherine Fife: I rise today to speak about Ontario's craft distilleries, a small, new and, until now, growing sector of Ontario's beverage alcohol sector. Two weeks ago, the Minister of Finance delivered his fall economic statement in this House. Two days later the Liberal government tabled Bill 70; the next day I received a briefing on the bill. That whole week, not one person in the government mentioned that this year's fall economic statement will mean the end of Ontario's craft distilleries.

The Ontario Craft Distillers Association noticed the changes in schedule 1 of Bill 70, and they responded. From the OCDA press release dated November 18: "Ontario's ... Dispiriting Distillery Tax Deals Major Blow to Home-Grown Small Batch Spirits...."

"This bill demonstrates that the Liberal government doesn't support the growth of small businesses or a healthy and competitive domestic market."

Since then, distillers across the province have told me that if Bill 70 passes without amendment, they will be closing their doors. There are simple changes that this government could have made which would have allowed these small businesses, these entrepreneurs, to succeed. They asked for a graduated tax rate like the craft beer industry has: a lower rate for smaller producers. They asked for per-litre taxation, again like the beer industry

has, so producers can invest in the quality of their product and are taxed on just what ends up in the bottles. Both of these requests were ignored.

These craft distillers deserve a fighting chance to be successful in the province of Ontario. Will this government listen?

YMCA PEACE MEDAL AWARDS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It was my true honour to be able attend the 2016 YMCA Northumberland Peace Medal breakfast in Cobourg this past Wednesday. The YMCA Peace Medal is presented to an individual or group providing a model for how each of us can contribute to caring, community and peace.

For 28 years, the Northumberland YMCA has awarded medals to individuals and groups, youth and adults, for their efforts to change our community and our world through selfless action. YMCAs across Canada urge our communities to celebrate the local people who work to make a difference in the lives of others and who demonstrate how any one of us can make a meaningful contribution to peace, a better community and a better world.

A special recognition to Happy Mireault, an avid YMCA and community supporter who was honoured posthumously after she lost her battle with cancer in April of this year.

I want to personally thank these incredible individuals and so many other volunteers for giving of their time selflessly to make our community a better place to live, work and play.

Speaker, thank you. It was truly an honour to be there last Wednesday.

REFUGEES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to be here today at the Ontario Legislature to talk about a wonderful initiative that occurred in my riding a week and a half ago in Nepean–Carleton. My daughter goes to Manordale Public School. Manordale Public School, in the last year, has welcomed 70 young Syrian refugees into their community. As a result, obviously, our community has welcomed the moms and the fathers, the aunts and the uncles and the grandparents of those families. But it was the leadership of my friend Carol Miller and of the president of the Manordale-Woodvale Community Association, Myles Egli, who brought together a newcomers' event just eight days ago with the city of Ottawa, with the Nepean, Rideau and Osgoode Community Resource Centre and with the Catholic immigration services of Ottawa, among others.

What I saw there was nothing short of wonderful: a big Canadian flag on a piece of cake that the kids were running to, very proud that they were able to have a piece of that. I also saw a young man, 14 years old. His name is Kalub Kearnan. When he found out that there was a newcomers' event, he asked his father to clean his bike. He wanted to draw the bike for the Syrian refugee chil-

dren in our community so that they would have something that they wouldn't have had if they were in Syria, and still may not have had as they've made their new life in Canada.

Speaker, I was very proud to be part of that with councillors Michael Qaqish and Keith Egli. But I think it's also important for us to recognize, as we welcome these young children into our communities, that we must have sufficient language services at our schools across Ontario. It's something that I addressed at the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board this past Friday and I wanted to reiterate on the floor of the Legislative Assembly here today.

HYDRO RATES

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise today on behalf of my constituents of Windsor West and continue to fight the high costs of hydro that are impacting so many in my community. For months, my constituents have written letters, signed petitions and even sent their hydro bills to the Premier and Minister of Energy in an effort to raise awareness and get relief from their ballooning hydro bills.

Businesses in my community are struggling to keep the lights on. For Kabab N' Curry, a restaurant in Windsor's downtown core, the lights may be off permanently if relief from skyrocketing hydro bills doesn't come soon. Other area businesses have contacted me to tell me that the cost of hydro is their number one barrier to expansion, the number one barrier to bringing more jobs into my community.

Speaker, it's not just businesses that are feeling the impact of ballooning hydro costs. Unfortunately, it's often our most vulnerable citizens who are impacted by this government's mismanagement of our energy system. Today, the Ontario Association of Food Banks released a report showing that the cost of electricity bills is making it more difficult for people who are already struggling to put food on the table. As for the government's plan to provide an 8% rebate on hydro bills, well, to quote the OAFB: "It is still arguably insufficient for many food bank clients who are trying to cover \$300-\$700 in hydro bills each month."

Ontario families need real relief from their hydro prices. Businesses need affordable energy to expand their operations and grow our economy. It's time for this government to admit they've failed Ontario families, admit the sale of Hydro One was ill-conceived and work to provide relief for families across Ontario.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Today I'm going to speak about an anti-bullying campaign that's being hosted in Peel region by our local police and local educators. This is a campaign that they've now been hosting for five years, and it's actually a contest. From now until April, high school students in Peel region will have an opportunity to submit posters and videos to this contest.

The best thing about this contest is that they're anti-cyber-bullying messages created for youth by youth.

This year's theme is, "What If Everyone Did Something?" to stop cyberbullying. Winning entries in the annual contest will have their posters displayed on Mississauga and Brampton transit buses. The videos will be shown at our local Cineplex theatres. One winner is chosen from each school board for the poster category and for the video category for both Peel District School Board and Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board.

Last year, Kelly Tang from St. Marguerite D'youville, which is in my riding of Brampton-Springdale, was the poster winner. I look forward to winners from the Brampton community this year as well.

I encourage all the students in Peel region to participate in this great initiative. Bullying is an important issue, and if we can all work together and create and build awareness around this issue, I know that we can put an end to it. It's so important that our schools are safe and inclusive for everyone.

1310

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Todd Smith: There are days that I think if the government had set out with an agenda to throttle small rural communities, then they are most definitely succeeding. They've forced energy projects over their objections. They've allowed assessments on agricultural lands to get out of control. The broken funding formulas for health care are taking their toll on rural hospitals. They've privatized Hydro One, which distributes power to most of rural Ontario, which is going to leave rural users at the whim of fat-cat, Liberal Bay Street buddies. And now, they're closing our schools.

This government has made it easier than ever to close schools in small, rural communities. Governments in Ontario have always believed that in order to get the complete experience at school, we didn't want kids spending hours upon hours on school buses—every government except this one. They'll tell you it's declining enrolment: "We just can't keep the schools open because there aren't enough kids." But between the 2013-14 and 2014-15 fiscal years, the cost of electricity at the Hastings and Prince Edward school board went from \$1.8 million to \$2.5 million. That's an increase of almost 40% in one year, and it's all because this Liberal government and this Premier made it almost impossible to keep the lights on.

So if you're worried that your school is going to close, like the people in Sophiasburgh in my riding are, don't buy the line that it's about enrolment. It's not worth the paper it's written on. It's because the government made it impossible to keep the lights on. That's why your kids are going to spend up to four hours a day on a school bus.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Salaam aleikom. Thank you very much, Speaker. On behalf of the entire Liberal caucus

and our leader, Premier Kathleen Wynne, and as a proud member of the Muslim faith along with three other colleagues of mine, I was appalled to learn, unfortunately, of the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington’s support of Islamophobic rhetoric.

By retweeting a prejudiced tweet, Mr. Hillier once again highlighted the divisive position that stems from ignorance and fearmongering in a time when we need to uplift one another and encourage acceptance. I would strongly advise and implore and respectfully request my colleagues, as well as Ontarians broadly, to avoid “Trumpism north.”

We as Ontarians pride ourselves on the success of multiculturalism and celebrate our differences. That action that I just referenced was a direct attack on the values we fight so hard to uphold. There is a troubling and dangerous pattern that has emerged, which, of course, is targeting a particular community. We all remember, for example, the distasteful campaign launched by the federal Conservatives regarding “barbaric cultural practices.”

I happened to be in Washington, D.C., in August 2016, where I had the privilege and honour of meeting Khizr and Ghazala Khan, the parents of Captain Humayun Khan, who died in Iraq. Their inclusivity, their celebration of life and their celebration of multiculturalism and diversity are things I think that we could emulate here in the province of Ontario.

OSTEOPOROSIS

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I’m pleased to rise today to discuss Osteoporosis Month, which occurs through November.

Osteoporosis is a medical condition in which the bones become brittle and fragile from reduced density, typically as a result of hormonal changes or a deficiency in calcium or vitamin D. This bone fragility causes risk of broken bones or fractures, particularly in the hip, spine, wrist and shoulder. Osteoporosis can affect both males and females, young and old, exercising healthy lifestyles or not. What is most alarming is the fact that this loss of density can come without any warning signs.

Fractures alone from osteoporosis are more common than heart attacks, strokes and breast cancer combined. One in three women and one in five men will suffer from an osteoporotic fracture in their lifetime.

This year, Osteoporosis Canada is encouraging Canadians to wear purple to help spread the awareness. They also encourage everyone to discuss the importance of nutrition and exercise, to know your risk of fracture and insist on assessment if you have a broken or fractured bone.

There’s no known cause for osteoporosis, but physicians and health care providers try to actively enforce a diet rich in calcium and vitamin D for Canadians to maintain healthy bones.

I’d like to take this opportunity to think Osteoporosis Canada for all the work they do to provide information and support to those living with osteoporosis. I would

also like to thank the countless patients, volunteers and our health care professionals who actively raise awareness around the disease to help prevent and manage osteoporosis within our community.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members’ public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Mr. John Vanthof: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot items numbers 25, 27, 29, 33 and 36 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Vanthof moves that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot items 25, 27, 29, 33 and 36 be waived.

Do we agree? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Reports by committees? Last call for reports by committees.

Introduction of bills? Introduction of bills? Last call for introduction of bills.

Motions?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, sorry. Well, yes, I did call for it three times. The member from Etobicoke Centre.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PATHWAYS TO POST-SECONDARY EXCELLENCE ACT (POST-SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL REPORT), 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LES VOIES DE L’EXCELLENCE AU NIVEAU POSTSECONDAIRE (RAPPORT SUR L’ENSEIGNEMENT POSTSECONDAIRE)

Mr. Baker moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 76, An Act to amend the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario Act, 2005 to require the Council to collect and publish information in respect of certain educational institutions / Projet de loi 76, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2005 sur le Conseil ontarien de la qualité de l’enseignement supérieur pour exiger que le Conseil recueille et publie des renseignements concernant certains établissements d’enseignement.

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. Yvan Baker: This bill amends the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario Act, 2005, to require the government to collect and publish information about certain educational institutions, universities and colleges for the benefit of students, and this information must be collected every school year. The purpose of the information is to allow students to make more informed decisions about their post-secondary choices.

PETITIONS

ENERGY CONTRACTS

Mr. Jeff Yurek: “To Premier Kathleen Wynne and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas on September 27, 2016, Energy Minister Thibeault announced that because Ontario had sufficient supply of electricity to meet demands over the next decade, he was suspending the LRP-2 process; and

“Whereas in April of 2016, the IESO signed additional wind and solar projects under the LRP-1 procurement process; and

“Whereas the addition of these recently approved LRP-1 projects will add unnecessary costs to our already skyrocketing electricity bills; and

“Whereas one of these LRP-1 projects, the Strong Breeze Wind Project, was approved for the community of Dutton Dunwich; and

“Whereas the municipality of Dutton Dunwich had declared itself to be an unwilling host because 84% of its citizens declared in a referendum that they did not want industrial wind turbines;

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

“To give direction to the IESO to cancel LRP-1 contracts, specifically the Strong Breeze Wind Project in Dutton Dunwich.”

I agree with this petition and the 1,800 names that are on it.

KOMOKA PROVINCIAL PARK

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition signed by hundreds of residents of London West, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas Komoka Provincial Park has long served residents and visitors to London, offering free access to beautiful views and numerous recreational hiking trails; and

“Whereas evidence has shown that access to the natural environment helps to reduce stress, improve mental well-being, and lower risks for chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart attacks and cancer; and

“Whereas new parking fees ranging from \$5.75 to \$14.50 for daily use of Komoka Provincial Park have been imposed without consultation and without

additional amenities to justify the new costs, appearing to be simply a cash grab by the Liberal government; and
1320

“Whereas the lack of bike lanes and bus routes connecting Komoka Provincial Park to London, and the prohibition on roadside parking, requires almost all visitors to drive to the park and pay to park their vehicles; and

“Whereas the new fees are likely to decrease park visits with negative consequences for community health and well-being;

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

“That the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry eliminate the parking fees introduced in August 2016 to ensure that Komoka Provincial Park remains accessible to residents of the city of London and all Ontarians.”

I couldn't agree more and I affix my signature and will give it to page Charlie to take to the table.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

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

“Whereas under the current Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines (PARG), one in eight Ontario schools is at risk of closure; and

“Whereas the value of a school to the local economy and community has been removed from the PARG; and

“Whereas the PARG outlines consultation requirements that are insufficient to allow for meaningful community involvement, including the establishment of community hubs; and

“Whereas school closures have a significant negative impact on families and their children, resulting in inequitable access to extracurricular activities and other essential school involvement, and after-school work opportunities;

“Whereas school closures have devastating impacts on the growth and overall viability of communities across Ontario, in particular self-sustaining agricultural communities;

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

“To place a moratorium on all school closures across Ontario and to suspend all pupil accommodation reviews until the PARG has been subject to a substantive review by an all-party committee that will examine the effects of extensive school closures on the health of our communities and children.”

I fully support this, affix my signature and send it with page Sage.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mr. Ernest Lefebvre from Onaping in my riding for this petition. It reads as follows:

“Nurses Know—Petition for Better Care.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas providing high-quality, universal, public health care is crucial for a fair and thriving Ontario; and

“Whereas years of underfunding have resulted in cuts to registered nurses (RNs) and hurt patient care; and

“Whereas, in 2015 alone, Ontario lost more than 1.5 million hours of RN care due to cuts; and

“Whereas procedures are being offloaded into private clinics not subject to hospital legislation;....

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

“Implement a moratorium on RN cuts;

“Commit to restoring hospital base operating funding to at least cover the costs of inflation and population growth;

“Create a fully-funded multi-year health human resources plan to bring Ontario’s ratio of registered nurses to population up to the national average;

“Ensure hospitals have enough resources to continue providing safe, quality and integrated care for clinical procedures and stop plans for moving such procedures into private, unaccountable clinics.”

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

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition with regard to electricity rates. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas over half of Ontarians’ power bills are regulatory and delivery charges and the global adjustment; and

“Whereas the global adjustment is a tangible measure of how much Ontario must overpay for unneeded wind and solar power, and the cost of offloading excess power to our neighbours at a loss; and

“Whereas the market rate for electricity, according to IESO data, has been less than three cents per kilowatt hour to date in 2016, yet the government’s lack of responsible science-based planning has not allowed these reductions to be passed on to Ontarians, resulting in electrical bills several times more than that amount; and

“Whereas the implementation of cap-and-trade will drive the cost of electricity even higher and deny Ontarians the option to choose affordable natural gas heating; and

“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; and

“Whereas the ill-conceived energy policies of this government that ignored the advice of independent experts and government agencies, such as the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) and the independent electrical system operator (IESO), and are not based on science have resulted in Ontarians’ electricity costs rising, despite lower natural gas costs and increased energy conservation in the province;

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

“To take immediate steps to reduce the total cost of electricity paid for by Ontarians, including costs associated with power consumed, the global adjustment, delivery charges, administrative charges, tax and any other charges added to Ontarians’ energy bills.”

I support this petition, have signed it and give it to page Kaitlyn.

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I have a petition for a universal, high-quality child care system in Ontario. I’d like to thank Kim Gilbert from Windsor for signing the petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition, will sign it and send it to the table with page Charlie.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Family Responsibility Office (FRO) is outdated, ineffective and the provincial government needs to conduct a review of the entire system;

“Whereas many families are either paying too much in child support or receiving too little, due to the ineffectiveness of the system;

“Whereas families are forced to become their own caseworkers to investigate information that is required by the Family Responsibility Office before they can enforce action;

“Whereas many of the federal and provincial databases do not link up, causing misinformation which affects the money paid or owed in child support for many families;

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

“We call on the provincial government to strike an all-party supported select committee to conduct a review of the practices of the Family Responsibility Office to improve and streamline the collection of child support in the province of Ontario.”

I agree with this petition and affix my name to it.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition with signatures from across the province. It reads as follows:

“Whereas half of all Canadian women have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, and approximately every six days a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner; and

“Whereas a 2014 national survey showed that Canadian workers who experience domestic violence often disclose the violence to a co-worker, and that the violence frequently follows the worker to work; and

“Whereas the experience of domestic violence and sexual violence can cause significant physical, mental, emotional and financial hardship for survivors, their families, and society as a whole; and

“Whereas Canadian employers lose \$78 million annually due to domestic violence, and \$18 million due to sexual violence, because of direct and indirect impacts that include distraction, decreased productivity, and absenteeism; and

“Whereas workers who experience domestic violence or sexual violence should not have to jeopardize their employment in order to seek medical attention, access counselling, relocate, or deal with police, lawyers or the courts; and

“Whereas the final report of the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment recommended that the Ontario government make education about domestic or intimate partner violence in the workplace mandatory for managers, supervisors, and workers;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 26 to provide employees who have experienced domestic violence or sexual violence (or whose children have experienced domestic violence or sexual violence) with up to 10 days of paid leave, reasonable unpaid leave, and options for

flexible work arrangements, and to require employers to provide mandatory workplace training about domestic violence and sexual violence.”

I fully support this petition and will give it to page Kaitlyn to take to the table after I affix my name.

HYDRO RATES

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

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

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

1330

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

“Whereas the recent implementation of the Ontario Electricity Support Program will see average household hydro bills increase an additional \$137 per year starting in 2016; and

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

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

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

“To immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario’s power consumers, including families, farmers and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity.”

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

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’aimerais remercier M^{me} Chantalle Thériault de Hanmer, dans Nickel Belt, pour avoir signé la pétition.

« Temps pour les soins :

« Attendu que des soins de qualité pour les 77 000 résidents des maisons de SLD est une priorité pour les familles de l’Ontario; et

« Attendu que le gouvernement provincial ne fournit pas un financement adéquat pour assurer un niveau de soins et de personnel dans les foyers de SLD afin de répondre à l’augmentation de l’acuité des résidents et du nombre croissant de résidents et résidentes ayant des comportements complexes; et

« Attendu que plusieurs enquêtes du coroner de l’Ontario sur les décès dans les maisons de SLD ont

recommandé une augmentation des soins pour les résidents et des niveaux de personnel. Les études » démontrent un minimum de soins recommandés de 4,5 heures de soins par jour;

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de :

« Modifier la Loi sur les foyers de SLD (2007) pour un minimum de quatre heures par résident par jour, ajusté pour le niveau d'acuité et la répartition des cas. »

J'appuie cette pétition et je vais demander à Sage de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Grant Crack: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas payday loans are the most expensive source of credit in Canada and can create the risk of an additional financial burden for the 3% of Ontario households that borrow payday loans; and

“Whereas in Ontario a two-week payday loan carries an annualized interest rate of approximately 547.5%; and

“Whereas these loans are typically marketed to financially vulnerable consumers;

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

“Mandate the Ontario government incrementally reduce the cost of borrowing a payday loan, first to \$18 per \$100 advanced in 2017 and then to \$15 per \$100 advanced in 2018.”

I agree with this petition. I affix my signature and give it to page Will.

NATURAL GAS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: “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 heating 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 gov-

ernment’s apparent intention to phase out, discourage and ban the use of natural gas to heat homes and buildings.”

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING ONTARIO UP FOR EVERYONE ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2016

LOI DE 2016 VISANT À FAVORISER L'ESSOR DE L'ONTARIO POUR TOUS (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 24, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 70, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 70, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

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

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I’m glad to participate in this debate and I’m glad you didn’t call the question, Mr. Speaker, because there are so many of us willing to speak. It’s unheard of that the government has already stopped debating—threw us for a loop there.

Considering Bill 70 is such an important act—it came out of the fall economic statement. Fall economic statements aren’t usually as large as this bill that they’ve brought forward. It’s quite an omnibus bill that is really sneaking through the Legislature. I think more people should be made aware of what is actually going on in this legislation before it comes to bear fruit.

Basically, Bill 70 is An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes. This act, the Building Ontario Up for Everyone Act, amends 27 statutes, enacts four new statutes and repeals three others. It’s unfortunate that the government has had to come with such a large omnibus bill at this point, because over the last 13 years we’ve totally seen how this government has made life harder and more unaffordable for all Ontarians.

This budget, unfortunately, is not going to do very much—or very little—to help the unaffordability of people living in this province. This bill is more of a distraction to look like this government is doing something when, at the same time, they are making life harder and harder.

Ontario will remain in a dire fiscal state, and people are going to find it harder and harder to make ends meet at the end of each month when their bills come due. Unfortunately, the government, under Premier Kathleen Wynne, has no plan to get their books back on track that doesn’t involve higher taxes, selling off our hydro,

increasing hydro rates or cutting front-line health care services.

The fact that there was barely a mention of hydro rates in this government's fall economic statement speaks volumes to the deaf ear that this government has given the people of Ontario, who have spoken out day in and day out with regard to the lack of policy and the high rates they are charged on their energy bills.

This bill, after amending 27 statutes, enacting four statutes and repealing three others, shouldn't be needed if the government was in such a great financial state. But after debate so far, which the government is not speaking to, our heads are shaking. What are Ontarians to think of this province, which is way off track?

As I mentioned earlier, the economic statement made little mention of energy rates. Energy rates across this province are skyrocketing, and this government has done very little to deal with the outrageous hydro bills. Reports show that the wind turbines and solar panels that this government put so much emphasis on do not create or generate enough energy to sustain this province, and cause us to utilize more natural gas to make sure the baseline power is continued.

Mr. Speaker, we are already shipping the extra energy that the wind and solar are creating and we're paying high exorbitant prices on down to the United States. We've become the economic driver of Michigan and Pennsylvania, and that's unfortunate.

At the same time, this government continues to award contracts and wind energy to municipalities who are unwilling hosts. Today, I just delivered a petition of 1,800 signatures—which is probably close to 30% or 40% of the population in that area of the province—to this government, stating that the wind turbine contract that they awarded last March is not wanted.

The municipality themselves had reached out to the Minister of Energy last year, leading up to the awarding of the contract, and earlier this year, to tell them they were an unwilling host and did not want this project. It's unfortunate, though, that the government refused to listen to the people of Dutton Dunwich, 84% of whom voted no in a referendum on this wind turbine.

1340

Last week, the Premier apologized for her and her government's actions on the energy file. It's one thing to say you're sorry; it's another thing to follow through and show that you truly are sorry. The best way to do this would be to say to the people of Dutton Dunwich, "We are sorry. We have shot energy rates through the roof. We are sorry we didn't listen to what the municipality wanted. We are sorry the people of Dutton Dunwich have to accept these wind turbines. We are going to cancel the project." That's what this government should be doing. There's still time to do so. There are "out" clauses in the contract that was signed in March that would get this government out of those contracts. Otherwise, from our calculations, over the lifespan of this contract it will cost the ratepayers \$250 million. That's more money that we cannot really justify expending on energy that we don't need.

Small businesses in my riding, due to these energy rates, have seen their hydro go from \$1,300 a month to \$3,000 a month; and \$2,000 of that bill is the global adjustment and delivery fees alone. People go, "What's the global adjustment?" Well, the global adjustment is basically the difference it costs to make the energy rates and the amount that we're paying the green energy companies for those wind and solar projects. In the original solar contracts we paid 80 cents a kilowatt hour. So if it's taking six or seven cents to make the energy, somewhere that amount has to be made up, and they make it up in the global adjustment, which we're all paying. It's either a line item—if we utilize enough energy, there is actually a global adjustment charge on our bill. If we're not using a ton of energy, like the majority of us, it's into our rates.

We were up in Kenora this past summer. There are two dams in Kenora that produce energy for pennies—one or two cents a kilowatt hour—that have shut down because of the contracts of the wind and solar this government has signed for 40 cents, 50 cents, 80 cents a kilowatt hour. But we've shut down the most renewable source of energy—water, which we built our province on. We've shut them down because we've created so many contracts of this high energy. This government has a deaf ear and a blind eye to what's going on in the province.

There are just numerous, numerous articles in the newspapers, and numerous polls. Energy is the number one topic people are talking about, and I don't think there's anybody who is quite happy with the role this government has taken on. So it's time that this government steps up. If they're going to write an omnibus bill, why didn't they at least do something for energy in this bill? Why won't they step forward and do something for the people of Dutton Dunwich in my riding and say, "We're listening; we're going to shut down that wind contract that we signed"? Unfortunately, they've stopped doing so.

Mr. Speaker, in regard to health care, health care is really not mentioned in this omnibus bill. Right now in committee we have Bill 41, which will be going through the amendment process on Wednesday. It was quite interesting that, through all the deputations on Bill 41, we didn't hear from one doctor or patient group who was consulted on this legislation. So, as I mentioned earlier about energy rates and the fact they're not listening to people with regard to energy, they're not listening to people with regard to health care. You just have to go back and look at how this government has mismanaged the health care sector: We've now started to ration health care throughout the province.

You see in your riding, Speaker, and probably in many of the ridings here, that when it comes to knee and hip surgeries, when the year starts, on April 1, by October they're out of money. So if you need a hip or knee replaced, you've got to wait for the next fiscal year, which is why the wait-list continues to grow and grow and grow. In fact, we'll see the Fraser report that they released last week showing that wait times are increasing.

The government over there will say, “We’re the best of all the provinces because the Fraser report has said so,” but if you look at the Commonwealth Fund, which the majority of people do when you compare countries, Canada is 12th on wait times. The States are ahead of us, Denmark, UK, Sweden—the countries that we look up to in the health care system. We’re last. If the government is happy with being the best of the worst, that’s up to them to do so, but it doesn’t benefit the patients in Ontario. We can do so much better. Unfortunately, the government is doing nothing with this bill. Bill 41 is also another bill that is out of touch.

Mr. Speaker, this government, over time, has had many experiments in the health care sector that have failed and cost Ontarians more money. Look at Ornge; the diabetes registry this government tried to create—20-some-odd-million dollars—they just cancelled it; the personal support worker, about \$10 million gone; eHealth, we’re talking billions of dollars. We’re waiting on the Auditor General report that’s coming out; it’s going to shed some light on eHealth—however, billions of dollars of what we have to offer.

The CCACs and the LHINs: This government has truly mismanaged both of those. We saw that in the Auditor General’s report last year, stating that 39% of all the money going to the CCAC stays within the bureaucracy. We’ve seen the LHINs—with regard to the management of the LHINs, they’re unable to fully integrate health care. The Auditor General pointed out that they actually failed and didn’t come close to achieving their goals. Now the government is going to give them more power. Unfortunately, Bill 70 doesn’t really touch on health care.

Another item that people have been talking about or debating is, in Ontario—it affects a lot of people in this Legislature—600 schools are set to close under this government, mainly in rural Ontario. In my riding, we have a number of schools that will be closing, which is unfortunate.

I bring up Springfield in our riding. Springfield is a small, tight-knit community, way off into the east part of our county. That school is so integral to that part—I go to their Remembrance Day ceremony every year. It’s at 9:30, and the whole school comes down to the cenotaph. We have a great ceremony. Speaking with the municipal councillors there—who, by the way, weren’t consulted at all in this regard because the government has removed municipalities from having any sort of input into the closure of their own schools. The municipality is quite favourable to working with the school board to keep this school open, and what they can do to rent it out at night, perhaps, or utilize it in order to keep it open. So we have the councillors ready to go. There’s the Springfield parents association, which has been created to help fight this situation. I respect those parents who are stepping forward, because they truly believe and the community truly believes that the school should remain open. But, under this government’s mismanagement, that school is set to close.

New Sarum, in my riding, is set to close as well. New Sarum is almost full. It’s not like it’s a school that’s dwindling down to low numbers. It’s unfortunate that they will close that. There’s a nice little community around there. The kids walk to school; they will now be bused, and who knows how long it will take them to go to wherever they may be?

They are looking at creating another school in the Belmont area. We need that school built because they’re going to close two other rural schools. Those kids in Westminster and South Dorchester will have the choice. If they don’t build the school in Belmont, those kids will be sent into London to school. Last year, the school board tried to send those kids—because there are no supports for rural schools anymore—to London for school. It was two years ago that the school board tried to send every child taking French immersion who lived west of St. Thomas to Strathroy to school, which is in a whole different county—45 minutes, at the closest range. We fought that.

So it’s not that this is a new problem going on in our school system where, in rural Ontario, the funding model doesn’t fit what is going on with the urban schools. We’ve asked the government to perhaps take a look at the funding formula to make a change. Bill 70 could have been a great place, with the release of the fall economic statement, to put this in there to help alleviate the pain, but instead, they didn’t.

My hope, going forward, is that the government allows school boards to work with municipalities and listen to the parents to see how we can keep these schools open, because when you shut down some of these schools in these smaller communities, that’s the end of the community. Schools are community-builders; they can also be community-destroyers, when you shut them down.

We’ve seen this bill come out, and there has been a lot of discussion ongoing. I went to the briefing the minister put on there, and it was quite interesting, the binder of information they’ve got. There’s so much change going on in this legislation that the binder is so huge, with the information.

The big topic that this government sold this to the public under was the land transfer act, doubling the tax credit on the land transfer for the refund up to \$4,000 for first-time homebuyers. That’s great that they’re doing that because it needs to be done; however, there are so many expenses in people’s lives that probably would have been a better break for them—and more than just people buying new homes. We’re talking about the senior couple living at home.

1350

Again, this government doesn’t understand. If you live in rural Ontario, the transportation networks aren’t there for these seniors. So these seniors are looking for places to get around. If they’re able to afford their high-priced driving permit, their vehicle licence sticker, which has shot up drastically under this government, and able to afford their energy prices, perhaps they would be able to

buy some food, which is also heading up. So taking some of this land transfer tax and giving an extra \$2,000 on the refund is great; however, the government is missing the boat on actually helping all Ontarians with regard to this legislation.

We look forward to further deliberation, and hopefully in the committee we'll talk more about the changes they're making to the College of Trades. As you know, Mr. Speaker, this government came out with the College of Trades during the last—well, implemented it after the 2011 election, and the tradespeople—the electricians and the plumbers and the carpenters—were taken aback by the fee increases, the fees that shot through the roof, and the fact of making some trades compulsory. The college backed off but they almost shut down the housing industry trying to make carpenters compulsory trades.

We're also looking at numerous other initiatives the government has brought forward in this legislation, but to return to the initial points, people in this province are talking about energy, people in this province are talking about health care, and people in this province are talking about how unaffordable life is under these 13 years of the Kathleen Wynne Liberal government. This bill does nothing to improve their stake in Ontario.

As an aside, we met on the weekend with a couple who were having trouble with long-term care. Again, this bill could have put in some provisions to actually build new long-term-care beds. This government has built zero new long-term-care beds. They have redone some beds, which is good, but the population is aging and the need for long-term care is expanding, and this government has done nothing in order to create situations to build more new long-term-care beds. They've wasted money. We saw earlier today in question period where they spent over a billion dollars to save the Minister of Finance's seat back in the 2011 election. We've seen, as I said earlier, Ornge, eHealth. The amount of money—\$300 billion in debt; a billion dollars a month is spent just to service the interest. It doesn't get anything out of it; it just satisfies our debt. A billion dollars a month is \$12 billion a year.

Of the problems I've listed in this speech, that \$12 billion a year that this government is flushing down the toilet could very well have fixed these problems. We could take care of our rural schools. We could improve health care. We could help that senior couple living at home manage their expenses so that we didn't have to skyrocket our fees and services.

I didn't scratch the surface of the special purpose account. Again, there are no details on how that special purpose account is spent. Maybe an audit would have been undertaken; maybe they could have added in there that there would be a yearly audit by the Auditor General with regard to where our hunting and fishing licence money goes, because we know that 100% of that money is supposed to go back into fishing and hunting. We've already seen from one little report we were able to find after five years that they spent over \$50,000 on psychologists.

I don't know, Mr. Speaker; it's quite troubling. Our province is in trouble. The government will tell you they're building it up but when we really look at it, this government is closing schools and closing hospitals. People are finding it harder and harder with work. We saw today that a greenhouse operator in Leamington is leaving the province because of energy rates. Things have to change. Bill 70 doesn't address those things that need to change, and I hope the government will make some amendments to this bill.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents of Windsor West for a very brief comment at this point on Bill 70, the Building Ontario Up for Everyone Act (Budget Measures).

My first question is, why are we putting workers' health and safety, and talking about the College of Trades and skilled trades, in a finance bill? What's alarming is that they've rolled it into this omnibus bill—they're creating a provision where there is no longer any critical oversight of health and safety in workplaces. What the government wants to do, under Bill 70—again, a finance bill—is make it so that an employer can become accredited and is no longer subject to inspection and scrutiny when it comes to workplace safety.

What we've seen time and time again, far too many times—one time is one time too many—are people who are not only getting seriously injured on the job but people who are dying. What this Liberal government wants to do under this bill is take away the oversight and give responsibility to an employer to do inspections to make sure their workplace is safe. Frankly, Speaker, I don't think that any worker in the province or the families of the people who have been killed on the job or who have been injured on the job would want to see any less oversight into health and safety.

We tabled an amendment that would remove schedules 16 and 17 from the bill, and the government said no. They want to ram through health and safety and remove that oversight in an omnibus bill that has nothing—nothing—to do, when you're looking at a finance bill or budget measures, with health and safety.

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

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to respond to the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London. When he was speaking, he mentioned that Bill 70 is the bill that's related to the fall economic statement. Of course, part of the good news of the fall economic statement is that the Ontario government has beaten its deficit targets for the seventh year in a row. I think that's really good news that Ontarians should know.

I wanted to comment on a couple of things that are in Bill 70 that I think will be of interest to my constituents. One of them is some changes in the rules that apply to credit unions and caisses populaires. As you would know, Speaker, Guelph and environs are the heart of the co-operative movement, be it financial co-operatives or

ag co-operatives or virtually any kind of co-operative in Ontario. The financial co-operatives, the credit unions, are always of interest in our neck of the woods.

Minister Albanese, when she was formerly the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, did some work on this, consulting with the industry. She made a number of recommendations in her report on how we can align our legislation around caisses populaires and credit unions with best practice. Some of those changes that will change the deposit insurance limits to \$250,000, permit credit unions to wholly own insurance brokerage subsidiaries, and remove differentiated rules for small credit unions are captured in Bill 70, and I think that's very good news for the credit unions and for the consumers who use them.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London gave quite a good speech on what he thought of Bill 70. Certainly, talking about the waste and mismanagement that this government has had over the years was a good part of his speech—how we're selling hydro to the United States for less than it costs us to produce it, and things like that.

One of the things that I would like to bring out was on the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Legislation Repeal Act, which is part of this bill. It says that the proposed act would dissolve the ORPP administrative corporation and transfer the dissolved corporation's assets and liabilities to the crown in right of Ontario. It would also repeal provisions in all other Ontario legislation that relate to the corporation.

When we talk about waste and mismanagement, this is a typical example of exactly how this government operates. They only spent \$70 million on this thing, and that's \$70 million that they spent on a corporation that nobody wanted in Ontario, especially people in my riding. They couldn't believe that they were going to get something else out of their paycheques, which they didn't want—and yet the government still spent \$70 million. That would have went a long way to keeping people's hydro bills lower, and certainly it would have helped a lot of people pay their hydro bills. Instead, this government spent all this money trying to promote the ORPP and then all of a sudden pulled the plug on it.

1400

When the member speaks of waste and mismanagement, this is just one of the most perfect examples of how this government does things, where they spend money and spend money and never look at the consequences of their spending.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in the House. I always appreciate listening to the remarks of the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London because they're always well thought out. I agreed with many of them.

Our biggest issue with this bill, and one issue that I don't think he mentioned—everyone thinks it's a budget bill. Bill 70, the Building Ontario Up for Everyone Act—it should have “everyone except workers,” because there are a few very egregious parts of this bill that deal with workers' health and safety. We brought this issue up when this bill was first introduced, and we put forward a reasoned amendment that said that we would be happy to consider this bill if the issues regarding workers and health and safety were put forward in separate bills. We brought that up at the same time this bill was introduced. That slowed the process down for a day or so, which was a good thing because it allowed us to put a bit more focus on this issue.

There are some good things in this budget bill. There are some bad things, too. The part about credit unions? We agree. Why does this government continually take some good things and continually stick it to the people by putting a poison pill in each one of these bills—in this case, affecting workers' health and safety in something that's a budget bill, where they are fairly confident that people are not going to notice and are going to look the other way? Well, on this one, we're not going to look the other way. We're proud to defend workers' health and safety. That's why we're bringing forward, in this bill—that part should not be in this bill. That's why we've put forward the reasoned amendment, and that's why we are considering voting against this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London can now reply.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thanks to the member from Windsor West, the President of the Treasury Board, the member from Perth–Wellington, and Ernie's nephew from Timiskaming–Cochrane for their words.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane hit it on the head: Every one of these bills that this government has come up with over the last 13 years—I've only been here for five of them—every little piece of legislation always has the poison pill in there to cause the opposition to vote against it so that they can hold it in their face when it comes to their promotions with the media and/or question period. If this government truly wanted to work with opposition members, they'd cease with these little tidbits they throw inside the bills to throw the opposition off.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 70 will not help families. It will not help families make life more affordable. It will not help with energy rates. It will not help stop the rationing of health care in our system. Bill 70 does little of any of that—except pass through new taxes, new fees to the people of this province; new regulation, new red tape for the businesses.

We've lost too many businesses in this riding. More people are in need of food banks than ever before.

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: It truly is.

They're having to choose between paying for heating or eating. We shouldn't have our province come to that

level, but after 13 years under Kathleen Wynne and her government, our province is no better off than it was before.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: As always, it's a pleasure to rise in this fine Legislature to add my comments.

I'm glad to have the opportunity to speak on Bill 70, the budget measures act. This budget measures act is a classic and frustrating example of an omnibus bill. It has everything in it, including, I suspect, the kitchen sink. At first glance we don't see it, but I get that sinking feeling when I see this massive piece of legislation, so I'm sure it's tucked into one of the corners of one of the 26 schedules. However, I'm going to focus primarily on just a few of those schedules rather than touching on all 26.

All sorts of people in industries are affected by this bill, but they've hardly had the time to react. This omnibus truck is being driven through the Legislature at lightning speed. Our research folks, our stakeholders and friends, neighbours and businesses across the province are still trying to wade through the details of this bill, and yet here we are already in this second week of debate. And you know that this government is just going to ram it through debate, will try to get it through committee and get it passed before we rise on December 8.

Schedule 6 amends the Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act, which creates a separate corrections bargaining unit, which essentially makes corrections essential, subject to binding arbitration. This schedule reflects the commitment made by the government to OPSEU to create a corrections-only unit.

Speaker, you may remember that around this time last year we were counting down to a potential strike or lockout that ultimately was averted—not averted, you will recall, without the government throwing millions and millions and millions—I'm losing track; I think at last count it was over \$44 million—into pre-strike preparations. Imagine how much better off this system would be if that kind of money was spent on making things safer or better resourced, but I digress.

It is interesting, though, that this piece of legislation is tucked quietly into a giant omnibus bill. I would have anticipated it would have been a stand-alone piece up for discussion, although really this does make sense because I would imagine this government doesn't really want to have a fulsome debate on the state of corrections in the province of Ontario. Those conversations tend to make this government look really, really negligent and incompetent, but don't worry, Speaker; I promise we will have other opportunities to discuss the crisis in corrections in this Legislature.

Back to the bill: Let's focus on pension issues for a moment. Schedule 18 is the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Legislation Repeal Act, 2016. It proposes that the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan be dissolved. You know, Speaker, we've had a lot of time in this Legislature this session to talk about pensions. Something that I hope was accomplished by the Ontario Retirement

Pension Plan that didn't happen was the discussion and debate around retirement security. I hope it helped people to better understand the need to have that financial security in retirement.

I was very proud as a New Democrat to be part of those conversations about what retirement security should look like and what retirement security that people deserve should look like. I was very glad as the critic to talk about the importance of strong defined benefit plans. I was glad to push this government on those issues to try and make a substantial difference. Ontario deserves strong pensions, and I will continue as critic to strengthen and defend pensions and retirement security in this province.

So, here we are at the end of the ORPP journey. An interesting and ironic tidbit is that the same day that this act came out was also the same day that the CBC reported that even after the ORPP was cancelled, this government spent \$793,000 on more commercials. Speaker, \$793,000 would go a long way for those who are dealing with our seniors and those in retirement with unpredictable incomes.

This government and its priorities make me feel sick to my stomach sometimes, and that's just one more example, but let's dive into the next stretch, which I find really, really unsettling.

This is schedule 16. This schedule amends the Occupational Health and Safety Act to allow the Chief Prevention Officer to accredit a health and safety management system according to standards set out by the Chief Prevention Officer. It will create a system of health and safety accreditation for employers that would remove these employers from being subject to mandatory health and safety inspections. It allows the Chief Prevention Officer to establish standards that a health and safety management system must meet in order to become an accredited health and safety management system.

Speaker, you might have questions about what an accredited health and safety management system would look like. You might be curious about the standards that health and safety management systems must meet in order to become accredited, but I can't tell you because those details are left to regulations.

Labour and injured workers' advocates have shared with us an email they received from ministry staff coming from the ministry. I'll share it with you:

1410

"Businesses who set up a superior example when it comes to health and safety standards and compliance should be rewarded for their efforts, while others should be incentivized to follow their example. This program would recognize employers who implement superior occupational health and safety management systems, highlighting the great work that they are doing to protect Ontario workers and reduce the burden of unnecessary processes such as routine inspections. We would still investigate complaints and incidents."

Just to highlight a little bit of that again, "This program would recognize employers ... who reduce the

burden of unnecessary processes such as routine inspections.” How on earth are we having a conversation about routine inspections being a burden? Where are we? When is a routine inspection an unnecessary process? What are other unnecessary processes, and why on earth does anyone who works at the ministry think that inspections are a burden or are unnecessary?

We’ve all heard that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Not today. Not in this bill. The Chief Prevention Officer will be setting standards to circumvent prevention—just let that hang there for a second—basing the system on an after-the-fact, post-event response. Higher fines, they’ll promise. But what on earth are we talking about?

Any changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act should be about making workplaces safer. This will not. This will endanger workers, full stop. This should be about prevention. This should be about training. This should be about education. This should be about seeing the benefits of health and safety initiatives. They should be investing in ensuring that more people go to work and go home safely at the end of the day.

The Ontario Federation of Labour has said, “These proposed amendment go far beyond just giving the government the power to create an accreditation process. Section 7.7 gives the Chief Prevention Officer the power to outsource.” Giving the Chief Prevention Officer the power to outsource could lead to the outsourcing of virtually the whole accreditation recognition process. He can outsource training program approval; he can outsource deciding who is an approved training provider; he can outsource the certification of the joint health and safety committee members; and he can outsource the collection of information about workers who have been trained.

This opens the door for privatization of workplace health and safety. We know how much this government loves to privatize. They love to privatize without permission, pretend it’s a good idea when it’s pointed out that it’s a mess, and then they apologize. We cannot have health and safety be privatized, mucked up and then apologized for. People will get hurt and then, I’m sorry; no government is going to fix it.

We want safer workplaces. Expanding power to the Chief Prevention Officer is not going to make workplaces safer. We need field visits and proactive inspections. I can personally comment on surprise inspections. I’ve been through 17 jails—through the front door—across the province. I’ll tell you, I just pop in—as MPPs, we can do that. I appreciate the surprise nature that when I just show up, the employer—in this case, the ministry—doesn’t know that I’m coming. So they don’t have time to paint, they don’t have time to clean, move people or transfer them to different institutions. There’s a real value in seeing the truth, not phoning ahead to avoid it.

Here’s a point of contrast: When the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services arranges to tour a jail, they roll out the red carpet—figuratively, of course. The ministry makes sure that all will meet with

the minister’s approval. I hear that they even painted at OCDC—shiny new paint—and then the tour was so short, incidentally, that he didn’t even get a chance to see it.

I said it before and I’ll say it again: I challenge him and I challenge the rest of us in this House to check out the correctional facilities in our ridings and put authentic eyes in there. But I don’t think the minister will because, if he sees it, he’ll have to deal with it. This brings us right back to schedule 16 and health and safety.

I’d like to take a moment and welcome my friend Len Elliott, executive board member and regional vice-president of OPSEU, who is joining us for the debate. Len shared with me some of his insight. He says that Ministry of Labour inspectors have written thousands of orders to contraventions—thousands of health and safety contraventions to which orders are written by health and safety inspectors on proactive field visits. Thousands of violations, thousands of contraventions and thousands of orders—and those visits and those orders might actually be an inconvenience to employers. I say, “Good.” I say that that is being proactive. That is prioritizing health and safety. I say, “Well done, and keep up the great work.” But not Minister Flynn and the Ministry of Labour: They’ve decided to say, “Oh, that’s a burden on employers and needs to stop.”

Proactive visits lessen the number of critical injuries and fatalities in this province and do reduce health and safety concerns. They’re not unnecessary. They aren’t a burden. They are absolutely necessary and should be happening more often. Any yappy backroom buddies who are running these businesses, who are whining about inconvenience and looking for exemptions, you know what? They should have more visits to determine why they want the inspectors out. It’s so shady.

The Minister of Labour and his team are pushing for accreditation, and using the term “burden” is shameful language to be using. So let’s paint a picture. The Chief Prevention Officer sets out what standards need to be met in an accredited workplace. They’ll determine how many binders and how many policies need to exist, which papers need to be posted, how many full-time health and safety people need to be on the books.

The workplaces, by the way, that already have those things today would likely meet these accreditation standards in a heartbeat. But here’s the real truth: Many of the employers that today might meet these standards could still have 200 orders written. They’ve got the binders, the policies and health and safety people. They would likely be accredited, but they still have killed and injured workers.

There it is. Accreditation is a deal made with big, heavy Ontario employers by this government. It’s shameful, it’s worrisome, and the Ministry of Labour position is that we just don’t understand. You know, if something happens, they want higher fines. Don’t worry. If someone loses an eye, at least they’ll try to get a higher fine. Speaker, that’s not acceptable. What happens after injury or fatality absolutely matters, but it should not

challenge actual prevention and proactive safety measures.

When did Minister Flynn agree to exempt employers from a program that would keep workers safe? I understand the importance of stakeholder input, but the Ministry of Labour seems to be listening only to high-level, influential companies, and guess what? The employees and workers are stakeholders too. The balance of power is and always will be with the employer. That's why we have the external system—the Ministry of Labour—to come in and check on compliance and check on enforcement of the act. No worker in Ontario has the ability to get things fixed. The employer has that power.

So workers go to the Ministry of Labour. But you know what? Sometimes, they don't. They don't call. They're afraid to call. They have a very real fear of reprisals. These workers are getting hurt. We just had workers in Windsor lose their lives in the workplace, and here we are, standing and talking about the burden of inspections on inconvenienced employers.

Ministry of Labour inspectors have the ability to proactively go in to inspect and come out writing orders. This government cannot take this proactive piece out. How dare the Minister of Labour consider any type of legislation that would roll back the times on the Occupational Health and Safety Act? Ironically—and I think this is interesting—when the original Occupational Health and Safety Act was passed, I understand it was also a Bill 70 that created it. Here we have another Bill 70, but instead, we're talking about removing safeguards, removing levels of prevention and safety precautions.

Proactive field visits are not a burden. Inspections are not a burden. There are workplaces that have critically injured and killed workers, but they would likely qualify for accreditation. To suggest that increased fines for egregious violations is somehow going to encourage employers to keep workplaces safe is absurd. We can't hit the emergency—we can, but it's tantamount to hitting the emergency stop after someone has lost their arm, and that's too little, too late.

In 2009, the Dean panel was created to look at the Occupational Health and Safety Act, and something that came out of that report was the creation of the Chief Prevention Officer. Something else is the provincial council. This provincial council, by the way, is not some whimsical thing that labour is imagining; it was Dean's recommendation. The government agreed, and this provincial council exists. It's supposed to have the participation of both employer and labour stakeholders. Here we have a hugely consequential amendment, and the provincial council was circumvented. That shouldn't be allowed to happen.

A worker a day dies in Ontario, whether from an accident or workplace illness or injury. More than two workers a day die in Canada. If this government wants to talk about burden, let's talk about the burden of responsibility to keep workers safe. Let's talk about the burden of loss carried by the family in the wake of tragedy. Let's talk about the financial burden weighing

on a worker who is forced into the WSIB nightmare maze after a workplace injury. Let's talk about burden. And shame on anyone for being loose and irresponsible with language. A safety inspection is not a burden. Anyone on that team who wants to challenge training, prevention, inspections and safety I think is in the wrong ministry. This legislation is disgusting. So we will move on.

1420

I know that my colleagues in the NDP are not going to let schedule 16 go, so we'll have lots of opportunity to talk about it.

We'll move on to schedule 17. Schedule 17 doubles down on undermining worker safety in the province. This schedule amends the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009. The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, or IBEW, shared a legal opinion with us that they sought on this because they saw it as being immensely troubling. The legal opinion stated: The amendments will “devalue skilled trades and put the public at risk by allowing unskilled workers to do the work of a compulsory trade.... [The] bottom line is, big business will benefit from cheap labour costs and the public and workers will be at risk.”

This is about public safety. Let me put it a clearer way: If I want to check if a skilled tradesperson performing a task is legitimate, I can go on the Ontario College of Trades public registry to search them. Schedule 17 removes the teeth from the Ontario College of Trades' ability to ensure that the workers installing or performing the tasks of the 22 compulsory trades are registered apprentices or licensed journeypersons in that trade, essentially allowing anyone to perform these tasks and rendering the skills and training of those apprentices and journeypersons meaningless.

Speaker, would you want someone who wasn't qualified wiring your children's school or a community hospital? What about someone with no documented experience working on the brakes of your car? Imagine driving along, looking in your rear-view mirror past your kids in the back seat at the dump truck following you down the 401: Do you really want to wonder who did their brakes? What about the hairstylist who mixes chemicals to dye your hair? I remember a girl I used to work with had a terrible chemical burn on her scalp that she got in a salon. It still hadn't even started to heal after months. Or what about a tower crane operator in Toronto lifting steel or a load of concrete up 50 floors above traffic, the public and the workers on the job site? Do we want someone unqualified performing this work? I don't.

At a time when Ontario and our country has been encouraging youth, women and our indigenous community members to seek out a career in the skilled trades, this Wynne government is trying to take us back decades. They're devaluing the in-class and on-the-job training that Ontario's apprentices and journeypersons have accomplished, ultimately putting the public at risk. For what? Who's going to benefit from this—unscrupulous contractors who will hire unqualified people to perform the tasks of Ontario's 22 compulsory trades?

I have no idea why the Liberals are so interested in this. How do they stand to benefit from these changes? Is this another cash-for-access story and Wynne is just paying back her friends? I don't know.

Schedule 16 and 17 are extremely problematic and ultimately dangerous. These substantial labour bills should not be a part of a finance omnibus bill. The NDP filed a reasoned amendment to have both schedule 16 and 17 pulled from this bill. The government didn't support that, but they need to support safety and they need to pull them out of this bill.

Speaker, this bill is going to pass. I'm going to jump to the end. That's what's going to happen. We, however, will not be supporting it. We would not be able to sleep at night if we supported it because Bills 16 and 17 are substantial labour bills that attack health and safety.

We support health and safety and so we're never going to support a piece of legislation which is going out of its way to hurt the people of this province. I'm disappointed to see that the government would attack health and safety and tuck it into the corners of a massive omnibus bill.

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: When I got elected by the constituents of Etobicoke Centre to serve in this Legislature, many of them said to me that they wanted to see us do as much work as quickly as possible. So I'm a little disappointed to hear members of the opposition talking about how we shouldn't have some of these important measures included in this bill, that they would like to see those measures delayed. I think that kind of procrastination is not helpful. I think there are some excellent measures in this bill, and the sooner we can get these things passed, the sooner we can ensure that we're helping people across Ontario, including workers.

The member from Oshawa is someone I respect very much, but I think she misunderstood what's intended here. At the heart of what the government is trying to do through the labour elements, the health and safety elements of this bill, is ensure that every worker returns home safe and sound at the end of the work day.

The objective of an accreditation process and employer recognition program is to augment delivery of health and safety, including enforcement activities. If done properly, accreditation has the potential to actually improve health and safety by incentivizing companies who, in partnership with labour and employees, do a superior job. It allows the Ministry of Labour to focus resources in other areas to prevent injuries. It allows the Ministry of Labour to focus their energies in those areas where there are more likely to be problems for workers. This actually allows us to protect more workers who are more vulnerable. This is ensuring that we're using our resources as wisely as possible to protect workers.

There is no replacement for getting health and safety right in the first place, and we'll continue to do this. But again, these measures are going to actually help workers and make sure we protect those who are most vulnerable

from having their health and safety infringed upon. This accreditation process allows us to use our resources wisely and protect workers, and I encourage all members to support it.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to be able to speak during the comment and question period after the member from Oshawa's speech. I thought she did, for the most part, a reasonable job in outlining her party's position on Bill 70, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes.

This is a piece of legislation that has far-ranging consequences. There are a number of acts affected—the Pension Benefits Act that the member talked about, the Alcohol and Gaming Regulation and Public Protection Act. The one thing I wanted to raise during this debate—and I'm going to be speaking shortly, but the government is proposing changes to the Tobacco Tax Act. Of course, we know that the government has failed miserably when it comes to contraband cigarettes and the sale of contraband cigarettes.

I would note Antonella Artuso's story in the Toronto Sun today. Her headline is, "Bootleg Butts Big Business." In the province of Ontario—I think the convenience stores do this every year. They go around and they collect cigarette butts from different areas of the province, different businesses, municipal offices, to see how many of those cigarette butts are actually illegal cigarettes. In southwestern Ontario where I'm from, the average is 26%. But if you look at some places like Whitby city hall, which is close to the member from Oshawa, 92% of those butts were contraband cigarettes. In Orillia Square Mall, it's 73%; eastern Ontario, 29.3%; northern Ontario, over 54%. In Sault Ste. Marie, the cabinet minister's riding, almost 75% of cigarettes are illegal.

Mr. Speaker, this government has failed utterly when it comes to the tobacco business in the province.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise and add comment to my colleague's 20 minutes on Bill 70. She did a very, very thorough job of highlighting some of the major issues in this omnibus bill, things like schedules 16 and 17, which should not be in a finance bill.

I'm going to read a portion of a quote directly from a ministry email; the member from Oshawa read it as well. It's the piece that says, "Reduce the burden of unnecessary processes such as routine inspections." Then I'd like to read something else from her notes that came directly from a Ministry of Labour inspector: "Ministry of Labour inspectors have written thousands of orders to contraventions. Thousands of health and safety contraventions to which orders are written by health and safety inspectors on proactive field visits. Thousands of violations. Thousands of contraventions. Thousands of orders."

That piece represents thousands of potential workplace injuries, thousands of potential workplace deaths,

thousands of workers who could be so seriously injured, they will never work again and cannot provide for their families—thousands of families who could face not having their loved one because this ministry has stripped oversight and feels that routine safety inspections are a burden.

1430

I give this to the ministry—to the government—to think about: What kind of a burden is it for an employee who is injured on the job? What kind of a burden is it to someone who has lost a limb? What kind of a burden is it to a family that has lost a loved one because you have stripped oversight?

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to have an opportunity to weigh in on this very important piece of legislation. I do think it's important to just remind people that we are on track to, and we remain committed to, balancing the budget by 2017-18, and we are already incorporating new commitments into our plan to make everyday life easier for Ontarians. We're achieving balance and we're managing our spending but we are making new investments that really matter to people.

This year's public accounts show that we beat our annual deficit target again. Seven years in a row that we've beaten that deficit target. We have held growth in program spending over the past four years, but we haven't made cuts to services that people rely on and we haven't raised taxes. I think we've been working a lot smarter lately because we have to, because of our commitment to achieve balance.

One of the ways we're achieving better outcomes is through the reforms to the Ontario Student Assistance Program, through OSAP. What we're doing in that case is, we're taking the \$1.2 billion that we're spending on OSAP now and we're adding to it the revenue that used to be forfeited through the tax credits for university. We're combining those two pots of money and creating a completely new OSAP that means that 150,000 students in this province will have access to grants that exceed their tuition. Free tuition for 150,000 students; 250,000 students will be better off after these reforms than they were before.

This is possible not because we're putting more money into the system but because we're getting a lot smarter and a lot more targeted. We're working together to make that happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Oshawa for her response.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to have another quick opportunity to share on Bill 70. I appreciate the comments from those around the room, although I appreciate some of the comments more than others, I'll be frank.

To the member from Etobicoke Centre who thinks I have misunderstood what this legislation is trying to do: You know what? It isn't even key what it's trying to do;

it's what it's going to do. What is it going to accomplish? If they haven't mapped it out to figure out what it's going to look like after they make these changes, shame on them. This is a ministry that needs to be pretty careful on schedule 16 that it doesn't undo all of the important work that it has done for years. Talking about our resources more wisely—for goodness' sakes, the member himself said that there is no replacement for getting health and safety right the first time. There's also no replacement for the worker who is injured by something that was preventable had there been routine inspections that they've decided are unnecessary burdens. Anyway, I will defend this up and down and as much as I can, but come on.

To the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex: Thank you for saying I did a reasonable job. Frankly, schedules 16 and 17 are not reasonable schedules, so the fact that I was reasonable, I thank you for that; high praise.

To the member from Windsor West: absolutely, thousands of orders, thousands of violations. We're talking about what could have happened. To be able to have an inspection, orders be written on a workplace that looks like it's safe, looks fine, meets the accreditation standards potentially, has all the binders on a shelf, has all of the posters on the wall—but still there are orders that can be written and lives that can be affected. Why on earth would you give them an exemption? Why would you give anyone an exemption when it comes to health and safety?

To the Deputy Premier: Thanks for the Liberal informal. We're talking about health and safety.

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

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Before I start, I just wanted to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Community and Social Services.

I'm rising this afternoon to discuss Bill 70 and the impact that it will have on the people of Davenport. For the past 11 years, this government has built Ontario up, and I believe that this bill is essential for making life easier for the people of Ontario, while growing the economy and managing spending.

However, Bill 70 is of particular importance to my riding of Davenport, as we have one of Ontario's craft distilleries in my riding. Yongehurst Distillery is producing new and interesting products and is one of the small but growing number of Ontario craft distillers. In fact, in 2016, we now have eight times more craft distillers than we had in 2011. I had the opportunity to have a tour of Yongehurst earlier this year, in July, and met its co-owners, Rocco and John-Paul. While touring the distillery, I spoke to them and heard their concerns about how beer and wine were being treated differently in Ontario as opposed to distilled spirits, and what the Ontario government could do to grow the craft spirits industry here.

After my meeting with Yongehurst, I had the opportunity to share their concerns and the concerns of other craft distillers from around the province with both

Minister Sousa and Minister Naqvi. In those conversations, the ministers assured me of our continued commitment to fostering a more innovative and dynamic business environment in Ontario, including for the rapidly growing craft distillery sector.

That's why we listened to Ontario distillers and introduced legislation that, if passed, would replace the LCBO markup and commission structure at on-site distillery retail stores. I believe that this legislation is a good step forward in continuing to foster the relationship between the government and Ontario's craft distillers. This change in the legislation would bring them more into line with how Ontario deals with beer and wine produced in the province.

Passage of the bill will also expand sales opportunities by allowing craft spirits to deliver directly to bars and restaurants, making it easier for bars and restaurants to develop relationships with craft distillers and grow their businesses. I know that Rocco and John-Paul spoke to me specifically about this issue.

We have been and will continue to support small producers in the spirits industry and remain committed to supporting the growth and expansion of this emerging sector. But I recognize that Bill 70 is just a first step on the road with Ontario craft distillers and that there is more work to be done.

If the bill passes second reading, I would encourage stakeholders like the members of the Ontario craft distillers and Yongehurst to participate in the public hearings of the bill.

I'm proud to stand in support of Bill 70. The legislation is a positive step, albeit a small first step, to be made by the government to support craft distillers, just one facet of a bill that will assuredly build Ontario up. My hope is that with the passage of the bill, you will be able to see more of the good things made in Ontario, made in Davenport, in bars and restaurants close to you. I look forward to continue working with Yongehurst to ensure that this happens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm delighted to have the opportunity to stand in this august chamber and deliver my comments this afternoon with respect to Bill 70, which is the appropriately named Building Ontario Up for Everyone Act.

I know this is specific legislation that we're discussing today, but, Speaker, I would say, as someone who has now served as Minister of Transportation for about two and a half years and has served in the Legislature as the MPP for Vaughan for just about four years, that that notion, that title, "Building Ontario Up for Everyone," strikes right at the heart of everything that Premier Kathleen Wynne and our government is doing today and has been doing in my time here in the Legislature.

Every member in the chamber today would know that I am fond of speaking about the enormous levels of infrastructure spending that our government is undertaking in every corner of the province, whether we're

talking about our roads, our bridges, our highways, or whether we're talking about the building of a seamless and integrated transit network in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area or supporting signature transit projects in communities like Waterloo region, Ottawa—upcoming projects that we foresee coming forward in wonderful communities like London and so many others. There is a very determined effort on the part of our government and our Premier, a determined effort that is emphasized in Bill 70, along with a number of other items, because there's a clear understanding on our part that, for more than a generation, particularly prior to 2003, there was chronic underinvestment in all forms of critical infrastructure in the province.

1440

I don't think there's a member on any side of this Legislature who would disagree with the fact that we have not successfully kept up with the demands. I'm often fond of saying that we have a twin challenge in Ontario, because prior to 2003, we were not investing enough in infrastructure, so we have the simultaneous challenge of having to catch up and also keep up, because our population grows and our infrastructure challenge continues to grow as well. That's why it is so important for us to be able to move forward with initiatives or legislation like Bill 70.

I know other members on this side, including the member from Davenport and the Deputy Premier, in discussion just a little bit earlier this afternoon, talked about some of the specific items that are included in the fall economic statement or in Bill 70. But I just want to say that there isn't a corner of the province that I have the opportunity to go to—and it doesn't matter whether that corner of the province is held by a government member or by an opposition member. When I meet with municipal leaders and business leaders, when I have the chance to speak to individuals, whether it's university students, college students—literally, the list is endless, Speaker, and you would know this as well—there is a significant demand to make sure that we continue to make these critical investments.

I'm also fond, as you would know, Speaker, of listing off all the projects that we are currently involved in, again, whether they're highway projects or they're transit projects. I'm fond of doing that because I'm proud of the work we've undertaken so far, but I know that we have so much more to do.

Just as an example, whether we're talking about the famous Morriston bypass, which I know is near and dear to the hearts of the President of Treasury Board and the member from Ancaster-Flamborough—I can't remember the rest of the—

Hon. Liz Sandals: Flamborough-Dundas—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thank you—Ancaster-Flamborough-Dundas-Westdale, or to the member from Wellington-Halton Hills, Speaker—I know that was a particularly gratifying opportunity that I had, to be in Puslinch not that many months ago, I guess at this point. Time flies when we're having fun.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): In March.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It was in March. Thank you for reminding me—to be there with a number of people from the community. I think the most encouraging thing that day was to see such a groundswell of appreciation and recognition for the outstanding advocacy taken by all three members whom I referenced just a moment ago on that particular project: to know that that particular project, the Morriston bypass—and I'll single that one out just for a moment, but I have others I'll reference too—will certainly help with the safety of the travelling public and that beautiful part of our province, to know it will help have a positive impact on the quality of life for the people who live in that area, but also to know that it will help to provide a significant and important economic link for that entire part of our province.

In fact, a number of weeks ago, I had the chance to take a tour of the Hamilton Port Authority and hear from individuals related to the port about the importance of making sure we get the Morriston bypass done and done right because of how much that entire sector, that entire region is dependent upon having those critical transportation links so that more goods can get to market more effectively and more quickly.

I point out that one example because I think when we discuss the infrastructure that we have a need for in this province, and particularly because I'm a little bit biased because of the transportation infrastructure in particular that we need, we often talk about whether or not it will help improve commute times, whether it will help with safety. But it really is a multi-faceted accomplishment, I will say, whenever we're able to strike the right balance. With Bill 70, when we're talking again about specific highway projects that we're relating to a number of the other projects that we have undertaken and will continue to undertake, we see that the spin-off benefits are considerable.

We create jobs, of course, when we make investments in critical infrastructure. We're fond on this side of the House of talking about the 12-year, \$160-billion infrastructure plan. It is the most ambitious, and it is the single largest investment in infrastructure in Ontario's history, and because I think it's extremely important to convey this to people, I'm also delighted to know that because of that investment in infrastructure over the next 12 years, we will help to create or sustain 110,000 jobs right across the province.

I know that in some of the discussion here this afternoon relating to Bill 70, there was a great deal of interest that was recognized—the member from the NDP caucus talking about some of the impacts relating to our skilled tradespeople. I'm not going to delve into that particular item of Bill 70, but I would say we are truly blessed in Ontario to have literally, not just in North America but perhaps right around the world, a global-leading infrastructure and construction sector. And right at the heart of that world-leading construction or infrastructure sector are the skilled tradespeople, the women and men who go to work every single day, who have such a

passion for making sure that they not only practise their craft or practise their trade but that they are able to help us build the province up.

Speaker, when I think of the infrastructure investments that we're making, I realize that over those next number of years, many Ontario individuals, but even more importantly, many Ontario families, will have more opportunity. They will have more income, a meaningful employment that will last, because we have demonstrated leadership here in Bill 70 and last year's budget and previous budgets over my time here in this Legislature to make sure that we're getting this right.

Here in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, the list of transit projects that this government is investing in is truly off the charts. We're currently building, as everyone here would know, I believe, the Eglinton Crosstown. It is the single largest public transit project in Ontario history: a capital cost of \$5.3 billion; 19 kilometres of LRT through the middle of the GTA, with approximately nine of those kilometres buried below the city of Toronto; significant connectivity to the GO lines in the area, to the TTC subway stations in the area and to somewhere in the neighbourhood of 54 bus routes. That's one transit project alone. That doesn't even take into account the Finch West LRT.

I know the member from Etobicoke North and the member from York West are both thrilled to know that we are making a \$1.2-billion investment in the Finch West LRT. That is a transit project that will run from the new subway station that's being built as part of the Toronto-York Spadina subway extension, which, in and of itself, is a project that this government is contributing \$870 million towards. There is a new subway station that will be built right at the corner—it's currently under construction—at Keele and Finch. The Finch West LRT will run westbound from that new subway station right at the edge of York University, all the way up to Humber College, going through two priority neighbourhoods. It will connect Humber College to York University, two of Ontario's leading post-secondary institutions. I know, again, the member from York West and the member from Etobicoke North have shown tremendous leadership on that particular project.

I could talk about the Hurontario LRT running through Mississauga and the southern tip of Brampton—going from the GO station in the south end, the Port Credit GO station, connecting to other GO stations and ultimately to the gateway at Steeles—or the Hamilton LRT project.

Those are just three that I could discuss.

The Viva BRT that runs, of course, along Highway 7 in my home of York region—a \$1.4-billion contribution our government is making towards York region's Viva BRT, which again, in and of itself, connects to multiple other existing transit lines.

The Union Pearson Express: I've heard from members of every single caucus here in the Legislature about how much of a worthwhile experience it has been for them and it is for them to occasionally have the opportunity to take the Union Pearson Express. That is a train that runs

19 and a half hours a day at regular intervals, and it takes 25 minutes to get an individual from Union Station all the way out to the airport. There are hundreds and hundreds of commuters in west-end Toronto, for example, who are using that train. Since we reduced the prices and made it more affordable, they are taking that train in order to get to and from work or to get home again, and they're just thrilled.

I point out all of these projects not simply because I'm proud of them—I am proud of them; I think it shows that we are a government that is making tremendous progress on what has been a long-standing challenge for all governments at all levels and of all partisan stripes—but I point this out because there is clear evidence right now, on the ground, in the ground, under way, by way of construction, to demonstrate to the people of this region and to the people of the province that we are making that unprecedented contribution or investment in infrastructure. This is not simply about plans on a drawing board or hope for conceptual ideas that may one day occur. We are actually in the process right now of building that seamless and integrated transit network that the greater Toronto and Hamilton area needs so badly. It needs it badly, again, not simply because of quality-of-life demands that we all have, and I say that as someone who is a life-long resident of the GTHA; it's also critical for our provincial economy to know that this region can continue to move, and move effectively and efficiently and safely.

1450

We know there are various reports that peg the cost of gridlock in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, depending on the source we're using, at anywhere from \$6 billion to \$10 billion annually in lost economic productivity. That's a challenge that cannot go unmet. That's why we're making these investments—investments that are contained, in many respects, in Bill 70 and in previous budgets that this government has introduced.

When I move beyond the greater Toronto and Hamilton area—earlier, I referenced the transit projects that we are currently supporting in Waterloo region, the ION LRT. I think of Ottawa's Confederation Line, the LRT that's currently under construction in the city of Ottawa. Not that long ago, the Premier was in Ottawa along with all of our Ottawa caucus members to announce that the provincial government was confirming its phase 2 funding for the Ottawa LRT. That's an enormous investment that we're making in our country's capital. Again, it's so critical with respect to that region's economy and to the quality of life for the people who live in Ottawa and around Ottawa.

We've also taken the extra step beyond the original scope of phase 2 for the LRT. We've also agreed to fund 50% of two extensions, one out to Trim Road in the riding of Ottawa—Orléans and one out to the Ottawa airport. I know that the member from Ottawa—Orléans and the member from Ottawa South have both been—in fact, the member from Ottawa—Orléans is also the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. They have

both been champions and staunch advocates to make sure that we were able to get it right with respect to that investment.

I've spent some time over the last number of months in northern Ontario. We have such an enormous and beautiful, majestic province that we are all very proud of, I know. In many of those communities, when they think of transit, when they think of transporting themselves, they of course are talking about making sure that we're able to have the highway infrastructure that connects communities and can also be an important economic link. So again, whether it's the four-laning of Highway 69, completing that project, which has been under way for a number of years—I know the Minister of Energy and, frankly, I would say, the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka are delighted to know that we continue to make progress on a project that has been sizable and has actually unlocked a ton of potential in that wonderful part of our province, and that work is ongoing. The four-laning of important segments of Highway 11/17—there's so much more work that we have already completed in that regard, but there is more work still to be done. There is no doubt that we'll continue to work with our municipal partners and our indigenous peoples to make sure that we are in the best position possible to go forward.

Speaker, I could literally spend all afternoon talking about the highway projects, the transit projects. I didn't even have the chance to really reference, at least not till this point, the work we're doing around modernizing and updating the ferry system in eastern Ontario. I had the chance a number of months ago to go out to Wolfe Island with the member from Kingston and the Islands to do a town hall with people on that island, in that community, to hear in a very compelling and direct way from those individuals about how critical it is for us to get it right with respect to the ferries, and how we need to build in more redundancy and build in more capability to that network. That's something that we're involved in.

Again, I could talk about this endlessly, as all of my colleagues would know all too well. I would say even in the last number of days, I've heard questions in this House from members from both opposition caucuses. Just the other day, I took a question from the member from Prince Edward—Hastings, who wanted to know about County Road 49 and the meetings that I've had with, for example, the mayor from Prince Edward county. In the past, I've taken questions from members of the NDP caucus, whether it's about four-laning highways in the north or making sure that we're providing southwestern Ontario with the investment it needs for its critical highway links.

I would say that Bill 70 and budgets that are still to come here in this Legislature provide every member of the opposition with the ideal opportunity to put crass politics aside, to look beyond their partisan stripes, to recognize that you can't, on the one hand, ask a question about the need for more infrastructure and on the other hand, continue year after year, month after month, to try to cut the legs out from underneath a government and a

Premier that understands exactly how to get this right. So whether we're talking about Bill 70, whether we're talking about budgets still to come, I would sincerely hope that members in the PC and NDP caucus would put their money where their mouth is, vote with us and help us build Ontario up for everyone.

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

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 70. Unfortunately, our party, for good reason, won't be able to support this bill because, in fact, it does very little but muddy around with minor details to solve big problems and it doesn't talk about, in other parts, the work the government has done badly.

I have a few suggestions of things that could and should be included in this bill. I would call them amendments. The land transfer tax: It's a noble thing to offer a reduction. I would suggest: Why don't we just do it right and eliminate it fully for first-time homebuyers? That would be a major help for new homebuyers. It would stimulate the sale of homes and it would stimulate new construction work in the new home business.

We recently had very large MPAC assessments on farmland across Ontario of approximately 100%, which is too much, too fast, as I call it. Something has to be done to make this reasonable, to make it fair, to make it just. I would suggest, as we've done in multi-residential assessments in the province of Ontario, that we put in place a law that freezes taxes on that sector, that sector being agricultural farmland, for four years.

This has been done already with multi-residential building units in the province of Ontario, for good reason, and we have a good reason to do it for farmland until we do more research to study a more fair and more just system of providing assessments for farmland—or property in general, I'd even broaden the words to say.

Those are just a couple of the points I have to put forward, but I think they're good ones and they would help the people of Ontario.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I rise to respond to the remarks from the member for Davenport and the Minister of Transportation about Bill 70, the very optimistically called Building Ontario Up for Everyone Act. They paint a very rosy picture, their perception of what is happening in the province. Unfortunately, that is not the reality faced by most of the people who live in the ridings we represent.

Just today, there was a report out from the Ontario Association of Food Banks. One of the findings that is very relevant for my community is that food bank usage is up 11% in the city of London—11%. Energy poverty has become the reality for far too many people across this province. The Ontario Association of Food Banks notes that rising hydro rates have had a direct and devastating impact on people who live in this province who have to, really, every day face that difficult choice: “Do we heat our home or do we buy food for our children?” Food

banks are seeing more and more people who are having to come to access emergency food supplies because they simply cannot afford to pay their hydro bills.

In London, we know that there were 4,000 Londoners who defaulted, who were simply unable to pay their hydro bills last year, and the number of people in arrears rose by 1,400. There are now 12,400 people who are in arrears on their hydro bills, and that is likely to increase even more, especially now as we go into the winter season. The remedy that is provided in the government's fall economic statement won't make a dent in the kind of financial pressures that people in Ontario are facing because of hydro bills.

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's an honour to join the debate on this important piece of legislation. I heard from the members of the opposition the sort of doom-and-gloom message that keeps being repeated. There's no question that there are people in Ontario who are struggling. There's no question about that. I have them in my community. We have them in communities across Ontario. We have more work to do, and I think everyone here on this side appreciates that.

1500

That said, there is also good news, and it's important to make sure that we put this all into context and commit ourselves to working on those areas where we need to work harder—there is a lot of hard work to be done—but also to celebrate that which is going well.

For example, what I mean by going well is the fact that, for the first half of 2016, Ontario actually posted stronger GDP growth than Canada, the US and almost all other G7 countries. That's positive news. A growing economy and new jobs are the best way to support Ontario families and to generate revenues that will help us invest in the services that we're all talking about here every day.

Business investment in Ontario increased by 0.6% in the second quarter of 2016, and 0.9% in the first quarter. At the same time, our labour market continues to grow, and we've recovered all of the jobs lost during the recession. These are important economic signs. There still is more work to be done, there's no question.

While all of this is happening, at the same time we're working hard to make sure that we balance the budget, a commitment that we made going into the last election campaign and a commitment that the Premier has maintained her resolve to achieve. We're doing all of that, but we're not approaching it with the slash-and-burn approach that the Mike Harris Tories did. We're doing this in a very responsible, thoughtful way, trying to get better value for money, while at the same time making those important investments that the Minister of Transportation was just speaking about a few minutes ago, which the members of the opposition continue to vote against and continue to speak out against.

I'm proud of this bill. I think it will make a difference for people.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have a chance to add some comments about Bill 70, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes, on the speech from the member from Davenport and the Minister of Transportation.

The member from Davenport was talking about the changes to taxation rates for craft distilleries. I know that I've heard other members do speeches and read into the record the response from the craft distilleries. They're not happy. In fact, lots of them are saying that it's going to put them out of business. The member from Davenport said that this is actually an improvement in the tax rate. Well, according to the notes here, as of July 1, 2017, the tax rate on craft distilleries will be 61.5% of the retail price, plus a volume tax of 38 cents per litre, plus an environmental tax. I just wonder how any business can survive paying all of that tax.

The government gets more money than the producer of the good, and yet they're supposed to somehow survive and grow in this province. It just seems amazing. I know the government says that this is an improvement on the tax rate that they were paying before, but I'm still incredulous that anybody can even survive paying those high tax rates.

The other part of this bill that I wanted to briefly talk about was the ORPP and the Ontario registered pension plan repeal act, and note that the government spent some \$800,000 after they decided to end the Ontario registered pension plan. They still went ahead and spent \$800,000 advertising a plan that they weren't planning on doing.

I note, in the Toronto Sun, that "Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk commented that the ads were 'self-congratulatory.' She noted they would not have been approved under an old law, which gave the Auditor General power to review government advertising for partisan content." The only problem is, the government changed the law so that they could do partisan advertising.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Davenport can respond.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I want to start off by thanking the members who weighed in on debate this afternoon on Bill 70: the members from Carleton–Mississippi Mills and London West, my colleague from Etobicoke Centre and my colleague across the way from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

I want to start by acknowledging the words of the member from London West, and to say that I too acknowledge that there are many families who are struggling and finding it difficult in my own riding of Davenport, for instance. But I want to make sure that my constituents and all Ontarians know that we on this side of the House are working to make life better for those individuals and to continue to build Ontario up.

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka mentioned the tax rate for the craft distillers. I think that it being reduced from 130%-plus to 61.5% is a step in the right

direction. As I spoke about earlier in my debate, we are working to make things better.

I know that the craft brewers were able to count on my advocacy and my support, and I will continue to advocate for and support the craft distillers in my riding, and across this province, to ensure that we get it right for them.

But I did want to just mention one key thing here that was very important, and that was the aspect of affordable housing, another key issue in my riding of Davenport. I know that with the cost of houses rising, and especially the way that they've been rising in my riding of Davenport, the fact that we will have young families helped by doubling the maximum refund for first-time homebuyers, from \$2,000 to \$4,000, starting January 1, 2017, is something that I've had many young families reach out to me in Davenport to say, "Thank you, Cristina, to you and your government, for helping us buy our first home."

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 70, the Building Ontario Up Act. They always suggest that I don't give much credit to the government, so here, Mr. Speaker, I think I'll give them credit again for a great slogan: "Building Ontario Up." Who wouldn't want that? Who wouldn't vote for that?

But if I go back to the Green Energy Act and wind turbines, if you look past the glossy photo and actually look at the detail of the 20-year or 50-year or inevitable never-ending story of this, it really starts to make you frightened.

Bill 70 is omnibus legislation that seeks to amend 27 statutes, enact four new ones and repeal three others. Every failed policy decision—or what Premier Wynne prefers to call "a mistake"—the Wynne Liberals have made over the last 13 years has made life harder and more unaffordable for Ontarians. No fall economic statement is going to change that.

The government's omnibus legislation is simply a distraction tactic and has nothing to do with the province's true financial state. The facts remain: Ontario is in a dire fiscal state and life remains unaffordable under this Liberal government.

The Wynne Liberals have no plan to get our books back on track that doesn't involve higher taxes, fees or hydro rates, more fire sales of government assets or cuts to front-line services. The fact that there was barely a mention of hydro rates in the government's fall economic statement shows just how out of touch this Premier and her government are. Albeit the Premier shared a mea culpa—"I made a mistake"—in regard to the hydro file under her watch, I see nothing in here, Mr. Speaker, that says what significant action they're going to do.

If the Premier was sincere in admitting a mistake, her fall economic statement would have provided a frank and honest assessment of the reality of our province's dire fiscal state. Most importantly, she would have said what she would do to make amends for her mistake, what actions she is taking to make amends to the many people

who have suffered socially and economically because of her ideological agenda.

At minimum, she would have been honest with the people, put their needs first and issued an apology for her colossal mistake in selling Hydro One and a directive that she would abandon the fire sale of this asset that belongs to the people of Ontario, not to the Liberal Party as a game piece to maintain their grip on power.

If Premier Wynne was sincere, they—especially as the self-declared education party and herself a former trustee and Minister of Education—would have actually disclosed in there that they were closing 600 schools across our province.

Furthermore, if she was sincere, she would admit that her decision to double our province's debt over the past 13 years—to a whopping \$330 billion—and burden the next generation—and the pages in front of you, Mr. Speaker, sadly—was a mistake. Her fall statement would have advised what she and her government were going to do to address their spending addiction and how they were going to make life more affordable for Ontarians.

I'm going to speak a little bit on some of the aspects. There are too many to get everything in in 20 minutes, so I've picked a few that are pertinent to all Ontarians and certainly to my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

On Alcohol and Gaming Regulation and Public Protection Act changes, this bill would allow the Liberal government to do what it does best: hike taxes. Bill 70 will impose a phased increase to the basic tax rate on wine and wine coolers purchased from wine boutiques and wine retail stores. This means that as of July 1, 2017, spirits from stores operated by a spirits manufacturer would be subject to a basic tax of 61.5% of retail price; a volume tax of 28 cents per litre for spirits coolers and 38 cents per litre for spirits; and an environmental tax of 8.93 cents for each non-refillable container.

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I think the government missed an opportunity with the changes in Bill 70. Perhaps the people of Ontario will deem it another mistake. This bill was a chance for them to fix the gaming act by increasing the limit on raffle table prizes from \$500 to \$10,000 or even more. These are raffles that are run by charity groups such as hospital auxiliaries and foundations, Royal Canadian Legions, daycare centres and service clubs across our great province. These groups, despite having a long and excellent record of raising money for activities that help to enhance the lives of all Ontarians, from health care and youth sports to arts and culture, are finding it harder and harder to operate under the act's archaic raffle limits. The limits were set in the 1970s and have never been adjusted to today's inflation rate. If left status quo, then our charities will keep running afoul of the AGCO rules.

This is certainly a problem in rural communities where volunteers work hard to raise money and fill gaps left by the government. I've heard from many organizations about their concerns with the province's archaic charity gaming rules. They impede the volunteers' efforts to raise necessary funds and recruit new members. Sadly,

we're losing valued members, volunteers, because of these mistakes. Unlike in urban regions where, as evidence suggests, voluntary sectors fare best thanks to steady and stable private sector funding and higher private donations, small towns in rural and northern Ontario rely on such things as penny tables and penny auction raffles that are capped at \$500. With growing shortfalls in government funding, there is increased stress on communities to keep filling the gaps; for example, a new MRI for a local hospital, new toys and books for a day-care centre, a rejuvenated cenotaph for those who served in Her Majesty's forces.

Again, current rules fall short of meeting the needs of communities today. I believe the government should have jumped on the opportunity to increase this maximum prize for raffles to \$10,000 as a minimum from \$500, to not only better reflect today's realities but also help ensure the regulation of charitable gaming is competitive and honest and ensure volunteers are efficient in their fundraising efforts. Our volunteer sector, which is made up of many, many of our proud seniors, would have very much lauded this effort.

On land transfer tax changes, this change does nothing to fix housing affordability in the province. It is simply a distraction tactic.

This government has caused hydro rates to skyrocket—a mistake, Mr. Speaker—and allowed bureaucratic costs to push up the cost of housing in Ontario. As we said before, at best, all this government wants to do is offer Band-Aid solutions.

If the Liberals sincerely want to address the cost of housing in Ontario, they need to start with their own unaffordable policies: affordable policies in hydro, for one. It is something that 10 Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound families whose hydro was disconnected last week would have embraced. Life for most—I believe even the member from Davenport admitted that people in her riding are suggesting life is harder for them currently today.

If the Liberals sincerely want to address the cost of this, then they need to change some of the direction they're going. Life is harder. We all, I think, have to admit that. That's certainly what I hear when I'm out in the riding, when I'm out across the province. When I'm in this building, I hear life is harder under this Liberal government. Whether it's soaring energy rates or more cuts to health care services, the Liberal government is making it harder for Ontario families to live and to buy a home, and for businesses to compete.

There is one in there, Mr. Speaker, that they do have and that is a good thing, as I certainly heard from the realtors last week: The refund for first-time homebuyers has gone from \$2,000 to \$4,000. That's a good-news story for a first-time homebuyer, but it's not going to offset when their hydro costs are going to go up 40% and continue to escalate. Many people's hydro bills are as big as their mortgage payments.

On the municipal affairs act: The changes in the Municipal Act will require all regional chairs to be directly elected, but specifically we would have liked to

see something in here about the Green Energy Act—again, a huge mistake, taking democracy away from the closest level of government to the people. This is something we've been talking about in the five years I've been here. There was a huge opportunity here. If they truly wanted to build Ontario up and give the voice back to the people we are all democratically elected to represent, they could have made a change like that. Instead, they're tinkering with things like regions. A number of regions have chosen to change to direct election of the chair, including Halton, Waterloo and Durham. The other regions have all reviewed options, and as recently as February 2016, York regional council voted 14-5 against making the change.

On the same day that this bill was introduced, the Minister of Municipal Affairs introduced an omnibus municipal affairs bill, Bill 68, that actually makes changes to some of the same sections of the Municipal Act. In fact, if the municipal affairs bill passes first, this bill will end up repealing some of those amendments.

While we support steps towards increasing democracy, we have concerns that this change is being forced with little or no consultation. This is very ominous and reminds us of the way the government overrode the rights of municipal councils and local citizens when it rammed through, as I referenced a few seconds ago, the Green Energy Act.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, despite many, many people across the province mentioning this, referencing it to the government, letters through my office and those of many of my colleagues and, I trust, the NDP caucus—and I would think maybe even some of the Liberal backbenchers might have had some of the same types of requests. We want to return democracy, and they could have done that—another opportunity and a huge mistake to not have addressed that and shown the people of Ontario that they truly were listening. And it would have helped our financial and economic situation.

On Insurance Act changes: Currently, the act provides that the Lieutenant Governor in Council may assess automobile insurers for the expenses and the expenditures of the Licence Appeal Tribunal relating to the resolution of statutory accident benefits disputes. Insurers must pay the amount assessed against them or will have their licence cancelled or suspended. The proposed amendment would provide that any unpaid amount is also a debt due to the crown which may be recovered by action or any other procedure available to the crown.

This is yet another botched file by the Liberal government, or, as the Premier would use her term, "a mistake." When we're talking mistakes—and I note the third party also likes to wade into some of this stuff. Certainly a big mistake: voting for the 2012 McGuinty-Wynne Liberals and allowing them to stay in power, which has resulted in many of the things we're talking about today and the mistakes that have continued to be made—so a big, colossal mistake on behalf of the third party.

Even after three years, they are still nowhere close to meeting their promise of rolling back auto insurance rates

by 15%. The Liberals' stretch goal has turned into a failed goal, or, as I would suggest, a mistake. Together with the recent increase in licence plate sticker fees, this is nothing but an added cost for Ontarians. It's clear that life's more unaffordable under the Wynne Liberal government.

On revenue act changes: I'm going back a little bit. I remember that when Premier McGuinty campaigned, one of the first things he said was, "I will not raise taxes." We had the most unprecedented, biggest tax hike—the health tax—in the province's history. I would suggest to you that it's not a revenue problem that the Liberal government has, it's actually a spending problem.

A new section in this act is proposed to enable to the Minister of Finance to collect business information from other ministries and public bodies for the purpose of administering and enforcing tax laws and in order to conduct related policy, statistical and risk analyses. This government is taking in record revenues, yet spending continues to be out of control. The Hydro One fire sale, a colossal mistake that we may never recover from, is all about new revenue for the Liberals' crushing deficit and out-of-control spending, a short-term fix that even the fiscal accountability officer is challenging and saying is very short-sighted and will result in structural deficits for many, many years. We can't just pad one budget because we made a promise and try to get there. What's that forsaking for the rest of our history?

Ontario's provincial government finances are a mess because of 13 years of Liberal waste, mismanagement, scandal and, yes, mistakes. This government has run eight consecutive budget deficits, a string of mistakes. It has racked up \$302 billion in debt, the highest debt in the country, an unconscionable mistake for today's taxpayers and future generations for decades to come. The debt servicing costs \$11 billion in lost tax dollars every year. The payments to service the debt are the third-largest expenditure and the fastest-growing expense in government. It's money not spent on critical and core public services, such as health care and education.

Speaker, you would have thought, in a financial statement, in an economic statement, that those types of things would have been addressed, that they would have truly shared and been accountable and transparent with the taxpayers of Ontario. Each \$1 billion of it equals the loss of one year of long-term care for 17,000 seniors; one year of home care for 55,000 people; 3,550 palliative care beds for one year; 8,000 new affordable housing units; \$260 a month for one year for each ODSP recipient; or one year of free tuition for 2,000 students and 10,000 new school playgrounds.

I ask the government: How can you defend the mistakes made by your Premier and the suffering of the people impacted above? Will each member admit to their constituents—who trusted them to do what is best for all Ontarians and put the needs of Ontario ahead of theirs, the Premier and the Liberal Party clinging to power—that they made a mistake voting for mistakes like selling Hydro One? I didn't hear that in the economic statement.

On the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act changes: It was a mistake not to create legislation that would promote and support trade workers for the future rather than another bureaucracy and a cash grab. That's what they could have done when they started the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act changes. This schedule would alter certain roles of the college. Specifically, the college would cease to determine whether a trade is compulsory. Instead, the minister will now have the power to determine the classification of a trade, which was formerly the college's responsibility. You're seeing a trend, Mr. Speaker, of more and more power vested in a cabinet member—

Interjection.

1520

Mr. Bill Walker: —a cabinet. This is not successful. This needs to be discussed and debated. When you give too much power to one individual, regardless of whom that individual is, it's not a good thing. I believe the college was there to be able to do that: to make generalizations to stakeholders' consultation meetings, to make sure they truly were there and doing it on behalf—not the ideology of perhaps one cabinet minister who says, "I'm moving it this way."

The college would also have a new object or undertaking of reviews of scope of practice of trades, including the requirements for the board of directors to prescribe a scope of practice for every trade and establish a policy and process regarding the establishment and review of scope of practice.

The board of directors would be required to develop and approve a compliance and enforcement policy. New provisions would authorize notice of contraventions to be issued and require the payment of AMPs to the consolidated revenue funds. The College of Trades Appointments Council would be continued but renamed the College of Trades Appointments Council and Classification Roster.

Mr. Speaker, like you, I trust, I am opposed to more fees and administration that do nothing for the tradespeople who are already stifled by overregulation—another colossal mistake. I believe we need less red tape and more opportunities for new workers. Ontario desperately needs a plan to fix its critical shortage of skilled tradespeople. I'm not certain that this piece of legislation is going to do that. Sadly, the Liberal policies have only worsened the looming skilled-trade shortage in Ontario—a huge mistake.

On the Pension Benefits Act changes: Again, I get nervous when I hear that this out-of-touch Liberal government wants to meddle in pensions. Recently, as my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka just said, this Liberal government spent \$800,000 on advertising a cancelled ORPP, a program they were never going to put into place, Mr. Speaker—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: —a sad mistake. That money could have gone to the people, to make life easier for each and every single person who needs help.

Only the Liberals would choose to spend money promoting the work of a different level of government, an out-of-touch and egregious mistake in the eyes of Ontarians who are suffering. They actually wasted \$70 million down the drain on their failed ORPP scheme, because it was about ideology and it was about polling, to keep them in power. That is just not acceptable. That's an arrogant mistake that will be felt by every Ontarian who goes without surgery, specialist assessment, long-term-care beds, mental health services, affordable housing—

Mr. James J. Bradley: Where's Bill Murdoch when you need him?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the member for St. Catharines to respect the fact that the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has the floor and to stop the repeated interjections.

The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll just repeat that in case people couldn't hear because of that heckling: It was an arrogant mistake that will be felt by every Ontarian who goes without surgery, specialist assessment, long-term-care beds, mental health services, affordable housing and community and social services—all the people who we come here to represent to the best of our ability and make life better for. That would be building Ontario up; not spending \$70 million on a failed program for political gain and ideology.

On the Taxation Act changes: The Liberal party is hiking fees and taxes to pay for years of scandal, waste, mismanagement and, yes, sadly, many, many mistakes, in a last-ditch effort to try and balance their failed budget. They just increased vehicle and driver registration fees by \$503 million in just four years. This is yet another unaffordable cash grab that makes life harder for Ontario families.

They continue to take in record revenues and yet, as I said earlier, continue to cut surgeries, close emergency departments and fire front-line nurses. Mr. Speaker, I ask the people listening, I ask the people across from me: Are people better off today than they were 13 years ago? What could life be if the Premier did not make so many mistakes?

On the Tobacco Tax Act changes: I note that 13 years on, there is still no action on illegal tobacco trade from the Liberal Party. Sadly, a mistake here means that many children across our province are starting to smoke because of the low-cost cigarettes that you can buy because of this trade, and all the ripple effect of all that negativity that we hear about. Sadly, Bill 70 misses the chance to crack down on illegal smokes and bring this market under control.

"Building Ontario Up," I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, is a great slogan, but you have to look at the details. I think my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London suggested, in his comments, that they always put in a few poison pills—they always put something in so that they can come back, if I don't vote for it, and say, "Why didn't the member from" wherever "not vote for that?" because they had this little nugget in here.

The Liberal scandal, the mismanagement, the waste and the colossal mistakes have driven our debt to \$300 billion, yet the Wynne Liberals have no plan to get our books back on track that doesn't involve higher taxes or hydro rates, more fire sales of government assets or cuts to front-line services. We only have so many assets, and what happens when it's gone?

I've said here earlier that the fiscal accountability officer suggested that if you sell that asset, what happens in years four, five and just keeping going out? This is going to lead to a structural deficit that we may never recover from.

When will the mistakes stop and Premier Wynne provide an accurate financial picture for the people of Ontario? When will we hear about her plan to make amends for the mistakes, to make amends for the suffering she has caused to the people across this great province of ours? When will she finally admit to making—and when will she actually be specific in what she's going to do to address and make those amends? When will the people of Ontario come first?

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I rise to offer some comments on the remarks from the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. Certainly, he touched on some of the concerns that have been identified by my colleagues and I in the NDP caucus.

In particular, there are two fundamental ways that the governing party can really undermine democracy. One of them is to have an omnibus bill that brings together a whole raft of unrelated amendments and packages them in one piece of legislation. The other is to leave most of the significant changes to regulation.

What we see before us today with Bill 70 is both of those things. The government has introduced a piece of legislation that brings together 26 different schedules with a number of amendments, some of them insignificant, some of them very, very substantive and consequential. When you create an omnibus bill, it really prevents the kind of public scrutiny that one would hope for in a healthy democracy.

That is the problem that the NDP has certainly identified. We introduced a reasoned amendment to remove schedules 16 and 17 from this omnibus bill, because those are extremely significant changes that will have a profound effect on workers in this province. They should not be considered in this package of amendments that's in this omnibus bill.

The other concern, of course, is around the regulations. Much of the change that is proposed in this bill is left to regulations. When you do that, it removes it from the debate and oversight of MPPs in this chamber.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. In the Catholic church, we call it a litany when you hear a list of things like that. I'm going to respond to that in a second. There

are things I could glean from that that I think there's some value in debating.

When he mentioned the pension guarantee fund, those changes are there to ensure the sustainability and reliability of pensions. The Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund is a thing we have to ensure that people are taken care of in the event that something happens.

I also want to remind him about the housing benefit that exists there in terms of the first-time homebuyers' relief on the land transfer tax. I think that's a really significant thing. I don't think you can negate mentioning that.

I do take to heart to some extent some of the members saying there's a lot of stuff in here. There is; there's a lot of really good stuff in here. But I do want to say something about what I would call the litany. I want to continue on with a theme I've been speaking about for the last couple of weeks, and that's the need to pick a lane.

I hear the member opposite—and I have a great deal of respect for him—talk about spending in health care and overspending, but there's no mention of the kinds of things that each member on all sides of this House asks for for their community. There was a decision in 2008–09: Do we continue to invest in health care and education or do we cut? Well, we know what happened between 1995 and 1999, so we know where they stand. But don't say that you can do both things, because you can't.

It's all about choices. You can't slay the deficit and give people the services they need, and you know that—and your leader knows that, but he continues to speak in the language of one thing to one group of people and another thing to another group of people. I think you need to pick a lane over on that side of the House.

1530

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

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the speech by the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. He did a great job of pointing out some of the mistakes this government has made. In particular, he talked about how the Premier did admit to a mistake on the electricity file. We all know that high electricity costs is the biggest issue for most of our constituents, but the question is, now what? We've heard from the government that they're planning on an 8% reduction to come up, but there's actually nothing in Bill 70 to do with reducing electricity costs. The only problem with that 8% reduction is that we know that the end of the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit last year—which was a 10% reduction, so we actually have a 2% higher rate than we had last year, in addition to many other increases we've seen.

The member talked about school closures. I know he's been a champion of protecting rural schools in his riding. In my case, I have no better example of schools that shouldn't close that are on the chopping block than in the community of Honey Harbour, which is more than an hour bus ride for young children to the nearest school.

With the accommodation review process that's going on, if the Catholic school and the public school both close, then it will be over an hour bus ride for young children, which is simply not acceptable, not to mention the fact that it would devastate the community of Honey Harbour in terms of trying to attract young families and businesses. This is a really important issue for many of us.

He talked about the lack of success this government has had with regard to contraband tobacco. I see in today's clippings a headline, "Bootleg Butts Big Business," pointing out how unsuccessful the government has been in various regions around the province.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to add my two comments in response to the speech from the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. As he says, there are missed opportunities. Even though this is a massive omnibus bill—26 schedules dealing with just about everything it could possibly get its fingers into and mixing it up—there are still missed opportunities, if you can imagine. Specifically, he mentioned cracking down on illegal tobacco, which is a specific. We know over here we've been talking about a missed opportunity, that the government didn't take on the problem of a lack of affordable housing. We can always call for more, but we'll talk about what is in this bill and what this government has been talking about lately.

The Premier has been talking about mistakes. The Premier admitted to a mistake. We would love to know which one, which mistake specifically, because then we could know that that mistake specifically might not happen again. I think that's the nature of admitting something, right?

We've seen massive mistakes with this government, but we haven't seen the massive apologies, although it seems to be something that's coming. They seem to apologize and apologize, but that doesn't seem to change behaviour. That's a shame.

The member mentioned selling off our assets. We're going to find ourselves—I think the wording was this—with a structural deficit that we may never recover from. Isn't that a shame, that we have a government that is selling off a predictable revenue-generating asset that strengthens our schools, strengthens our hospitals, strengthens our health care services, and they're saying, "Pick a lane"? Well, yes, I would encourage the Tories to pick a lane on most things, but on this one, we're in the same lane, and that is, we want a stronger Ontario. We would encourage the government to join us in calling for stopping the sell-off of Hydro One.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments for this round. I return to the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: My colleague from London West talked about the omnibus bill. Really, what I think she was summarizing, very quickly, is that this was a distraction of people with shiny baubles: 26, 27 acts they dug into.

The member from Ottawa South wanted to talk about a litany of mistakes. The Premier came out with her mea culpa and said, "I made a mistake." I would suggest to you there is a whole litany of mistakes that she might want to fess up to. We might talk about the Green Energy Act and \$133 billion that's going to cost the taxpayers of Ontario. We might want to talk about the fire sale of Hydro One, a \$750-million net profit that we could have had. We could talk about Ornge and gas plants and the decimation of the horse racing industry. But we won't go into all of that litany because he wants to pick a lane. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll share through you to him: We'll pick a lane. We won't borrow from the next generation to stay in power today. We won't take away democracy like the Green Energy Act did. We won't talk about transparency and accountability and then in a fall economic statement not tell the people what they're actually going to do and the dire straits we truly are in.

My colleague and friend from Parry Sound-Muskoka said the Premier admitted a mistake about hydro. And yet, in this fall economic statement, despite her obviously knowing of that mistake at that point, Premier Wynne didn't come out and say, "I'm going to actually take action. I'm going to do something significant to make life better for people." "I'm going to tweak around the edges and give you a bit of your own money back"—that is not what we need. She didn't come out and say, "I'm not going to close 600 schools despite being a trustee and a former Minister of Education." She's going to decimate rural Ontario with 600 school closures.

My colleague from Oshawa talked about missed opportunities, and she's bang on. There was no significant action in most of the things in that statement that are truly going to make life significantly different for the people of Ontario. She talked about the selling off of assets and the structural deficit which will be left behind after the fire sale of Hydro One.

We will pick a lane. We'll continue to challenge this government to spend every single dollar so that life in Ontario truly is better for every single Ontarian.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for further debate, 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 his designate indicates otherwise.

I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: No further debate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

BURDEN REDUCTION ACT, 2016
LOI DE 2016 SUR L'ALLÈGEMENT
DU FARDEAU RÉGLEMENTAIRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 17, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to reduce the regulatory burden on business, to enact various new Acts and to make other amendments and repeals / *Projet de loi 27, Loi visant à alléger le fardeau réglementaire des entreprises, à édicter diverses lois et à modifier et abroger d'autres lois.*

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

Mr. Duguid has moved second reading of Bill 27, An Act to reduce the regulatory burden on business, to enact various new Acts and to make other amendments and repeals. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1538 to 1540.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I wish to inform the House that I have received a request for a deferral of this vote, pursuant to standing order 28(h), requesting that the vote on Bill 27 be deferred until tomorrow during the time of deferred votes, signed by the chief government whip.

Second reading vote deferred.

PUTTING CONSUMERS FIRST ACT
(CONSUMER PROTECTION STATUTE
LAW AMENDMENT), 2016

LOI DE 2016 DONNANT LA PRIORITÉ
AUX CONSOMMATEURS (MODIFIANT
DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LA PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR)

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 24, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 59, An Act to enact a new Act with respect to home inspections and to amend various Acts with respect to financial services and consumer protection / *Projet de loi 59, Loi édictant une nouvelle loi concernant les inspections immobilières et modifiant diverses lois concernant les services financiers et la protection du consommateur.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on Bill 59? Further debate? The member from St. Catharines.

Mr. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much. I was not expecting to debate this particular piece of legislation at this point in time, but I'm delighted to do so, because it's a piece of legislation that I have asked our various ministers to bring in for a period of time and one which I suspect has the support of all three parties. We'll see when the vote takes place, but I would think that all the parties would be in favour of this kind of consumer protection.

This deals with what we have all confronted as individual members of the Legislature, and that is people

going door to door and badgering or bullying or persuading, using interesting tactics, people to sign contracts which they really didn't want to sign. Now, one of the things we want to do is ensure that there were rules in place that this wouldn't happen.

One of the challenges we've had is that every time we take some action, the people who are responsible for going door to door and persuading people to buy things they didn't want seem to find a new wrinkle or a new foot in the door, so to speak. Now, it's particularly cases where there are vulnerable seniors. Many people who are senior citizens in our society are very trusting people. Over the years, they have been used to people perhaps coming door to door years ago selling encyclopedias or perhaps vacuum cleaners and things of that nature. The tactics that were used then were far different than what we see today.

We find now that people want people to purchase new furnaces, new water heating systems, new air conditioners, and they persuade people that they're somehow going to save money by making the purchase that they are trying to persuade them to make. Unfortunately, many of the people regret signing a contract or agreeing to a contract. Therefore, cooling-off periods have been very, very helpful. The ability not to have a contract actually signed at the door when somebody comes to the door is one of the things that has been proposed. Often the complaints we receive aren't from the people themselves, but from members of their family, who, when they find out what has been signed and what the implications are financially, have then contacted our constituency offices to ask how they can get out of these contracts.

There are have been television programs. I'm going to suggest programs such as W5 on CTV and Marketplace on CBC as a couple of those—and I know Global has had some coverage of this as well—that have pointed out the great difficulty confronting people who are being bullied at the door. People will show up with what they say is government identification. The former minister is entering the House at the present time, and he's well aware of this and was initiating certain actions when he had that responsibility, and the new minister now is following up with even further action. But we know these people would be very persuasive. Once they got the name on a contract, it was difficult to get out of the contract. I think that all of us in this House are very sympathetic to those people.

Does that mean we want to block any sales forever of anything? No. But it does mean that certain tough rules have to be put in place, so that we do not have that happening, particularly to vulnerable citizens in our society, costing them hundreds or thousands of dollars more than they would have anticipated or more than they would have money to spend.

The second is home inspectors. Nowadays, people want to have a home inspected when they are purchasing it and, sometimes, people who are selling want to have a home inspector in to be able to certify that the house

they're selling is in good shape. Home inspectors themselves—because the right-wing talk show hosts, as soon as this happens, of course, immediately say, “Oh, that's the Liberal government wanting to put more rules and regulations in place. Isn't it awful?” Of course, they forget when they find out later that, in fact, it was the home inspectors themselves who wanted to see a regime put in place to ensure that they are regulated appropriately, so that they have the qualifications and the credibility as individuals who do home inspections to carry out the responsibilities.

It's good for the consumer, it's good for the homeowners and it's good, of course, for the home inspectors themselves. There are a lot of very legitimate people out there who are in this business. They know what they're doing and they know what to look for. They're very helpful to prospective homebuyers and to those who are selling houses by providing information on everything that would be relevant to a home sale taking place.

Of course, also in this consumer protection bill, we're dealing with the people who have payday loans. I remember driving down a main street in Hamilton and, within two blocks, there had to be about five of these places in business, all of them trying to lure people in who were in a very vulnerable position because they needed money and couldn't easily get it from, say, a bank or a credit union. Even though credit unions recently have endeavoured to help as many people as possible in this situation, there are those who are not credit-worthy enough to be able to do this, and they're in desperate circumstances. What they don't realize is what kind of provisions there are when they make the purchase—I'll call it the purchase—of that loan. Now, there are some people who would say, “Why don't you put them all out of business?” There's a certain attractiveness to that, because they do prey upon the most vulnerable people, financially speaking.

We probably all have a credit bureau within our community or nearby that gives good advice. I always advise people who are in those circumstances and call our constituency office, “Please consult with a credit counselling service in the community,” because those individuals are there to tell people how they might obtain some money without it costing them all kinds of money in interest, or how they might rearrange their finances to be able to be very viable.

I look at the changes that the minister has proposed. In this case, I think they're attractive to many people in this House. Some good suggestions have really come from all sides of the House. I have to pay particular tribute to my colleague from Etobicoke Centre, who brought forward a private member's bill that I think prompted some of this legislation, and he certainly deserves a great deal of credit.

To be fair, I think people from all sides of this House have encountered what I have as an individual constituency person, and have said that there are ways we can protect the consumer. You never want to go overboard on this, and I don't think this bill does that. You want to

ensure that you cover all of the bases. We're always interested in any amendments that might come forward that, as a result of the bill being presented and people talking about it, it can be improved. If it can be, the government is prepared to accept amendments, but only if those amendments are going to, in fact, improve the legislation and not be counter to the intent of the legislation.

I pay tribute to both Ministers of Consumer Services, the member for Sault Ste. Marie and the member for Ottawa-Orléans, both of whom have made this effort. They've consulted with people in the field. The members of the public service who work in those ministries have been providing advice, both the Ministry of the Attorney General and the ministry of consumer services—consumer and business services, as we call it today.

1550

I think, as a result, we'll have a good bill here that, if accepted by the House—and I look across at another member for Ottawa who I think would be very supportive of this. This morning, she had on a shirt which was the Ottawa Redblacks. I want to take this opportunity, with the forbearance of the Speaker, to congratulate the Ottawa Redblacks on their victory in the Grey Cup. I know there were people from the West who were hopeful, because of the record during the season, that Calgary would win. We always thank them for participating, but we wanted to see the Redblacks win. As a renewed franchise, for instance, it's been very good. They haven't won since the 1970s—I think 1976?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Yes.

Mr. James J. Bradley: Somewhere in there—before I was even in this Legislature. That tells you how long ago it was that they won. I want to congratulate them now.

But back to the bill, I think this bill is one which, as I look around and see heads nodding—they're either nodding off during my speech or they're nodding in agreement with the bill—I certainly encourage all members to pass as expeditiously as possible.

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

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm pleased to make a comment on the chief government whip's comments—the member for St. Catharines. I was nodding: I was nodding with you in agreement that we're proud the Ottawa Redblacks won the Grey Cup yesterday, and we're proud of our member from Nepean-Carleton, who was a strong supporter of the Ottawa Redblacks heading into the Grey Cup final yesterday. What a game that was. We're probably going to have a 10-minute speech by myself in the next little while, so I'm hoping they stick around and listen.

However, I'm glad the chief government whip—the minister of the Blue Jays, as we refer to him—had the opportunity to speak. I'm glad he stood up and gave his few minutes. There are great concerns in my riding with regard to payday lending, cheque cashing, those types of organizations. They seem to be prolific in our part of Ontario. We wish there were other businesses that were being prolific and creating jobs, but unfortunately people

are on hard times in this province with their high energy bills.

I will give more explanation as to my points but I'm glad the member stood up and gave their points. We are supportive of this bill. We will have amendments at committee when this bill reaches committee. Hopefully, the government takes our amendments, looks at them, studies them and approves of the amendments that we bring forward.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Well, this bill does a couple of things that are right but it leaves a whole host of areas where they just don't do enough. It's particularly important to highlight these gaps because they're the biggest problem.

One of the areas this bill purports to address is payday loans and payday loan companies. That's a serious problem and it's a serious issue in this province, and the government has an opportunity here to do something. What is their big action? Their action is to delegate authority to do something to the municipalities. That's their big action on this file.

When people have been talking about how payday loan companies exploit the poor, how they put people in a very difficult position—they take people who are already hard off and make it even worse. This government's solution to the problem is just to say, "Okay, municipalities, you can go and regulate that." That is passing the buck; that is not dealing with the problem.

What we need to see in this piece of legislation is a hard cap on the amount of interest that these payday loan companies can charge. We need to see a commitment to creating accessible and affordable credit so that low-income people don't rely on these exorbitantly high interest rates that are charged by payday loan companies.

In another area, this bill is taking a step in the right direction, but we want to ensure that it's not just incremental steps again and again. Where it comes to door-to-door sales, this government took an initiative to address this problem when it came to water heaters and furnaces, but they left open a whole host of other areas. So I ask the government: In this implementation, in this bill, let's make sure we address the key problem, which is high-interest, long-term contracts that people get locked into for services at the door. Let's make sure the bill covers a wide host of scenarios, so that it's not the case that certain areas are covered but then, months later or years later, we see that there's another area that has been left unaddressed.

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's an honour to join the debate on this bill. I'm particularly proud of this piece of legislation because, I have to tell you that just recently, I reintroduced in September and prior, in the previous session, introduced a private member's bill that would ban the door-to-door sales of certain products, where people regularly get duped and convinced to sign contracts that

charge them more than they should pay for certain products, that leave them with products that they don't actually need, and often the products they get sold don't operate as advertised.

I hold a seniors' advisory group meeting every month in my riding. When I started holding the meetings, I started to hear from seniors about the issues that are important to them. I heard about issues that you would expect to hear about. I heard about pocketbook issues, I heard about health care, I heard about housing and a range of other issues. But what I was surprised to hear was how often those seniors had experienced, or knew someone who had experienced, being taken advantage of at the door by a door-to-door salesperson. More often than not, the products that they were selling were furnaces, air conditioners, water heaters and water treatment devices.

To me, it is beyond reprehensible that there are businesses, that there are people who make a living, who have a business model based on taking advantage of vulnerable consumers.

That's why I introduced a private member's bill to ban the door-to-door sale of furnaces, water heaters, air conditioners and water treatment devices. That's why I'm so proud to stand here today, because our government has taken up this piece of legislation and has included in this piece of legislation—which protects consumers in a number of areas—provisions that would ban the unsolicited door-to-door sale of certain products, like the ones I've mentioned. It also regulates the home inspection industry and strengthens consumer financial protection.

These are the kinds of things that are important to the people of Ontario, but they're particularly important to the people and particularly the seniors in my riding of Etobicoke Centre, who need to know that they will be protected when they buy products that we all use every single day.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm proud to rise today and I, too, would like to add my congratulations to the Ottawa Redblacks. Being a season's ticket holder since the middle 1980s, it's been a long, long drought. I think Henry Burris did a great job yesterday, pulling those—

Interjection.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Yes, it was an exciting game, and I was in doubt many times throughout.

Anyway, to this bill, it's interesting. For parts of it, I spoke for some length to it. But the issue when it comes to payday loans is, what we don't see in this bill is anything that the government has done to actually help people who are in need. I think that's the biggest issue. The people who have to resort to these loans are doing so because they have no alternative. They can't get bank financing, and they're stuck.

So what do they do? They just legislate it away, thinking that the people will just not need the money, and of course, that's not true. They will have to go under-

ground. It's too bad, because it has the opportunity to fix something.

One of my colleagues was talking about the door-to-door sales on water heaters. I know that's probably dropped quite a bit, because they were talking about banning natural gas. I suppose that would ruin that market. But we're not sure what they're going to do as time goes by. That's always an alternative.

I think that instead of just banning things, you have to look at the root cause, what's the issue. Working out a deal with the banks to make cheque cashing more available—there are lots of issues that could be done, and we don't see that here. What we see are people in Ontario who are in need who can't afford to pay a hydro bill. The cost of getting a reconnection is extreme. What do you want to do? You have to go and get cash to pay these bills off.

I'm looking forward to that, hopefully, as they get into amendments, maybe there will be something we'll see that we're not expecting, but unfortunately, it's not likely.

Anyway, I'm happy to speak on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That was four questions and comments. I allow the member for St. Catharines to reply.

1600

Mr. James J. Bradley: I appreciate the comments of all members who have commented on my speech to this House.

I want to point out to the NDP critic that our government is proposing to provide the registrar of payday loans with authority to inspect unlicensed lenders and provide for a rulemaking authority to set standards that lenders must take into account when determining a borrower's ability to repay, restrict high-frequency borrowing, provide repeat borrowers with an extended payment plan option, and improve or add compliance and enforcement powers to address unlicensed lenders.

I say that because there was an indication that all that had been done was that we had downloaded, so-called, onto municipalities. What I have to say to the member is that we received from various municipalities across the province a request, in fact, that we make certain provisions in the bill so that they could get involved in licensing. This was not something we foisted upon them; it is something that they happened to request.

I think the other comments that have been made surrounding education are important as well. It's providing as much information to the public as possible on what these payday loan and cheque-cashing places do, providing as much information on what the interest rates happen to be, as much information on the loans and the consequences of taking out such a loan.

They've been with us a long period of time, and there's a concern, I know, that somehow, just as soon as we pass the bill, someone will circumvent it. That's why we have this Legislature and a regulatory framework available to us: to enable us, in fact, to make any changes along the way when we see that people have tried to

determine a way to get around the provisions of this legislation.

I look forward to further debate and suggestions from all in the House.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to rise in debate of Bill 59, the Putting Consumers First Act. Before I do, I wanted to say thank you to all of my colleagues who have congratulated me and other members from Ottawa, including my colleague from Ottawa South, on the wonderful win last night by the Ottawa Redblacks, after only three seasons in the CFL. They ended a 40-year drought in our community by bringing home the Grey Cup in probably one of the best football games I've ever seen. It went into overtime, but I must say, in the regular play, the last two minutes were probably the most tense I've ever watched, and I was very, very proud that we have the Grey Cup. I'll be looking forward to attending the parade tomorrow with my little girl. I'm very, very excited about that.

I also wanted to say thanks to members of this assembly for allowing me and Mr. Fraser to wear our jerseys in pride. When you come from a community like ours of close to a million people—we still think we're a small town, despite the fact that we are the second-largest municipality in the entire province. It is because of, I think, our sports teams, like the Redblacks, like the Senators, like the 67s, like the Ottawa Champions, which bring our community together.

But that's not the only win I want to talk about before I get into the meat of this bill, Speaker. This is my first opportunity in debate to thank and congratulate the two new members of this assembly who were recently elected in a by-election. I'd like to congratulate my colleague for the Progressive Conservatives in Niagara West—Glanbrook, Sam Oosterhoff, obviously succeeding my colleague, and former MPP, Tim Hudak.

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I would also, if the government members would like to listen, like to congratulate, from my city, in Ottawa—Vanier, Nathalie Des Rosiers.

We come to this chamber, and many times we will deal with legislation—many times we actually agree, and people don't see that. It will be a bill like this, Bill 59, where we in the opposition actually do see the merits to the government's legislation, and will be part of a proactive approach in addressing a problem in the province and coming to terms with agreement. Other times, however, we do disagree, and sometimes that can be quite polarizing. But I would remind the two new members, one from the opposition and one from the government, that the eagle above the government reminds the opposition members to keep a watchful eye on the actions of government. Meanwhile, the owl at the intersection of the arches above the west public gallery, you'll note, reminds the governing party to use their power wisely. As we have this discussion on Bill 59, I think it's an appropriate time to welcome both of those two members

to this assembly, but also to remind them that we each have roles to play. Depending on what type of legislation we're dealing with, we may be more in agreement with one another than we are in disagreement.

When I look at this piece of legislation put forward by another Ottawa—this is a very eastern Ontario type of day. The Minister of Government and Consumer Services is an Ottawa member, and our critic on the Progressive Conservative side is also an eastern Ontarian from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Jim McDonell. I must congratulate my colleague Mr. McDonell for the wonderful work that he has done distilling this information for my Progressive Conservative colleagues and me, and how this bill will impact our constituents.

I think when you look at an act to look at home inspections and to amend other acts with respect to financial services and consumer protection, you're looking at effectively something that's an omnibus bill, covering a number of different areas. I note here we're dealing with home inspections, door-to-door sales, collections, payday lending, cooling-off periods, cheque cashing, debt settlement, leases and a number of other things in terms of a former Bill 55. When I look at this piece of legislation, I think my colleague Jim McDonell has done an incredible job in making sure that our colleagues in the Progressive Conservative Party are prepared to debate this legislation.

Let me talk a little bit about home inspection. I represent Nepean–Carleton, one of the fastest-growing communities in all of Canada, not just in Ontario. Nepean is home to a community called Barrhaven, where we are fast growing in terms of housing developments. We are always in constant awe of the development that is occurring in our community. I think it's really important that we have reliable home inspection professionals so that consumers across the province, new homeowners, before they make their largest purchase, will have a credible, reliable home inspector.

Right now, at the present moment, there are no province-wide certifications or professional standards for home inspectors, or any recourse, for that matter, for a consumer whose home is revealed to be in need of major work following a purchase. I think, when I look at the communities that I represent, this is important for them, whether it's a new home that they are buying or a home that has been generously loved by a previous family.

The government, of course, commissioned a consultation on home inspections that recommended licensing the profession. We are pleased in the Progressive Conservative caucus that the government has taken some of Mr. McDonell's advice and begun integrating independent officer oversight and salary disclosures into legislation, in compliance with the sunshine list. We'd prefer, obviously, that other independent officers beyond the Auditor General oversee the authority, such as the Ombudsman, but these points can no longer be integrated due to the committee's procedural rules.

Stakeholders such as the Ontario home inspectors and real estate professionals have already voiced their support of this initiative. I think that's incredibly critical. If you

have a major organization like the Ontario Real Estate Association coming out in support of these home inspections, I think that is a step in the right direction and it's one that we certainly listen to.

I worked with OREA many times throughout my career and, in fact, have tabled a piece of legislation on a number of occasions dealing with illegal grow-ops and clandestine drug operations because, as you probably are aware, in different parts of Ontario, my community included, there have been homes that have been abused by renters or even owners who have used those for illegal drug operations, and in some cases these are very dangerous to communities. In every case, they are illegal, and there is no recourse for the future buyer or for the current homeowner that may be leasing or renting that facility to recover anything. So it's important that we have home inspectors that are fully licensed, reliable and credible to our consumers in the province of Ontario.

The Ontario Association of Home Inspectors has experience; they have expertise in coordinating professional standards and education on a voluntary basis. The authority, if it is not synonymous with OAHI, must draw on this pool of knowledge. I think it's incredible that we are now formalizing this within this legislative context in order for us to better protect consumers in the province of Ontario when they are purchasing a home or they have rented out that home, and that it provides them with some recourse.

1610

I'm not going to get too into detail with door-to-door sales, collections or payday lending. Many of the others will have an opportunity. I have a limited amount of time, Speaker. But I did want to point out that I was once a Girl Guide and I am the mother now of a graduated Girl Guide. I must say, I have gone door to door many a time, not just to door-knock in a campaign to try to get myself elected but to actually go door to door to sell Girl Guide cookies. Last year, when she finished, I realized I had a case of these in the trunk of my minivan. People love Girl Guide cookies but they didn't want to take two or three boxes at a time, and I wasn't prepared to go door to door to sell them, Speaker, because I frankly didn't have that much time and they were a little bit out of date. Thankfully, my faithful assistant Kayla Fernet did take those cookies and now, whenever she has people visiting her home, she's able to give those cookies out. That's obviously very important.

When I look at the rest of this bill, looking at, for example, door-to-door sales, which is a direct-selling industry of \$2 billion annually in Canada that employs thousands of law-abiding salespeople who care about their customers, it's us trying to deal with those bad actors in the system. And they may not be deterred by new regulation. They could be continuing to go after vulnerable consumers. That's why it's important for the ministry to take its duty to educate and reach out very seriously.

In terms of collections, this industry must have a rock-solid consumer protection provision and strong enforcement to deter wrongdoing.

Finally, with payday lending, it is a last resort, as one of my colleagues had stated earlier, and it's one where we must ensure that people understand through their own financial education and awareness that it is probably more difficult than they may think once they're involved in it. I think that's why it's important for us to reduce problem access for consumers so that they're seeking more legitimate types to assist them.

I know, Speaker—and I'll speak to this in my closing remarks—times are tough and people are vulnerable. It's becoming increasingly more important that government protect people from those who want to take advantage of them, particularly our senior population.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Nepean–Carleton. She always comes up with some good information and does her homework, which I certainly respect.

Unfortunately, it's been a bad day for me here watching all these Ottawa fans with their shirts on. Being a Tiger-Cat fan, it's been very hurtful, but I got through it because the East won, at least; they beat the West. I can live with that, Speaker, but I'd like to see a different colour here next year.

Anyway, in reference to the bill, there's a lot of good effort by the government to get some good things for consumer protection in here, but they missed a lot. What I mean by that is there are a lot of vulnerable people out there who have people coming to the door offering to fix their roof and do renovations, and half the time they take the money and they don't come back, or half the time they do a bad job and expect to be paid in full for shady workmanship. I don't think this bill goes far enough.

Also, many times over the years, people come to your door representing the cancer society or heart or all these others, and they have fake IDs and they sometimes rip people off. I don't think these people are prosecuted enough, because there are a lot of vulnerable people out there. Someone may have lost a family member to these types of diseases and they're very generous with their donations at the door sometimes, and sometimes they're very vulnerable. I've seen many incidents over the years where people pretend to be who they're not at the door and a lot of senior citizens and a lot of other people who are meaning well get burnt, to say the least.

I think this bill doesn't go far enough. There are a lot of other things that happen at the door that this bill doesn't cover.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's great to be debating this bill this afternoon. We are all, of course, very proud of the Redblacks. It was the best CFL game that I think I've seen in my whole life. It was really an exciting game. And I do want to say that I didn't need any consumer protection for the friendly wager I had with a certain member. It's all squared right now. He squared up pretty quickly and I have a lot of respect for him.

This bill is something we can all agree on because we know that we have to provide protection for the people we represent. There are a lot of things that happen—like with home inspections. It's the biggest purchase of a family's life or an individual's life. I have a friend who just helped his daughter and son-in-law buy a house. They had a challenge that was a significant one, and it's going to create some pressure on that family. So that's something we have to address.

I have to commend the member from Etobicoke Centre on door-to-door sales. If you take a look at the risk that's there for seniors and vulnerable people to sign contracts that they can't get out of, it's something that we need to address. So I'm glad to see so much agreement and support.

To the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek: We can always do more, and that's what we try to do. We have to continually look at those pieces of legislation and policies that we put forward, to make sure that we're reflecting what the current circumstances are, what the risks are out there and what we all agree on are important things to do for the people we serve.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to follow my colleague from Nepean–Carleton. I wish her congratulations on her Redblacks victory. Of course, we've heard about that somehow in the House today.

I'd also like to commend my colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, who has put in a lot of time and energy to make sure we're aware of the important points in this bill. I think there are some positives: things like door-to-door sales limitations and home inspector regulation, which, again, we brought to the attention of the government, and they came through—payday lending, leases—all of those things that consumer protection needs so that people aren't getting scammed at the door.

One of the things that I know we've talked about a lot in here is the whole payday lending act. One of the concerns we have is, are we really addressing why they need it? What I see and what I've heard a lot in my riding and across the province is that people, sadly, are needing more and more of those services because of their inability to pay their bills, particularly their hydro bills. The Minister of Energy stood in the House this morning and was almost proud that there were 300,000 people on a list to get energy assistance in the form of government programs. I would hope that they'd actually be more proud of trying to get that list wiped out so they don't have anybody having to put their hand out looking for assistance, and taking away the stress. Cold weather is coming. The Christmas season is coming. People need to see some relief on their hydro bills and the ability for them to live a better life.

The other thing that I certainly have heard—people have come to me to say that one of the biggest door-to-door issues they have is something like when a politician knocks on the door and doesn't talk about the big things,

like selling Hydro One, for example. What are they going to do about those door-to-door salespeople? It wasn't even in the discussion when we campaigned in 2014. It wasn't even brought to light. And now they're going to actually sell that asset, which results in even more people needing relief, more people needing payday loans, because they are saying, "Can I can afford food or can I afford my heat?"

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Walker: The government—I think I've hit a nerve because they're actually heckling me a fair bit when I talk about this issue that people are talking to me about.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to follow the member from Nepean and comment. It's good to see the pride in the Redblacks' victory from yesterday. I have to tell you, though, if you're not a big football fan, myself included, and you watched the documentary on the shooting death of Mylan Hicks—and the fact that his mom was there at the game yesterday. What a waste of a life. How tragic it was. For those of us who don't follow football—I have to confess that I was really hoping for a win for Mylan Hicks's mom, as a mom of the Stampeders. But I'm very happy that an Ontario team won. It was a testament to the skill of those athletes on the field.

With regard to Bill 59, I must tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we thought Bill 70 was going to be on the docket this afternoon—an important piece of legislation which has an aspect of consumer protection in it, especially for those people who are having renovations in their homes and are hoping that the college could play a role in ensuring that some of those workers are actually qualified to do the work on an above-board basis. That certainly is a consumer protection perspective that we would have brought to that debate had it not collapsed already for second reading, with public delegations already on Thursday. Boy, there are some pieces of legislation that move very fast through this House and there are some pieces that go very, very slow, and there's a reason for that.

1620

I thought the member from Nepean, though, brought that personal perspective around consumer protection. It is true: We rarely agree on a piece of legislation. That's as good as it's going to get, from my perspective.

I'll do 10 minutes on it later as to all the weaknesses that are contained within this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments for this round, and we return to the member from Nepean–Carleton for her response.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Speaker. Again, it was a pleasure to speak to Bill 59, and it was really wonderful to engage with my colleagues from all sides of the House on this piece of legislation.

But also, a little bit on the Redblacks: I need to say to my friend from Kitchener–Waterloo that I did watch that

documentary and was really touched about the life of Mylan Hicks, but also by his mom's strength. I wouldn't go quite as far as saying that I hoped for Calgary, but I would hope that the member—and this is me being a hockey mom who now cheers for the team that scores against my daughter; I have now become that person. But it was good; I'm sure they felt in the last two minutes of play that they had lived up to their promise and their commitment to their teammate. But I am very, very proud of Henry Burris and others.

Speaker, I spend a lot of time at the rink these days, as a hockey trainer. My daughter's team lost the other day, 3-1. She had a penalty; I'm sure you're all surprised by that. They scored, one man down, and then we lost at an empty-netter. So it was 3-1.

That has absolutely nothing to do with Bill 59, but you know what? It is putting something first, and I think it's putting family first, going to my daughter's hockey games and watching peewee house league and being on that team. Again, it's taking me away from having to do that door-to-door sales at Girl Guides, because there is way too much hockey going on in my house.

It's also why, as you will recall, Speaker, when I was talking about going door to door and selling Girl Guide cookies, that I had that extra box in my trunk, and I had to get rid of it, because there was no room for all the hockey gear and all the water bottles and all the pucks. So that actually helped with that.

Speaker, again, it's wonderful to speak to Bill 59. It's wonderful to be here with all my colleagues. I wouldn't rather spend my Monday afternoon with anyone else but all of you.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House and speak on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming–Cochrane, and today on Bill 59, An Act to enact a new Act with respect to home inspections and to amend various Acts with respect to financial services and consumer protection. It's a big mouthful, but it covers three main areas.

The first one is home inspections. I think a lot of people in Ontario probably didn't know that home inspectors right now aren't regulated. I have a confession to make: I didn't know that before this act was brought in. I think it's a good thing that this industry is being regulated.

There are a lot of good home inspectors out there, but there's no real bar, except a voluntary one. That's a problem, especially when you consider that buying a home is probably the biggest investment of many people's lives. They need to be reassured that this home is actually what it is shown to be.

Sometimes houses can fool you, Speaker. I'll give you a couple of examples. We've bought and sold several houses, my wife and I, but usually they came with farms. We weren't as concerned with the house as we were with the farm. We lived in this house for a while. It was a nice house on the outside. It's still a nice house. I was busy in

the field, and we were going to put a door in it, an extra door, a patio door. I told Ria she could knock out the drywall and then she'd find studs and insulation. I'd come back and I'd put a header in, and we could get somebody to do the work to put in a door.

She knocked out the drywall and then she came to the field with the truck. She said, "John, what you told me was going to be there wasn't there." She took over in the field and I went to look, and there were boards. I cut the boards away, and then there were beams. It turned out that we lived in a log home, but we didn't know. It turned out that log home was built—we had a huge fire in 1922 in Timiskaming where several people died, thousands of acres were burned and several towns burned, and that house was built right after the fire. The whole house is built with three-by-sevens—the roof, the walls, the interior walls, everything. I never knew that but we found that out; the first couple of winters that was a very cold house. But we never would have known that. If someone was just buying that house for a home, they maybe would have had second thoughts that it was a log house. I'm not sure a home inspector would have actually caught that. That's a point.

I know of another home—and I never asked permission to use the person's name so I'm not going to use it, but I'm going to use the story. He went to purchase a home. It was 17 years old but a beautiful home. He bought it and he noticed a little while after that right by the chimney, the roof seemed to be failing a little bit. I think it was a leak. He thought, "I'll just go up and tar the roof." He walked on the roof and he noticed that there was much more going on than what he thought. It turned out that, somehow, how it had been built, dry rot had set in and all the walls had to be replaced and the first four feet of the trusses. It was a \$100,000 bill. I hope that a home inspector would have caught that. That's truly where a home inspector is worth their weight in gold.

The last house I purchased, where I now live, is the first house that we ever bought for a house. There was no farm that came with this one, just a couple of lots.

Interjection: Just a big lake.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes.

We debated whether we should have a home inspector, and we got a home inspector. I followed him all over—and this guy is reputable—and I crawled all over. I crawled in the attic; I did everything that he did. He found some issues with the house, the same issues that I identified; they weren't hidden. I think it was a valid exercise.

I have an admission to make: My daughter is going to move into a house on December 5—she purchased her first home in northern Ontario—and she didn't get a home inspector. It was my idea, because I figured if I crawled all over with the home inspector, I might as well just do the whole crawling all over myself. Actually, I am as legally qualified to inspect that home as a home inspector is before this legislation is passed. I could have technically said I was a home inspector because I followed a full home inspection. That's why we need this legislation.

I'm also a major investor in this home so if something goes wrong, I'm sure I'll end up—

Interjection: Ka-ching.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, but I'm really happy that my daughter is buying a house in northern Ontario.

I think the home inspection part of this bill—I think we're all in agreement. We can talk about how it should be done a bit differently, but home inspections have a valid purpose. Not everyone is a carpenter or knows someone who is a carpenter or knows someone who is plumber, so to have an ability to hire someone to do an inspection—an impartial inspection; it's also important—that's a really good thing. And to know that there's—

Mr. Paul Miller: So he does respect tradespeople.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm being heckled by my own member, Speaker.

So to know that you can hire somebody and there's a bar which they have to pass, and also that if you have an issue you can go back to their administrative body and say, "Wait a second, in our opinion there was something wrong with the way this inspection was done," is a very good thing.

The second part that this bill covers is door-to-door sales—some door-to-door sales. I remember when we first got elected—I was elected at the same time as the member from Kenora–Rainy River. I know that in our neck of the woods, her part of northern Ontario and my part of northern Ontario, we spent a lot of time fighting door-to-door sales on energy contracts. They were horrific.

Again, to add a personal story to this: My mother moved from her own home to a retirement home, and we were—I'm not proud of this—fixing up her financial details and, lo and behold, I found out that my mother had signed one of these energy contracts, and she was paying way too much for electricity for a lot of years. I'm sure that it's happening to other people too.

1630

Again, it's incumbent on us to make sure that we put guidelines in place—I was going to say "roadblocks"; maybe "roadblocks" is better, because people will try to go around it. But it's incumbent on us to make sure that we identify a problem like that, and door-to-door sales are a problem. Now I understand that it's water heaters and furnaces.

A wise person once told me that if you want to make a wise purchase, you have to decide yourself that you need something and then you search it out. When someone else comes and says, "You need this," you should take that with a grain of salt. Because unless you woke up at 6 o'clock that morning wanting a new water heater, and if somebody comes at 11 o'clock, saying, "You need a water heater"—if you didn't think of that at 6 o'clock this morning, maybe you should hold the phone.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Is that a Dutch saying?

Mr. John Vanthof: It was actually my dad, so it's a Dutch thing. But if you really think about it, it's true, right? It's a pretty good guideline.

So anything that we can do to make sure that door-to-door sales are regulated and—you know, there are people

who call for an outright ban. I'm not sure that you can make that work, because, as has been mentioned, a few people would want to ban politicians from door-to-door sales.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Maybe they should.

Mr. John Vanthof: And maybe they should. But we have to do everything we can to make sure that the people who show up at your door are upfront and not overly aggressive and that they actually play by a certain set of rules.

The last thing that I need to touch on: This act also talks about payday loans, although it is an omission of this act that it doesn't actually address the interest rates of payday loans. It's a fact that people need payday loans; it's a fact of life. It's not a thing that we should be proud of as a society, but there are some people who need them.

But the fact that those people are in a problem place, and then they are gouged—and we all know that they are gouged. We can always go better with bills. The government can always do a better job, and no one is discounting that. But if you're really going to help people who are afflicted with the payday loan industry, we need to look at the interest rates.

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

Mr. James J. Bradley: I want to say that what was helpful—and it often is in legislation of this kind—was the member for Timiskaming's personal story about the need for home inspections. In today's market and with the cost of things today, he's quite right in saying that a significant flaw in a house doesn't cost \$5,000 or \$10,000 anymore. It can cost as much as \$100,000, if it's as significant a flaw as he described.

That's why home inspections have become even more important today than they ever were. Having people who are well-qualified, as he points out, who know what they're doing, who have the training, who have the experience and who have the trust of both the buyer and seller is exceedingly important. This bill goes a long way to address that.

There are suggestions with other parts of the bill that we simply ban anything door-to-door. I don't think that we could probably constitutionally get away with that. But it's tempting, and it's tempting because of circumstances that members have brought to our attention, where people have been just bamboozled into making purchases that they simply did not want to make.

In terms of the payday loans, it's the same thing. I mean, the knee-jerk reaction is, "Just abolish the places." But what we know—and I think that some of the members have alluded to this—is that if you do, it goes completely underground. By making rules that people can live by and putting restrictions on them and complying with what some municipalities want, this bill goes a long way to solving some of these problems. Of course, we look forward to any amendments that would come forward for evaluation.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: We know that Bill 70 is a budget measures bill, and it does address the Land Transfer Tax Act. I just wanted to point out that back in 1996, under the Mike Harris government, a first-time buyer purchasing an average-priced home did not pay any land transfer tax at all, thanks to a rebate system. Now, in 1996—and this is the nature of the real estate market, much of it driven by Toronto prices—an average-priced home was something like \$155,000; 20 years later, we know things have changed.

This is from the Ontario Real Estate Association: They indicate that an average-priced home now is something in the order of \$529,827. A first-time buyer, when they're over that threshold and at that level, is paying something like \$5,000 in land transfer tax. That probably impacts the amount you're paying on your mortgage and probably does suffocate the odd real estate sale as well.

Presently in Ontario, a first-time homebuyer with a rebate will get about \$2,000 back. The proposal is to get \$4,000 back. I think the real estate association would like to see \$6,000 back. I would like to see the elimination of this land transfer tax, myself.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to compliment the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. What I like about his presentations is that he brings personal experience into the fray.

Speaker, I personally built a home with—well, the builder built it and I checked it out, but it helped that I had three trades. I would have my friends in different trades go up while the house was being built and we would check it when the builders had gone home for the day, just to go over it and see that code was carried through. We picked up a couple of little things, but basically, the builder did a good job.

It was good to know for your peace of mind when you're building a house that with experienced tradespeople, you can go up there with a few friends and they can check it. I had an electrician buddy of mine. I had a framer and a couple of other guys come up. They gave me the thumbs-up for it. I was quite pleased, because these guys are well respected in their fields and they know what to look for—something where these fly-by-night building inspectors would never know. So having them licensed is very important.

I do believe that the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane could be right. That one thing he noticed, that it used to be a log cabin and he tore the wall apart—I don't think even a qualified building inspector would drill into the wall to find out what's in there, so I'm not quite sure how that would have helped him.

The bottom line is that you certainly have to beware of what you're buying and take an interest in it. I would recommend to any consumer who's buying a house that they get people in qualified trades, if they know anybody or find somebody, and have them just go over it and take

a look before the building inspector comes so that they can do comparative analysis to make sure that the qualified building inspector—which he doesn't have to be nowadays—would be able to catch it.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker. I believe you're supposed to say thank you, not the member from Etobicoke North.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

The member for Etobicoke North on a question-and-comment round.

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Merci, monsieur le Président. J'ai le plaisir de soutenir et de parler du projet de loi 59 donnant la priorité aux consommateurs.

Speaker, it's a privilege to speak not only on this bill but also on a day that the honourable member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, I understand, is grieving for the loss of his particular team. We share in that grief and so on.

There are a number of important points in this bill, as has been mentioned by a number of my colleagues. Of course, we salute the remarks from the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, who I think would function quite well as a home inspector—although, now that we are seeking to regulate and institutionalize and codify and bring some more scrutiny to this area, perhaps we could all increase our skill set in this area.

1640

I think it's important, as the member from the riding of Etobicoke North, just immediately to the north of Etobicoke Centre—my colleague, as you will be aware, brought forward some of the substantive parts of this bill originally in a private member's bill. We have a number of seniors who unfortunately continue, to this day, to succumb—maybe because they're polite; maybe because there's a language issue; maybe because folks who show up to the door look official, as if they're from the government or from the energy board or from some entity that really should not be said no to—and they unfortunately find themselves signing up, whether it's for a home furnace, a heater, some kind of a gas contract, whatever, in ways that really should not be happening in the province of Ontario. That's why we are making it possible to ban unsolicited door-to-door sales.

Now, it's not all door-to-door sales—it's not every kind of particular sale that might happen—but I think it's important, for those of us who have a high proportion of seniors, that we bring them an added level of consumer protection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments for this particular round. We return to the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank all the members who took the time to respond, and I'd like to respond to them as well, such as the member for St. Catharines. He made a remark that sometimes, when we overregulate, we drive things underground. I would wholeheartedly

agree. That has happened so many times in this province. One of them was with small abattoirs. We overregulated, and as a result, we have lots of slaughtering going on, but now a lot of it is happening in places where it shouldn't happen.

I fully agree with that statement, and we should look, each time we make a regulation, at whether that regulation is actually going to be effective or whether it's going to appear to be effective for a speech but, in actuality, doesn't work at all. I totally agree with that.

The member from Haldimand–Norfolk talked about, in Bill 70, the rebate for houses for first-time homebuyers. I don't think, in most parts of the province, that a \$2,000 rebate is really—in my part of the world, it's quite a bit—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes. But Toronto?

Mr. John Vanthof: —but in Toronto, it's not going to make that big of a difference.

The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek said something about how we should look for people who are well respected in their fields. We've had our discussions about tradesmen and farmers, and we're both well respected in our fields.

Finally, the member from Etobicoke North touched on an issue regarding—and I think one of the things that this bill is trying to help with is seniors, and seniors are some of the most affected by door-to-door sales. I know in my constituency office, some of the most egregious complaints we get are from seniors who feel pressured and who feel that the people they're dealing with were some type of officialdom. I think he touched on a really good point. That's something we all have to keep in mind. That's probably how my mom ended up with a Direct Energy contract. I think we really have to keep that in mind.

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's a privilege to join the debate on Bill 59, the Putting Consumers First Act.

Speaker, as I've said before in this Legislature, when I was elected, I was elected by the people of Etobicoke Centre to help make a difference in their lives. In a democracy, in the system of government that we have, it takes a lot of work for an individual member to be able to make that difference in a meaningful way. I know all the members on this side work very hard to be able to do that for their constituents every day.

I'm so proud to be standing here today, Speaker, because this particular bill is one that I had the opportunity to play a role on, and I'll share with you why I say that.

Every month in the spring and in the fall, I hold a seniors' advisory group meeting in my riding, in Etobicoke Centre. The purpose of the meeting in part is to hear from seniors in my community about the issues that are important to them.

When I started holding these meetings shortly after I was elected, in the fall of 2014, I started to hear about the issues that you would expect to hear about. I started to

hear from seniors about transportation, I started to hear from seniors about pocketbook issues and the challenges they were facing; I heard about housing; I even heard about youth unemployment—a lot of the issues that you would expect to hear from seniors who are concerned for their own quality of life, but also for the quality of life within their communities and for their families.

I also started to hear about an issue that I didn't expect to hear about. That was the issue of door-to-door sales. I started to hear from seniors who had been the victims of aggressive, misleading and coercive sales tactics at their doors, or who knew someone who had been the victim of aggressive, misleading and coercive sales tactics at the door.

One constituent pulled me aside at the end of a meeting and said, "You know, all these issues we've been talking about"—because we talked about a range of them—"like health care, like education, like the environment, like transit, transportation—these are all important, but if you really are serious about helping seniors, the government needs to do something about seniors and other vulnerable consumers who are being taken advantage of every day at their very own doorstep, in their own home." That's when I decided to take this issue on, Speaker.

I want to share with you a story that I heard from one of the seniors in my community that I think brings this to life. This person is a member of my seniors' advisory group. One day, a senior in my community had a knock at the door. She opened the door, and there was a man standing there in an orange jacket, in a uniform. As she looked out beyond him on to the street, she saw a number of other men in matching orange jackets, knocking at the doors of her neighbours throughout her community. The gentleman said he was there with the energy company. He said that the energy company's analysis showed that energy use was unusually high in that particular neighbourhood and that they believed it was due to non-compliant furnaces, and so he asked if he could inspect her furnace. He had a jacket, a badge and a name tag and everything like that. He looked very official. So she allowed him to come in and inspect her furnace. He went down to take a look and immediately determined that it was out of compliance, that the furnace was not consistent with requirements.

But he said that he had a solution for her. He said that if she paid \$129 a month right away and signed on the dotted line right there, on the spot, he could get her existing non-compliant furnace replaced very, very quickly and that, as it so happened, the government of Ontario was offering a rebate to people who replaced their furnaces for more energy-efficient ones, and that the rebate was \$1,300 to anyone who signed up right away to get a new furnace. Of course, that rebate was a hoax, but she agreed to this. She thought he sounded legitimate and credible. He, of course, promised her that replacing her non-compliant furnace with a new one would allow her to save money on her hydro bill.

After thinking about it, after he'd gone away and she had signed the contract, the next day she realized she

thought she had been duped and she should have taken more time to make that decision. So, as is permitted by the law, there's a cooling-off period that every consumer is entitled to. So she called the company back the next day and said she'd like to cancel, and they wouldn't let her cancel. They weren't allowing her to cancel. They gave her all kinds of excuses. Coincidentally, as she was on the phone with the company trying to cancel, the installers came with a new furnace. They came in, they tore out her existing furnace and they put in the new one. Throughout the whole period on the phone, the company refused to cancel, refused to stop the installers and they took away her perfectly fine furnace.

She started getting billed immediately, \$129 a month. She never got the government of Ontario rebate that he had talked about, of course, and even though she was told that she'd be able to save on her energy bill, no such savings ever materialized. She just started paying \$129 a month for a furnace that replaced her existing furnace, which had been perfectly fine. When she complained and complained and complained, eventually the company who sold her the furnace said, "Well, listen, if you don't want to pay the \$129 a month, we can sell you the furnace we've already installed for \$9,000." Basically, they were offering to allow her to keep the furnace that she didn't want if she paid another \$9,000. That was how this company dealt with her.

1650

As I did more research, Speaker, I found out that stories like this are all too common, that people across Ontario continue to receive unwanted marketers at their door who use misleading, aggressive and coercive sales practices to entice people into contracts to take advantage of them. Under the guise of saving consumers money, many dishonest marketers dupe consumers into contracts that are more expensive than they should be, that have harsh cancellation fees or provide inferior products or services that don't work at all, or certainly don't work as advertised, as was the case in the story I just told you.

The problem is particularly concentrated in a handful of products: in the sale and lease of air conditioners, furnaces, water heaters and water treatment devices. These four products alone cost consumers—those who reported their experiences to the government of Ontario—\$3.2 million in 2015 alone. Now, these are just the people, for those four products, who reported what had happened to them to the government. You can imagine that there are going to be tens of thousands of consumers who wouldn't have reported what had happened to them, who wouldn't even realize that they had been duped. This number, this \$3.2-million figure, really understates how impacted people are by these misleading tactics.

So I decided I needed to do something about this and, after doing a lot of research and consulting with CARP, with the Consumers Council of Canada, with the Public Interest Advocacy Centre and with my own consumers, I introduced a private member's bill in the spring, Bill 193, and I reintroduced it this fall as Bill 14 after the prorogation, which would have banned the sale of those four

product categories that I talked about. Again, this is all about protecting vulnerable consumers from these tactics.

Speaker, to me, it is beyond reprehensible that there are people, organizations and businesses out there who make a living, who have a business model that's based on taking advantage of the most vulnerable people in our society. It has to stop. That's why I introduced Bill 193 and then Bill 14, and that's why I'm proud to stand here today in support of this bill, because I think this bill will do a tremendous amount to protect consumers from those very tactics.

It's important to strike a balance. I come from a business background, and we want to protect Ontarians from coercive sales tactics, but we also want to ensure consumers have choice and that small businesses are still able to thrive and that we, of course, don't limit the activities of charities or not-for-profit organizations. I want to be very clear: This bill does not impede charities or community groups from going door to door and advocating. It doesn't prevent the local student who wants to mow your lawn from coming to your door and selling you those services. It doesn't prevent Girl Guides from coming to your door and selling you Girl Guide cookies. This is really talking about a few product categories where we know that there are consistently coercive practices being used. To me, this bill strikes the balance.

Speaker, I started by talking about how I came here, like all of us came here, to make a difference for the people of Ontario. In my riding, in Etobicoke Centre, we have among the largest number of seniors of any riding in the province. Like I said, when I started hearing from members of my seniors' advisory group that this was happening to them, that this was happening to people they knew, then I knew I had to do something. I knew that we had to do something. I'm proud to stand here today, Speaker, because this is a bill that indicates that our government wants to do something to protect seniors from these misleading, aggressive and coercive sales practices. This bill is making a difference for consumers and for seniors.

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

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I want to thank the member opposite for his remarks. It's interesting. We talk about door-to-door sales, and a few months ago the government passed a bill giving a cooling-off period with regard to water heater sales, which was a good idea, and now they're going to give the minister the power to ban whatever he or she may see fit at the door. It still doesn't do much to educate the people of Ontario through the ministry of consumer affairs on the dangers of people going door to door or the phone calls you receive. I couldn't tell you how many people get the phone call and end up giving a credit card to someone who doesn't know what's going on. Or the Internet: I couldn't tell you how many aunts and uncles I've had die in Africa with an inheritance for me, where all I have to do is give them my bank number. This goes on.

I say it's a spoof, but someone out there is falling for these tricks. Otherwise, it wouldn't continually happen over and over again. So hopefully the government, while they're banning everything, can step forward and come up with an educational program, utilizing the ministry of consumer affairs. I bet you that 90% of the people don't know this ministry exists.

I'm hoping that maybe they can create an educational program to teach them, because the next step will be banning anybody phone-calling you, wanting to address any sort of sales. I don't even know how you would start to ban sales via the Internet or these emails we get.

You want to nip the problem as quickly as possible. The best way to do it is utilize the advantage they have as government, their ability to outreach to people throughout Ontario and to educate them. Let them know. Work with the local police forces and the health units. Let's get some education out there so that people won't be fooled by these door-to-door salespeople or the phone calls or the Internet. I don't know why they don't do that.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I want to commend the member from Etobicoke for his leadership on this file. I think it's important to give credit where credit is due. He certainly has raised this issue and led the charge on bringing some fairness.

I think with respect to the door-to-door sales, there is a lot that this bill addresses. One principle that I'd like to see highlighted—and if we can focus in on this principle, we can provide some legislation that goes beyond the specifically defined areas and captures the heart of what we want to capture in terms of unfair practices—is high-interest, long-term contracts that people enter into, that provide a service and that people don't have a vehicle or an avenue to get out of.

That's what we see again and again: People get into these high-interest contracts that are long-term. There's really no way to get out, and they end up paying far more than what the item is worth, in terms of the interest. There's no way to then extricate yourself from the situation; you're forced to pay a significant penalty. That's really the principle that we want to address.

I think this bill does certainly address the specific areas where we've seen complaints—water filtration systems, other home services, energy services—but we need to make sure that the bill is broad enough to cover the concept of the unfairness.

The other area that I want to reiterate—though the House leader mentioned that the bill does provide some specifics around payday loan companies, the key issue that is not addressed by this legislation is the interest rate. That's really at the heart of where people are being exploited. It's the high interest rates that are charged by the payday loan companies.

That's where we need to see this government step up and provide some leadership. That's the area where we would see some significant protection to those who are vulnerable. That's what I call on this government to do

with the amendments. Moving forward, we look to addressing that high interest rate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Speaker, first of all, let me congratulate the member from Etobicoke Centre on his 10-minute presentation. I think it hit all the key issues, and some of his own personal experiences. That's what I want to spend the next minute and a half talking about.

Just this weekend, Speaker, I got home on Saturday afternoon and there was a message on my home phone from a lady by the name of Betty. I won't say her last name, because I haven't got her permission. She's a big supporter of mine. I can tell you that she lives in the city of Quinte West. By the way, Betty is over 80. She has suffered two bouts of cancer, is not well, lives on her own and still manages fairly well.

She wanted to let me know that somebody had called her house to make an appointment to go and inspect her furnace, because there were these very good government grants that she probably would qualify for. Of course, Speaker, as you can imagine, at first it sounded really, really good. Oh, and by the way, this gentleman was going to come on a Sunday, and he was there representing some government agency.

She put two and two together: Government folks normally don't work very hard during the week. Why would they work on weekends? She got concerned, and she did call me, and she called the police. It turned out it was somewhat of a hoax. It was somebody trying to take advantage of these folks.

Speaker, when we look at Bill 59 and how we can move it forward, I'm sure there are still things we have to do, down the road, but at the present time, this addresses those key issues. I look forward to all of the members supporting this bill. Let's get it done before we go for Christmas break.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I believe that we have time for one more question or comment. The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to add to some comments to the speech from the member from Etobicoke Centre. I thought that he did an excellent job of describing a situation with vulnerable seniors in his riding, laying out significant problems and describing it in a way that certainly was very understandable.

I guess that my question would be whether the bad players will be deterred by new regulations. I note that the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London brought up education. It seems to me that that's probably something that's very much needed, along with just new regulation to try to protect our most vulnerable. He noted that there are lots of other ways of getting into contact with people, whether it be via Internet or over the telephone, asking for sensitive information.

The member from Northumberland–Quinte West specifically talked about a constituent who responded to

a telephone call for an appointment to look at a furnace. That probably wouldn't be covered by this legislation, if they're actually booking an appointment. I think that there is a real need for education for folks out there, so that they are aware of the various scams that are going on and try to protect themselves as much as possible.

I do agree with the member from Timiskaming who was talking: If you wake up in the morning and you aren't planning on making a big purchase, when somebody shows up at your door to try to sell you something you don't really need, it's probably a good time to think twice about just jumping in and signing, no matter how good it sounds, because it's probably better than it actually is.

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'd like to thank the members who spoke: the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London, the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton and the member for Northumberland–Quinte West. Thank you all for joining the debate and for your helpful input and many strong words of support. I appreciate that very much. We debate fiercely, I would say, in this Legislature on a daily basis, and it's nice to come to a consensus, or largely to a consensus, around issues that are so important to people. I think that this is an example of how our system of government can work really, really well.

I think, in summary, there were a number of issues that were raised by the members during the debate. I can't raise them all, but there is no question that we have a lot of work to do, and I think that this bill will go a long way to doing that work in protecting consumers in a number of areas.

In terms of the regulation of the home inspection industry, this particular piece of this bill was championed by my colleague, my seatmate, the member for Trinity–Spadina, strengthening financial protections for consumers.

Then, of course, there's the part of the bill that I'm most proud of, which is the ban of unsolicited door-to-door sales.

At the end of the day, based on the stories that we have heard here today, based on the stories that I have heard in my own riding of Etobicoke Centre, we know that there are tens of thousands of people who are approached and thousands who are duped every day across this province by people who use misleading, aggressive and coercive sales tactics at the door. It's incumbent upon us to do what we can to protect them from that.

I think that this bill takes an important step forward, by banning unsolicited door-to-door-sales, of protecting consumers, of protecting vulnerable people in our communities and of protecting seniors. I'm proud of this bill, and I hope that we can get all-party support to move it forward as quickly as possible.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's a pleasure to rise and speak for a little while on Bill 59, the Putting Consumers First Act.

I think that I want to start my remarks on the home inspection business. A number of years ago, we purchased a property up in the Bruce Peninsula. It had a house on it, but it needed some work, if I can put it that way. Fortunately, my wife and I had been involved in the renovation business for a number of years, and I have two sons in the trades. So we took a chance on this and we thought we would tackle it. We did our own inspection on the house and we saw a number of issues that certainly were there and priced it accordingly.

If you saw the movie on TV a number of years ago where Griswold—I think that was the fellow's name—plugged the Christmas lights up, well, that's the number of lights that were around this place. It was all down the laneway. He was a very nice man who owned this place, and he was very proud of this. But we saw some wires hanging out of the socket, which is the underpart of where your eave comes over, and we were a little suspect as to the wiring that was in there.

Anyway, we made the purchase and we decided to start fixing this place up to what we wanted. My one son is an electrician, so he started to repair some of the wiring. We found extension cords used throughout the eavestrough to light the Christmas lights up. It wasn't an expensive extension cord that was used; it had orange coating on it, and usually that's about the cheapest you can buy. So that was wired back and hooked onto a couple of other spots, because I'm sure when it was wired up the first time, he probably didn't have enough power to run all the lights, so he continued on to go here and there with this extension cord. So we disconnected that.

Then we got into doing some things around the kitchen in this place and we noticed some—and we had seen this before we bought the place, but it looked like smoke or black soot. We took the covers off and, sure enough, there were some issues with the plugs back there.

My son the electrician got busy and did a lot of rewiring of the place and certainly tore out a bunch of these extension cords that were used to light up the Christmas lights and other things. While he found that, in the ceiling we found some exposed—I believe they call them junction boxes. They're round and wires come into them. They had just actually put the ceiling up over that without putting a cover on. So those all got ripped out.

By the time my son got done the rewiring of this place and fixing up the panel box, there was quite a considerable amount of money involved that we had to pay him. But this was payback time with my family, with my sons, so I get this labour for free, which is kind of nice. Certainly, the ordinary person would be paying \$40 or \$50 per hour for a qualified electrician to do this, and maybe more than that.

We were very fortunate that I had the help, and, as I say, Jane and I have been involved in the renovation

business for quite a few years, so we were able to spot some trouble spots in this place. But we could do it ourselves. We could fix these places up. I know the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound saw this place, and it was quite a transition from when we bought it to what we have now. But again, it was because we had our own labour.

I can imagine somebody buying this place—there's quite a lot of land involved here; that's basically the reason we bought the property—and falling in love with the fact that it had all this land, and, "We can deal with the house later," and getting into a mess without having somebody go into the place and look at it and say, "Look, I think you're going to be spending" however many dollars on this place before it was livable. Because certainly, with some of the wiring connections especially that we'd found before we purchased it, it wasn't safe. I can imagine that there would have been a lot of money spent.

So I'm glad the home inspection business is addressed here because, as has been previously stated, I could hang a sign out at my place and say I'm a home inspector right now, and do that without being regulated. That is going on right now across the province. In fact, we have run into that a couple of times in our business, where homeowners have said to us when we're in there, "Well, we had this inspected," and we hadn't really ever heard of the fellow that did it—and found some issues. So I'm glad this is being addressed in this bill.

1710

The other thing I would like to talk about too is the payday lending part of this bill. Education plays an important part, certainly, in any financial transaction. Being educated as to how finances work when you take a mortgage out or when you borrow money at a bank for a car or whatever—and certainly, to do with the payday lending industry, you should be educated on just exactly what you're getting into. I do know that there are people who use this because they can't get deals through the normal lending institutions.

But, you know, Speaker, our member from Nipissing has tabled a bill on educating high school children in financing. I think that's just an excellent idea, that they get a basic understanding of how finances work and how to work through the process so that they understand what they're getting into before they sign on the dotted line. I believe it goes through the use of credit cards and that type of thing so that, if they decide to purchase something on credit versus cash, they know the ramifications of the whole thing and what they're going to pay at the end, because as you well know, Speaker, if you buy something for \$1,000 and borrow the money, it's going to cost you more at the end because of interest rates. I do believe that this bill that the member from Nipissing has before the House—I hope it comes up for debate soon because I think it's quite important that we start young, in the high schools, and that we start teaching our young folks the ins and outs of the lending business so that they can make informed decisions if they choose to borrow money for what they need.

There are a couple of other issues I would like to speak about in this bill. One has to do with door-to-door sales. There many people that make their living off door-to-door sales who are quite reputable. They've done it all their lives, and people get to know them. I hope it doesn't affect them too much. It's the door-to-door sales—because we always get calls. I know in my office I get a couple of calls every year about some couple being ripped off on siding or windows or something in their house. They pay a bunch of money up front and then they never see the guy, sometimes. So I think we have to address that problem, but again, that's education. You should only deal with people that you know. Before you hand out cash or write a cheque for anything, you should maybe call the Better Business Bureau or something like that to see if it's a reputable company and that you're not just dealing with a fly-by-nighter.

Again, that gets back to education. The public should be educated that way, or should educate themselves. We can't protect everybody against everything. The public has to take some responsibility as to what they do and what they get into. But these high-pressure salesmen that deal with this shifty door-to-door-sales business are very good at what they do. They're very high-pressure people, and they're very good at their job. We can see that this has happened, actually, with the wind farm business, where people have signed over their land to some of these salesmen. They're very good at what they do. Then they find out they can't get out of their lease of their land. They find out that there are some things in the lease that they're not very comfortable with, but unfortunately they can't get out of it. I think this bill does address some of these things.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to the member from Perth–Wellington for highlighting some of the concerns that he has from his own riding, but which are really provincial concerns, around the regulatory expectations or lack thereof around home inspectors in the province of Ontario.

It's interesting because he has an electrician in the family. There has clearly been a huge gap in ensuring the quality of work and that regulated workers are qualified to do the electrical work in a lot of instances. It's true, we cannot protect everybody from everything, but if you are pretending to be an electrician in the province of Ontario, there is great cause for concern, obviously, because of the nature of that work.

Just going back to Bill 70, around schedule 17, not protecting the safety and ensuring that these contractors who are in people's homes, who are pretending to be a qualified electrician in this instance, are in fact qualified is a huge gap in accountability. There are some areas of the law and of legislation that require strong, enforceable regulation. Then there are some areas where we probably overregulate in some instances. Certainly around the safety around electrical work, this should take precedence.

Payday loans are a huge issue in the province of Ontario. It is a sad testament, I think, that these businesses—because that's what they are. They're not social service agencies; they're not there for the good of the people. They are there to make a high interest rate off a desperate person who needs cash now. This is a long-standing issue which I will delve into a little bit more, but I want to thank the member from Perth–Wellington.

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

Mr. James J. Bradley: The member for Perth–Wellington again was helpful in his remarks because he used anecdotes. I think in legislation of this kind they are very valuable: looking at individual circumstances that arise and trying to find legislation and a regulatory framework that can in fact address them appropriately without, as the old saying goes, throwing the baby out with the bathwater. His comment about education is valuable, as well.

I think there's an old saying that we're all familiar with: If it sounds too good, it probably is too good. If we follow that very carefully, we will avoid some of these circumstances.

Beyond this bill, there are other scams that the member spoke of. You get the driveway people who come in or the people who want to do some renovations. They get all the money up front and then they fly the coop and they're never to be found again, or the work they're doing is very substandard work. So you want to ensure, first of all, that the people who are doing the work are qualified to be able to do that work appropriately. Certainly, in terms of home inspection, that is something we want to make sure that we have. The industry, by the way, is very supportive of this legislation, because the good people out there want to ensure that there is a level playing field and that scammers don't try to impersonate real home inspectors.

Again, I go back to the payday loan people. I am appalled by the number of these I see. There are controls needed. You don't want to drive it completely underground but you want to ensure that there are appropriate controls that are available.

Again, every member here has a story about door-to-door people. Whether they're phoning first and saying they're from the government or from some reputable agency out there, people have to be very cautious about it, and we have a role of educating the public and protecting them through legislation and regulations.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to and make comment on my colleague from Perth–Wellington. He brought up a number of things. The first thing he talked about, when I was in the House, was Christmas lights. I had the great fortune a week or so ago to be in Owen Sound at the flipping of the switch at the Festival of Northern Lights. I'd like welcome everyone from across Ontario to come and see such a great display. It's a fabulous thing. It covers the city. The sad thing is that as

soon as the mayor flipped the switch with a number of us, a bunch of people in the crowd said, “Oh, I wonder how long we’re going to be able to keep it on with the cost of these lights and hydro these days?”

It was just brought up in here about Owen Sound: \$422 of hydro, but actually their bill was \$10,000, Mr. Speaker. That’s attributed to global adjustment, delivery fees and actually paying Quebec and New York in the States to take our surplus energy. We don’t give it away; we actually pay them to take it. There are a lot of challenges.

On that note, I’m wondering who that door-to-door speaker is who keeps banging on the door of the Legislature, Premier Wynne’s front door, and talking to her, because he was talking about interest rates. I’m not certain that she really understands that at some point all this money she’s borrowing on behalf of the next generation and beyond, we’re going to have to pay back with a lot of interest. So there needs to be some help there.

1720

Close to home, again, the United Way of Bruce Grey keeps us up to speed. Right now, they’re trying to find a way to not have 10 families in our backyard disconnected. Sadly, what some of those people are saying is that they need an agency like payday loans, because it’s a \$95 fee to get reconnected. They want to go out and pay at least a portion of their bill so they don’t get disconnected. So there is a legitimate need.

I don’t think we can fairly paint every single agency out there the same. If there are unscrupulous people, let’s go after them. Let’s not shut it down. For some people at the lower end of the payment scale, they need a service like this. I think one of the members across said that we need balance, and we do. Some 560,000 people are on a list for arrears in hydro. Sadly, they’re going to need things like payday loans.

At the end of the day, I think what we want to do is make sure there’s legislation that protects people. And let’s go after the unscrupulous and weed them out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I have to respectfully disagree with the member who just spoke. We do not need payday loan companies that charge close to a 400% interest rate. We don’t need that at all.

What we do need is access to affordable credit, credit that’s reasonable, and we need a government that regulates the insurance that’s charged and doesn’t allow these payday loan companies to misleadingly say, “We’re just charging \$18 for every \$100 you take from us,” making it sound like it’s only 18% interest, when in fact if you annualize that interest, it’s literally closer to 400% interest. That is unacceptable. It’s reprehensible. In fact, according to the Criminal Code of Canada, it’s a criminal offence, usury, to charge more than 60% interest. But due to certain loopholes, the government allows payday loan companies to charge—if you annualize the interest rate—400% interest. That’s completely unacceptable.

What we do need to see, though, is this government taking steps to make sure that people don’t need payday loan companies in the first place. We need to make sure that the government makes life more affordable—and that when people can’t afford, they have access to real alternatives, like credit unions and financial institutions, which provide loans at reasonable rates. That’s what we need. Any company that charges a 400% interest rate should not be allowed to do that. That’s what we need to regulate.

When it comes to the member’s comments around education, I think that’s a very solid point with respect to any sort of contract. I think the consumer needs to have the ability to make the decisions about getting into a contract and if it makes sense or not. But again, that doesn’t dismiss the fact that this government has a responsibility to ensure that people are protected.

When it comes to door-to-door sales, this is a step forward. We need to ensure that the principles, though, that we are trying to implement are—the long-term, high-interest contracts that are pressure-tactic sales at the door are the types of sales or types of strategies that are prevented.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Perth–Wellington can respond for two minutes.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I want to thank the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, the member from St. Catharines, the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

I heard the member speaking about regulations. Certainly, we don’t want to overregulate something. We want to make sure the regulations are good and that people are still able to make a living at what they do.

Speaker, I can speak a little bit about overregulation and what it has done to the Perth part of my riding. Did you know that there are no abattoirs left in Perth county? They’re gone—except there are a couple of big abattoirs. We used to be able to take a cow and a pig over to an abattoir that was close to us, but they’re all shut down. Some of them have been due to retirement, but a lot of them have been due to regulations that have been imposed upon them. They just said, “We’re not doing this anymore,” because it seems that when an inspector comes in, he changes something or he does this or that. We never, ever got sick off the meat that was brought out of that plant that we used. We used that abattoir for years and never got sick off it. I don’t want to see that happening with what this legislation is proposing here—that we get it so regulated that it feels like you’ve got somebody looking over your shoulder all the time and wondering what you’re doing. Let’s make the regulations simple so that you can understand them, that those who want to be involved in the business—either the home inspection business or some of the other things that we’re talking about here—know the rules, they’re easy to follow and they can make their living off it. That’s what we need to do here, because it’s really sad when we have the most animals, I believe, in Ontario in our riding of Perth—

Wellington, and in Perth county, you can't take one to slaughter. You can't get it done.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to be in the House this afternoon with all of you, discussing and debating Bill 59.

I was, of course, hoping that it was going to be Bill 70. We've had, I think, only seven hours on Bill 70. It's going to be voted on tomorrow, and the committee is already set to meet on Bill 70. It's an omnibus piece of legislation which deserves our full attention and full debate, and it does not look like that piece of legislation is going to get there. It's also unfortunate, though, because Bill 70 does have some consumer protection issues contained within it, which I touched on last week.

But I do think we just need to take this debate back to a place around: What is consumer protection? What does the government think of consumer protection? What do we think of consumer protection? But more importantly, what are the expectations of the citizens that we serve, and what should they be receiving as a benchmark, if you will, from the government? I think it's safe to say that there are some outstanding gaps.

The door-to-door sales of water heaters and other services, which have become more and more aggressive over the years, particularly on those people who are vulnerable in our communities—we've been dealing with many of these issues in the four years since I have been elected.

One fellow in particular was very much taken advantage of, and I would describe that situation as being very predatory against him. The door-to-door salesman identified a weak individual, who had some issues around dementia, and completely took advantage. Helping that individual undo the damage of that aggressive action against him—because it certainly wasn't for him—through legal aid and having an advocate, was a huge amount of work, to try to secure justice for him.

As it relates to Bill 59, New Democrats are, of course, very supportive and welcoming of legislation that would raise the bar, if you will, on protection against aggressive and predatory door-to-door sales folks who knowingly entrap particularly seniors, in this instance, into contracts that they can neither afford nor do they need. It's very concerning.

The issue of consumer protection—even driving in this morning, I was driving in on my 3:45 a.m. drive from K-W, because I need to get here. I know you know this drive very well. On CBC, there was a lady who was discussing the fact that she had been a victim of credit card fraud. There was an investigation, and it was found that it was not her—she didn't put this exorbitant amount of money on her credit card—yet her credit rating remained damaged because of that action for years. There were no checks and balances on securing an appropriate credit rating.

One other fellow came to me, and he said he had booked reservations at a hotel. He arrived a little bit late,

and his room was gone. They had already resold the room. If he paid for the room, he should get the room.

There are inconsistencies, from a consumer protection perspective, across this province.

I think it would surprise a lot of people to discover that home inspectors are not a regulated sector, that the qualifications are very minimal and that no one is watching the home inspectors.

Now, this isn't to say that there aren't some ethical, principled people out there who take a lot of pride in the trade, as they would describe it. However, there are others who charge exorbitant rates, who deliver sub-par services and whose own interests trump the interests of the homeowner, and that is most unfortunate.

Bill 59 on this, though, is going to create another administrative authority for home inspectors. It's going to regulate a class of debt collectors not previously captured under the Consumer Protection Act—and I'll talk about that quickly in a minute—and it regulates and bans certain door-to-door, high-pressure sales tactics.

1730

The regulations that are set forth in this piece of legislation on the payday loan industry mostly download powers to regulate industry onto municipalities. The issue of the increased number of payday loan organizations—private companies, private businesses—it's really a tell-tale sign that your community is hurting when you see these organizations and these companies pop up in your city, because they are very strategic about where they go, where they set up. They recognize where there are certain vulnerabilities in the local economy such that people will eventually have to seek out some fast cash. What Bill 59 fails to do is, really, to set out the rules of engagement. If the government is going to be supportive of this industry, of this sector, what are the rules of engagement for them? What are the true guidelines around protection for consumers?

Schedule 2 of Bill 59 amends the existing act overseeing the industry and opens up the Municipal Act and the City of Toronto Act to prevent payday lenders from operating in designated areas where municipal bylaws have been passed. This is a small control factor that will now be in the hands of municipalities.

It does create a regulatory framework to set limits of how many times payday lenders can loan to individual borrowers in a set period. Also, it would extend payment plans for repayment and it limits products that payday lenders can market, like cash cards, though they are not specified. I'm sure that we all remember last Christmas in Hamilton, where there were a number of payday loan companies that were accepting gift cards from people and offering them 50% on the value of the card. We call that stealing, really. It's a form of theft. If you brought in your Starbucks card for \$50, they would give you \$25 for it. That's still within the rules, and we don't know if those rules have been changed, because it's all been set to regulation.

What the bill doesn't do—I think that hopefully this can be amended at committee; we certainly will be trying

to amend it—is cap the interest rates on loans. The ministry suggests that the schedule is already set to lower January 1, annually, in 2016-17. However, anti-poverty advocates who have been pushing for reform on payday loans organizations forever, it seems, don't think that lowering the borrowing rates to \$18 for every \$100, as proposed, is enough, as that would result in a 390% interest annualization, as the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton has spoken about. This is well above other lending products and impossibly high for Ontario's most vulnerable workers.

This is the classic case of a government bill coming before us which incorporates three other private members' bills. All the speakers have acknowledged that the loan interest rates are exorbitant, that they are problematic, and yet it is not included in the legislation. This always begs the question. The government side will always concede, "Well, we can always do more," but you have an opportunity. It has been a long time coming for the Putting Consumers First Act (Consumer Protection Statute Law Amendment). This is An Act to enact a new Act with respect to home inspections and to amend various Acts with respect to financial services and consumer protection, and yet they have left it open for interpretation.

This leaves me feeling that if you can always do more with a piece of legislation, why don't you do it? Why don't you create a piece of legislation which actually meets the needs of the people of this province? Why do we have to keep revisiting some common themes around affordability? When I think of the elderly man whom my office was trying to help—that man was facing high hydro costs. His house needed to be renovated. He hadn't been able to access the previous renovation tax credit. He was isolated, because there was a lack of social programming in the community. So when somebody shows up on his doorstep and says, "I want to help you," those are magic words to a senior citizen, Mr. Speaker.

If anything comes of this legislation that is very productive, I would hope that the focus would be on having a comprehensive definition of consumer protection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you, Speaker, for recognizing me so carefully and prudently. I'm happy to speak for two minutes to this, although it fell onto my desk late in the day.

Laughter.

Hon. Bill Mauro: That's different.

Hon. David Zimmer: That's different, yes.

Anyway, what is the top line here in this legislation? I'm sure that the members opposite are interested in what the top line in this legislation is—certainly, the public is. The top line is that this government, once again, is putting the interests of consumers at home and in the marketplace first in our interests. We are doing that.

All members of this House who vote for this bill should be applauded, so I am expecting the members

opposite in the official opposition and the third party to be applauding themselves for supporting this bill, because this is good for the consumers of Willowdale and it's good for the consumers of all of your ridings held by the official opposition and by the third party. But I expect that after the next election we will have most of those seats, so you won't have to worry about protecting your constituents, because we will do it for you, having captured your seats.

Our goal here—again, the top line—is to build a safe and a fair, but above all, an informed marketplace. So what is an informed marketplace? Well, one of the elements of informed marketplace is to be able, if you're a consumer living in a home on a street in your constituency, to look down the driveway, to look down the sidewalk and to spot a shyster coming up the street. Having made that determination, this legislation will kick in and protect you as a consumer.

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

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It's a privilege to speak to Bill 59. I will probably echo what most people have covered here today: that basically this bill addresses many things but they're all pretty good things.

I think in particular with respect to home inspectors, many of us didn't realize that they weren't regulated, that there was no standard, so that's a welcome thing. As has been pointed out, the purchase of a home for most people is the biggest purchase of their life. It's in their interest to do it the best way they can: to buy a home knowing the quality of the home they're buying. Having a qualified home inspector would be an important part of that business transaction.

But for all of these things, I would like to say, with an overarching comment, Mr. Speaker, that people should always realize that we are not a nanny state—although, from time to time, we seem to be heading that way. Always, we are responsible for our own actions and our decisions, and suffer the consequences of our decisions. Never can the state protect us from all things. So it's good business, even with a home inspector, to inspect his work and make sure that you're getting a good home or that his work is competent, to the best of your ability.

Payday lending, cheque cashing, collections agencies: Those things sound distasteful, but obviously there's a need for the services that these people offer. That's why they're there. We need to have some regulation to make sure that what they're offering is straightforward and honest, and that people know what they're getting into and have the freedom of choice.

Door-to-door salesmen: We do not need to have respect for good salesmen, and this is really to protect people from unscrupulous people.

1740

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Kitchener-Waterloo. Once again, it was an eloquent presentation and a lot of very substance-bearing condi-

tions and substance-bearing comments, unlike the minister who stood up and said, “I’m there to protect the consumers of Ontario. Our party protects the consumers.” Well, I don’t know where they were—if they got left at the bus stop—when it came to hydro rates, gas plants, Ornge, MaRS, eHealth, Pan Am and Hamilton stadium. I don’t think they were exactly protecting the consumers then, and I could probably name 20 more.

With all due respect, when they make fun of their position and what they’re doing to make it look like they’re really doing something and stand up, they don’t mention all the other things that they’ve screwed up. With all due respect, I really like that they have a good laugh out of it and it’s very comical, but the people out there who are paying the bills and are paying these big mistakes that are constantly being made—and I’m talking billions of dollars—aren’t laughing. They don’t think it’s funny at all.

You can have your fun and mock it and make fun of it, but when you really think about it, I’d be very concerned about a government that blows billions of dollars every year when I’ve got people in my riding living below the poverty level—20% of them—who can’t even pay their bills. Their kids don’t even have a place to stay. They come into my office with holes in their shoes. And these guys are making fun of it. Well, Speaker, it’s no joke.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments. The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Well, thank you, Speaker, for recognizing me so deliberately and so cogently. Like the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, I, too, have been called on late in the day, quite late, to comment. But I did have the pleasure, as did the minister, of listening to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo as she discussed this bill.

As she pointed out, this bill is the product of three private members’ bills, and it speaks to the power of the private member’s bill. One of the great things that we do on Thursday afternoons is we go through private members’ bills, and they do see the light of day.

Speaker, as you know, I’ve had the pleasure of having a private member’s bill passed in this House through third reading, the tipping bill. It didn’t become government legislation, as we’re doing here with other private members’ bills, but it did see the light of day and second reading and committee and be passed. It helps the vulnerable in our community, the consumers, the tip receivers not have their tips skimmed by owners of restaurants.

Then, Speaker, you also know that I brought forward a private member’s bill to suggest that daycare owners shouldn’t be charging a non-refundable, non-transparent fee to be on a wait-list. After first reading, we adopted the changes in regulation, and I was very delighted, because I’m sure, had we gotten to the second reading debate, that would have been adopted.

The member talks a lot about how consumer protection is very important, and the minister talked about constituency protection to some extent. While I may not

be as optimistic as him in thinking that we will have a chance to win all of those ridings he mentions, I certainly hope we will retain as many as we have now and maybe a few more.

Speaker, I’m delighted. We don’t always agree on all issues, but on consumer protection, I know the member from Kitchener–Waterloo is one and the same.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Kitchener–Waterloo can now respond.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I don’t know what’s going on here. I mean, it is late in the day, but the game isn’t over yet, as they say.

Just a quick shout-out to my folks, who are watching, and especially to the former mayor of Peterborough, Jack Doris, who met my parents in the Shoppers Drug Mart and, after my Bill 70 one-hour lead, had some very nice things to say. I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but I really do wish we were debating Bill 70 today, because it needs greater thought from this government for sure.

I want to thank the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and, yes, Beaches–East York. I do want to thank, though, the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, the member from Willowdale, who I think, maybe inadvertently, introduced the idea of the shyster clause or the shyster amendment, because he mentioned there’s a shyster down the lane.

The problem with this piece of legislation is that it doesn’t stop the shyster at the payday loan place. And that is a real problem for the most vulnerable people that we have in the province of Ontario, who really are seeking fast cash for a whole host of issues—no judgment there—but who get caught in this trap of high interest rates. Bill 59 still leaves all of that to regulation and doesn’t address the high interest on those payday loans.

So I ask the government, with all honesty: Why would you leave this up to regulation? Why not take a firm step on it—step in it? Step on it.

Laughter.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Step in it, and get it done, because there are things that you want to step in and then there are things that you don’t, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I’m reluctant to ask for further debate, but I think I have to.

I’m pleased to recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I’m pleased to have a few minutes today on this particular piece of legislation, Bill 59, the Putting Consumers First Act.

I think I should begin by referencing the remarks of my good friend the member from Willowdale, the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. He gets pretty emotional when it comes to matters of consumer protection, and in his opening remarks he made references to “shysters” when it comes to this particular legislation. He of course completely understands that

there are many well-intentioned people who work in this particular field, but it is a very difficult piece when we know that there are people in the field who are giving the rest of them a difficult time and a bad reputation. As such, the need for this kind of legislation to come forward to protect consumers is incumbent upon government. So that's what we have before us here today.

I think perhaps "disreputable" might be a better word for us to describe some of those who are in the field. We understand that there are a lot of people who work very hard and make a good living and contribute to the economy of Ontario in this particular field, but unfortunately there are a number of people who do not act in such a good fashion. I would say that most of us who have been members for some time would have that direct experience in our constituency offices. I would say that they are sort of the unsung heroes when it comes to the work of Queen's Park. I know that my staff in my constituency office in Thunder Bay–Atikokan, over the course of my 13-years-plus here, have spent a great deal of time dealing with matters just like this.

Anything that we can do to try and lessen the need for that kind of reactive response, where we can hopefully deal with some of this proactively, I think would do us all well.

I remember specifically, I would say, when it came to Hydro One issues, that three or four years ago my office in Thunder Bay was under siege, it would seem, from people who either were not receiving a hydro bill, who were receiving an incorrect bill or who, six months later, would receive six months' worth of bills. For whatever reason, Hydro One was having a very difficult time three or four years ago getting it right. I can tell you that the staff at my office were working diligently, as I am sure is the case in a number of other offices across the province, to deal with that particular issue. This is similar in the sense that we're trying to do what we can to help consumers in their homes.

There are three main components to the bill that are being protected here today: We're dealing with door-to-door sales, we're dealing with home inspectors, and we're dealing with payday loans.

I would say, on the payday loans piece, there are a couple of pieces of legislation that fall within my ministry, as the Minister of Municipal Affairs—the Municipal Act and the City of Toronto Act—that, if this legislation passes, would be amended to enable municipalities to have more control when it comes to payday loan operations in their particular municipality. I think that is a good thing, as I think all would think.

When it comes to home inspectors and the single largest purchase, likely, that anyone is to undertake in their lifetime, we find ourselves in a situation where people are buying these homes, sometimes, on the advice of a home inspector. Some are very good and some are not. I would say that this is a great example of where we need regulation and we need protection, because there are some really, really good suppliers of information and work in this sector. They are the people who would be

most interested in seeing this regulation come in because they want their industry to be protected and not to have reputation that they're providing bad advice when people are making purchases hundreds of thousands of dollars in value. So we're doing that.

I have just about a minute left, but one of the things I would say is that there has been some criticism that perhaps we shouldn't do this because you can't get it perfect, you can't get it right, and the bad guys who are out there who are unscrupulous and practising poorly will always find a way to end-run the legislation, will be creative. There is always some truth to that, but I don't think it means that we shouldn't try. I don't think it should mean that we shouldn't be bringing forward consumer protection regulation.

1750

I remember when the deep recession hit in 2008 and one of the advantages that Canada had over the United States was the regulation that existed in our banking sector. One of the reasons that Canada came through the recession—I won't say as well as we did, but perhaps we didn't see the carnage that occurred in the United States in that particular sector—was because of the regulation that was in place at the time governing our banking sector. I know there are some political parties that would not have brought that sort of regulation into place. Thank goodness we had it in Canada because, as difficult as that period of time was, without that protection, the situation that occurred in our country through the recession would have been much worse.

So consumer protection is very important.

I see my time is up. I thank you for my five minutes.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have a minute or two to comment on Bill 59, An Act to enact a new Act with respect to home inspections and to amend various Acts with respect to financial services and consumer protection, and the speech from the Minister of Municipal Affairs. In the last part of his speech, he was talking about the role of regulation and talking a bit about the banking sector. I would agree with him that Canada having strong regulations in the banking sector did help us in the crash of 2008, as compared to other jurisdictions around the world.

I know that this bill is dealing with one area where it seems like all parties are in agreement that there should be some more rules, and that's to do with home inspections. I met with the Ontario Real Estate Association last week, and they were supportive of licensing home inspectors, and I know that the association of home inspectors is in favour of that. I think we all agree that it's the biggest purchase most of us make and it's very important and having licensed home inspectors makes sense.

How you apply the rules is important as well. I note that there's a requirement for various contracts—and there is the danger that the way the government goes about doing it can create unnecessary red tape. Certainly,

I think it's safe to say that over the last 20 or 30 years in Ontario we've seen more and more rules. A lot of them don't necessarily make any difference, but they do make a difference in the lives of businesses and individuals and the cost of trying to do business in the province of Ontario. So I think it is important to make sure we get it right and not make regulations that are overly prescriptive. We want a good outcome, but we don't want to unnecessarily bury people in having to fill out forms or do things they don't need to do.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, I agree with the minister on some of his comments about protecting consumers. He touched on three important areas.

However, this bill doesn't go far enough. I'll reiterate from earlier today that this bill does not deal with unscrupulous people who come to doors and offer to do your roof or do home renovations. You find that half the time—especially with the vulnerable elderly—they walk away with their money, they don't complete the work, and if they do complete the work, it's shoddy at best. There's nothing in this bill to protect against those types of things. Even if they prosecute them, a lot of times they can't find these guys. They take off and go to other provinces, and you can never find them again. They have fake names, fake company names, fake everything. I think the government should come down hard on these types of characters.

Also, there are a lot of times people come to your door representing respectable organizations like cancer or heart and things like that with false ID and false credentials. The next thing you know, people who have big hearts give a considerable amount of money to these people when they come to the door, thinking they're giving to a legitimate organization when they're not.

So I don't see any of that in there either.

Any people who are involved in these types of scams should be dealt with harshly to send a strong message to the population that the Ontario government won't put up with these types of shenanigans anymore in this province. That would be a real protection of the consumers of this province.

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

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: It's a privilege to speak on Bill 59, Putting Consumers First Act. As you know, there are many different components to this particular bill: banning unsolicited door-to-door sales, regulating the home inspection industry and of course strengthening consumer financial protection, specifically with reference to the payday loan market.

I think I'd speak with regard to many of the residents in my own riding of Etobicoke North. We have, Speaker, as you may appreciate, first of all, many seniors, many individuals for whom English may not be the primary language of communication, perhaps people who may be prone to seeing a person in some kind of a uniform with a clipboard in hand or an official-looking van that pulls up

to the door and kind of grants them a status that they may not deserve. Some of these individuals will feel pressured and coerced and coaxed into perhaps signing contracts where they may not be fully aware of, for example, the fine print and the extra charges, the delivery charges, insulation charges and so on.

Another thing that I've sort of discovered, which I find interesting, Speaker, is that seniors want to be nice to people. There's still a whole group of people out there—when someone comes to the door, they are actually warmly received and there's not immediately a suspicion that goes up that they're there to be duped or to be exploited. We need to make protections stronger for that group of people in particular.

That's why I'm proud to support Bill 59, the Putting Consumers First Act, because it will not only ban these unsolicited door-to-door sales, for example, with regard to things like furnaces and home heating and gas and energy contracts and so on, but a whole other list of issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One last question or comment.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm glad the member opposite said that seniors are nice people. That really made me feel good. I appreciate that.

Applause.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm sure the member from St. Catharines does too. Yes.

We've talked about this bill quite a bit this afternoon. I think that we all are in agreement that there are good parts in the bill. I'm sure when it gets to committee that there will be—

Mr. Bill Walker: Maybe he'll listen to our amendments.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: —a few amendments that will be proposed to help strengthen the bill. I hope the government does listen to them.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Always.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yes, they'll listen to them all day. We hope they support some of the amendments that we bring to the bill.

But I want to get back to the education process on this. I think it's really important that the general public knows about things and we start with the young people, young people like the person here from the St. Thomas area, so that he could be educated on some financial matters so he wouldn't be getting into any trouble. I think that's something that we have to concentrate on, to make sure our young people are educated in financial matters so they don't get themselves into jams.

We also have to protect people who are older than us who get involved with salesmen who come to put windows or siding in and expect a big down payment and then you never see them again. That's certainly something that's very important.

And it's a great idea to regulate the home inspection agency. These guys want to do a good job. They might as well be on the same page, because they want their

reputations as good as they can be. I'm sure that this bill will help strengthen that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Municipal Affairs may reply, if he wishes.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Thank you to the members from Parry Sound–Muskoka, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Etobicoke North and Perth–Wellington for their comments.

Speaker, judging from what I've heard in the debate this afternoon, the tone and the tenor of the debate and the comments, the two-minuters in response to my speech, it sounds like we have a bill that's going to have broad-based support from all three parties in the Legislature. Although I can't assume that—if I was to make a wager, I think I might be willing to put a few bucks down on that one.

Although the last bet I made, and I won't go in to detail on that one, I lost \$150, and you can maybe guess what that was on. But I won't talk too much about that.

Mr. Bill Walker: No, no, tell us more.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'll discuss it with you after.

The three main component pieces here that we're dealing with—door-to-door sales, payday loans and home inspectors—I think in my short time that I have here, I want to highlight that home inspector one. When people are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars—the largest single purchase they are likely to make in their

entire lifetime—I think it's incumbent upon us to do what we can. I believe home inspectors are perhaps the only industry related to a home purchase that is not in some way, shape or form regulated. It's a gap. It's a hole that we need to fill.

When it comes to consumer protection, I just think, as I said in my opening remarks, it's important for us—I like to do this occasionally—to give a shout-out to the staff in my constituency office, because one of the core services that they have provided to my constituents for 13 years is when it comes to matters of consumer protection: Karen O'Connor; Sharla Knapton; Norine Carroll, who is no longer with me; Jeff Howie; and Lindsay Fron. They do a terrific job of representing me as the MPP and our office, as we do our outreach for the constituents of Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

We have a good piece of legislation here. It sounds like it's going to have support from across the floor. I'm sure there will be a few amendments at second reading, but we look forward to the continued debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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	
Des Rosiers, Nathalie (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	
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	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
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)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Hon. / L'hon. Marie-France (LIB)	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)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	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
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Municipal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires municipales
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Hon. / L'hon. Kathryn (LIB)	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)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, 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 Attorney General / Procureur général Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	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	

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Joe Dickson, Han Dong
Michael Harris, Sophie Kiwala
Arthur Potts, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Han Dong, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
Cristina Martins, Peter Z. Milczyn
Lou Rinaldi
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Lisa M. Thompson
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permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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James J. Bradley, Raymond Sung Joon Cho
Wayne Gates, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Cristina Martins
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
Bob Delaney, Randy Hillier
Michael Mantha, Arthur Potts
Shafiq Qaadri, Laurie Scott
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Steve Clark
Granville Anderson, Robert Bailey
James J. Bradley, Steve Clark
Vic Dhillon, Sophie Kiwala
Michael Mantha, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
John Fraser, Ernie Hardeman
Percy Hatfield, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Peter Z. Milczyn, Julia Munro
Arthur Potts
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Ted McMeekin
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Jennifer K. French
Ted McMeekin, Mario Sergio
Bill Walker, Soo Wong
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Lorne Coe
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch