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(Hansard)**

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des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 23 March 2017

Jeudi 23 mars 2017

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 23 March 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 23 mars 2017

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MODERNIZING ONTARIO'S MUNICIPAL LEGISLATION ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LA MODERNISATION DE LA LÉGISLATION MUNICIPALE ONTARIENNE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 21, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 68, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to municipalities / Projet de loi 68, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les municipalités.

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

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: As a former city of Toronto councillor for over 20 years and as a relatively new member of provincial Parliament, it is my privilege and honour to stand today in the Legislature and speak to Bill 68, Modernizing Ontario's Municipal Legislation Act, 2016. It is a huge bill, amending and repealing many other pieces of legislation to do with how municipalities govern themselves.

As the esteemed member from Oxford mentioned during past debates, I strongly feel that submissions from individuals, stakeholders and municipalities have been invaluable. Thank you to all the contributors.

Many of the amendments, in my opinion, deserve positive acknowledgement, such as that giving councils the power to enact bylaws regarding climate change. Another is a new section added concerning the establishing of community councils by municipalities. In fact, Toronto city council is already operating four district community councils. Those are the downtown Toronto, Scarborough, Etobicoke, and North York community councils.

But as much as the bill is generally a step in the right direction, there are three areas I'd like to highlight that concern me the most. First is the amendment to section 238 of the Municipal Act, 2001, which allows local board members and councillors to participate in meetings remotely via an electronic device. Second is the increase of the cap on what a candidate can personally contribute to his or her own campaign during elections under the Municipal Elections Act, 1996. Lastly is the increase of

the contribution limit for elections, from \$750 to \$1,200 per contributor.

The amendment to allow councillors to participate in meetings electronically—through Skype, teleconference or other methods—is a major step back in accountability. The government claims this bill's purpose is to increase accountability and transparency, but its contents clearly say otherwise. Perhaps this amendment would not have been such an issue if there were an explanation for it that makes sense.

What doesn't make sense in it is this: The reason that the amendment was made was so that councillors and board members may participate in meetings, even when weather might normally not have allowed for their participation. This may be a sound argument for improving a councillor's ability to participate in their meetings in rural and northern Ontario, but the same amendment was also applied to the City of Toronto Act of 2006, which, unless you consider any part of Toronto, from Etobicoke to Scarborough, as rural, makes no sense.

A provision that may make sense for councillors who must drive on roads that receive little to no winter maintenance does not make sense for completely urban cities like Toronto. Looking back through the roughly 25 years of my involvement in municipal politics, I cannot think of a single reason why such a provision would be necessary for Toronto councillors.

While my main issue with this amendment is the increased lack of transparency and accountability that is being introduced with it, the implications are much broader. It is a glaring example that this bill is, in many cases, a set of sweeping changes, blanket legislation that does not take into account the different needs and the characteristics of the very many municipalities that make up Ontario.

One-size-fits-all legislation is not a productive way to update the old Municipal Act. What could have been a great opportunity to really cater to the unique requests and needs of each municipality now comes off as an afterthought.

Another part of the bill that worries me is the changes to the Municipal Elections Act of 1996. It was my assumption that improving our democratic process would be at the forefront of any legislation dealing with campaigning and elections, but for seemingly no reason at all, the amendments in the bill seem to be taking a step backwards, regressing even.

We have heard from many individuals and municipalities that increasing the cap on what an individual can contribute to their own campaign would create an

imbalance in the dollar power of candidates. Of course, running an election is far from cheap, but by raising the cap to \$25,000, a candidate's individual wealth, or lack thereof, can become a deciding factor. It should be up to the strength of a candidate's ability to fulfill their duties, not the strength of their pocketbooks, to win them an election.

A higher cap on a candidate's personal contribution to their own campaign will definitely put wealthier candidates at an advantage over others. This undermines the principles of electing the best man for the job. Equal opportunities for all the candidates, regardless of their independent wealth, should be respected in any democratic society, especially Ontario's.

Lastly, the increased cap on individual contributions to a campaign from \$750 to \$1,200 concerns me. Our own provincial election campaign contributions are capped at \$1,200 for ridings that are far larger and more populous than many of the districts a municipal councillor or board member is called to represent. For example, I used to be the Toronto city councillor for ward 42. Now I am the MPP representing Scarborough–Rouge River, which includes both ward 42 and ward 41. In other words, my provincial riding is twice as large as the previous municipal riding. On top of this, it was a lot easier to fundraise for my municipal elections since the donors receive a cash rebate regardless of their income, whereas the provincial election donors only receive a tax rebate if they file income taxes. Therefore, it definitely seems to me that such an increase should be justified by further review and scrutiny.

0910

As the critic for city of Toronto issues and the member for Scarborough–Rouge River, I know these amendments would affect the areas I am called on to represent, but as an Ontarian myself I know that the implications go beyond my own municipality. The effects of this bill will be felt far and wide, one way or another, so why don't we take this chance to do right by all the municipalities and give them the legislation they deserve?

Just to close up, I'm sure the bill is well-intended, but it's my opinion that we are not doing Ontario right with this one-size-fits-all bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is a privilege for me to rise on behalf of my constituents in London West to offer some comments on Bill 68, the Modernizing Ontario's Municipal Legislation Act, 2016. As has been said by many of my colleagues within the NDP caucus who have spoken to the bill, this is really one of those pieces of legislation where the question is, where is the meat? It's a fairly lengthy bill. There are a lot of words in the bill, but there is really not a lot of substance.

However, having said that, one of the changes that I did want to highlight, which I do think is welcome but doesn't go far enough, is the change to allow council seats to not be considered vacated due to pregnancy or adoption of a child. This is a very important provision.

It's a long-overdue provision. If we want to get more women, particularly more young women, involved in municipal politics, we have to allow for them to run, to serve in elected office and also raise a family.

One of my concerns is that the legislation does not also include amendments to the Education Act, because trustees are in the same situation. Trustees run for elected office; they are under the same kind of requirements. If you miss three meetings in a row, then your seat is considered to be vacated. Without amendments to the Education Act, this means that trustees who become pregnant while in office, who want to raise a child, may have to vacate their seats because the amendment is not included in the Education Act. We need that to be added to this bill in order to make it fair to everyone in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments. I recognize the member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Speaker. It's good to see you in the chair this morning on this great Thursday morning, the day that we get back to the ridings.

Let me make some comments to the member for Scarborough–Rouge River. It seems that the official opposition is obsessed with this electronic participation in meetings. I think they should read the rest of the bill and talk about all the positive things. But let me just focus again—and I've done this now, as parliamentary assistant, to answer some of these questions the last few times this bill has been debated—and make it clear that, first of all, AMO and the majority of the municipalities in the province of Ontario have requested options like that. So, Speaker, we've listened to municipalities.

By the way, Speaker, I'd be remiss not to say that this is a choice the municipality would make. It's not mandated. Nobody is holding a hammer over their head. When the opposition makes these comments, I think they remember the dark days when they were in government. They were using a sledgehammer that—Madam Speaker, municipalities didn't exist. It didn't matter what they said. They know that that's true. I was a municipal politician in those days and I know what it was like. I think they're still stuck back there.

Let me talk about campaign contributions. The member questions the amount that's allowed—

Interjection.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Yes, Madam Speaker, sorry. I know you're keeping an eye on me.

I think it's only fair that municipal politicians, when it comes to election finances, are somewhat equivalent to what we do here at Queen's Park—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Oh, I'm done.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's an honour, as always, to be able to rise in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and represent the fine constituents of Niagara West–Glanbrook. I want to thank all of the honourable members who have spoken so far to this piece of legislation in the

lengthy and substantive debate that we've had surrounding this piece of legislation so far. I commend them for the due process that they're giving it and the deliberative debate that we're having on it.

I want to recognize the sentiment brought forward by the honourable member opposite that he is perhaps frustrated by the perceived lack of ability that we have to notice the good things about this bill. The reality is, while there are perhaps valuable components, there are great flaws. We have to be aware of those flaws. We can't ignore those flaws. The duty of the opposition is to point out where the government is going astray from what would be in the best interests of the citizens of Ontario.

One of the areas I have a concern with is: I fear that, as this legislation was brought forward, there was insufficient consultation with various municipalities. The one reason I have that is that I asked my mayors. I said, "What do you think about Bill 68? I'd love to hear your concerns. I'd love to hear your thoughts." It was concerning to me that they said, "Sorry, Bill 68? Come again?" It was surprising, to be honest.

They did say that they felt very strongly that we needed to ensure the inclusion—that they needed to have expanded ombudsman oversight of municipally owned assets, including hydro companies, or if it deals with expanding criteria for closed session meetings. They're definitely interested in additional options to be made available. They also wanted to make sure that they had a fulsome conversation about this piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm proud to stand and contribute to questions and comments on Bill 68.

Speaker, we know that there is a lot of talk around changing the way elections are legislated. We know that there is a lot of talk around how politicians are doing their jobs.

We're looking to this bill today, and we can also look to the federal government—how one of the promises was to change the electoral system and promise real, effective change. Then they backed off on that. People were looking to have proportional representation be the way the federal government decided, and they changed the whole channel on that.

They also just talked about this in the House of Commons recently, that the government is proposing how Parliament is being designed. One of the proposals that the Liberals are suggesting is that the Prime Minister only report to the House of Commons once a week and take questions for the whole day.

This is a topic of interest. I think it's also a matter of public interest that we talk about this. But we also have to make legislation work so that the public's contributions are actually what forms the legislation. I think, in this respect, there perhaps needs to be more discussion around electronic voting. When we're talking about people not being present to hear a debate and then taking a vote electronically, there are concerns around that. Same issue—I'll bring it back to the federal govern-

ment—saying that the Prime Minister should only be there once a week in order to take questions daily.

Speaker, definitely we need to look at our legislation with regard to Elections Ontario and municipal elections, but we need to do this with public input so we can get it right the first time.

0920

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Scarborough—Rouge River to wrap up.

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I would like to thank all the speakers from the third party and the government. As my NDP colleague said, I think that this bill needs more amendments and we need to hear more from different municipal council representatives, because all different councils, when you look at rural and especially the city of Toronto—one-size-fits-all really doesn't make sense, which I mentioned. I don't think we should adopt this bill as it is. I think we need further study.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you, Madam Speaker—I got it right. I know that's bringing a smile to your face early on Thursday morning.

Thank you for allowing me to rise and speak to this bill today. As you may know, I had the honour and the privilege of being elected to city council for the city of Niagara Falls for a few years. As this bill touches on a number of municipal issues, I'm happy to speak to Bill 68.

I look back on my time on city council with a lot of fond memories. Our council rarely ever fought and we always worked together to put the interests of our residents first. I want to be clear: We didn't always agree, but we certainly always conducted ourselves in a professional manner.

I think if you ask most people in Niagara Falls they can remember that council was always getting along and putting residents first. Some of the best things around council, quite frankly, happened after council, when we used to go out for beer, pizza, and discuss the council meeting. So I'm proud of the time that I was on council, and I'm certainly happy to speak to the bill.

One of the major issues not discussed here is municipal funding. We know that the last time the PCs were in government, they downloaded the costs of a number of programs onto municipalities. This always seems to be the case when we're dealing with the PC government. These are costs that cities and towns across the province are trying to figure out how to cover. In Niagara, there's no bigger example, as my colleagues that are here today from Niagara know, than mental health.

I think it's important for everybody to listen to this. The PCs were the first ones to start downloading and cutting these costs onto cities that simply didn't have the budgets to cover the services. Once they started, unfortunately, my colleagues the Liberals continued to do it. The result is now that Niagara's people struggle to find mental health services. Think about this: One in five—not just in Niagara, but right across the province of On-

tario—are suffering from mental health issues. You know what pulls on your heartstrings? That includes our kids.

In Niagara, and I'm sure in other municipalities around the province of Ontario, suicides among young people are up. There's stress on young people. Some of the reasons for that is that they can't get the services they need, they can't get the help early enough. We don't have the education to pick up on the signs early enough. In my opinion, mental health is a crisis not only in Niagara, but I believe it's a crisis right across the province of Ontario.

These services are absolutely essential. No person seeking treatment for mental health should have to jump through hoops only to be told the service doesn't exist. I understand that this is a health care issue, but frankly it's an emergency. Our towns and our cities need funding to stop it.

But here's something that we also need—again, I wish some people would listen to this; I know it's early in the morning, but this is important. They need a return to the 50-50 partnership with the province that allowed the cities to carry their fair share of responsibility. So the city would be responsible for 50%; the province would be responsible for 50%. And you know what, Madam Speaker—and I'm looking at you for a reason, because I know you're listening—it worked. That's the issue. Nobody can say it didn't work; it worked. Municipalities were able to service their residents, they were able to get the funding, and they were able to provide the service. That's so important. Until we start dealing with this properly at the provincial level, services will continue to suffer and property taxes will continue to rise.

Madam Speaker, I've talked about this issue. I've talked about it with my colleagues from Niagara as well.

One of the major issues we're dealing with in Niagara right now is called an RFPQ process, for our casinos. If you'll allow me, Madam Speaker, I'd like to explain how this connects with what I was just saying. Right now in Niagara, there's a real concern that we will not get a major promoter for our casinos as they change who is running them. Right now, they're there until 2018. They've already been told they have to go. Because the RFPQ process has not been open long enough to attract a big name, we're struggling in Niagara. Woodbine is going to expand. Eighty per cent of our customers down in Niagara come from Toronto. That's why we need somebody with a big name, similar to what they have in Vegas.

But here's the effect. Why is it important? Why is it important to everybody here? Why is it important to the 107 people that are elected here? Because 1,500 jobs depend on this. What kind of jobs are they? They're good-paying jobs. They have some benefits. Some are unionized, some are not unionized—tourist jobs, long-term jobs. Quite frankly, the reason why casinos were brought in to Niagara Falls and expanded right across the province of Ontario wasn't for OLG to make money; it was to create jobs in those communities that would host them. So that means 1,500 livelihoods and families depend on this being done properly. If we don't stand up

for them and do the right thing, what is the point of being elected to this Legislature—when we can't try to protect good-paying jobs in the province of Ontario?

When it comes to property taxes, all of these residents who work at the casino pay property taxes. If the province doesn't act and these families lose their jobs, the property tax rate will skyrocket as the city tries to make up for lost revenue—and not just the city, but the entire Niagara region.

Cities and towns are struggling to cover their budgets, as it is. I ask any of my colleagues here, the MPPS that are here this morning, to talk to your city councils. Most are in debt. Most are paying interest payments. Instead of that money going back into the city, it's going to a bank or a credit union rather than back into our—because they're running into debt. If you lose taxpayers, what happens to that debt? The debt goes up.

They could step in tomorrow and protect these jobs. That's the kind of action that would actually benefit our municipality.

Some changes to the Municipal Act are good, and certainly, as the NDP, we appreciate them. But where is the real action? Where is the real movement by this government to help cities and towns? More importantly, where is the real action to help the people who live in the province of Ontario? There are serious municipal issues—and, trust me, I bring them to the attention of every minister in this House. There are serious issues where we could intervene and make a true difference. The casino is just one of them, but it's an important one.

Let me talk about one part of the bill which addresses the municipal right to pass a bylaw that addresses climate change. I think, if you look carefully at the legislation, the language here may not be necessary as this is already allowed, but I understand why it's here. Make no mistake about it—and I want my colleagues over here to hear this. Make no mistake about it: Climate change is one of the defining issues of our time.

I'm going to repeat that, particularly for my young colleague from Niagara. Make no mistake about it: Climate change is one of the defining issues of our time. I think even more than being a defining issue of our time, it's a defining issue for the generation that will take over this place when we all leave.

0930

I know many members in this House have fought passionate battles over things very close to their heart. Whether it's fighting against poverty, fighting for affordable housing or fighting for the right to a decent job that allows you to raise your family and put your children through school, there is always a cause that drives people to seek election in this House. For me, it was my grandkids.

I have a lot more to say. I have a lot more pages here, but obviously my time is running out. It's all about my grandkids. It's all about my kids. I want to make sure that when I leave they can breathe the air, they can drink the water right here in Ontario—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Certainly, it's a pleasure to rise in the House and to speak a little bit about Bill 68 and some of the comments from the member for Niagara Falls. He did occasionally allude to Bill 68.

The first point that he tried to make was that apparently we need to support municipalities. Well, I'm certainly going to refute what he had to say on that because our government has done an amazing amount for municipalities. I think we all recall the downloading that the PC government did in the late 1990s, downloading costs on the backs of municipalities and residential property taxpayers. We have uploaded costs back to the province, giving municipalities more room in their budgets to invest in local priorities. By 2017, in fact, municipalities have benefited from over \$4 billion in ongoing provincial support. We've uploaded nearly \$2 billion this year.

The Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund: We have, just in 2017, \$505 million in unconditional support to municipalities—primarily, in fact, rural and northern municipalities who have the greatest need.

The Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund: \$100 million a year. That will increase to \$300 million a year in 2018-19.

And, of course, the transit funding. It goes on and on in terms of what we have done for municipalities.

I have the great honour of representing four municipalities in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham. I know that they're going to be welcoming a number of these initiatives in this bill. They're already working on codes of conduct and sharing integrity commissioners to reduce costs—all of which is what we have in this exceptionally excellent bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Those of us in the Legislature here this morning who have served on local town or city councils or regional councils—including the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who I thank for being here in the House again today to listen to debate. They're aware of how increasingly complex it's become to work in the municipal sector but also to serve on the councils and to make the types of decisions that they have to make on a day-to-day basis.

The goal all along for the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus in debating Bill 68 is to ensure that the Municipal Act functions as an effective document that enables local governments to operate in an efficient, effective manner, helping them to continue to provide the type of high-quality services to the citizens that they serve.

The recent changes that are being debated today in the Legislature and have been debated previously—it's been a robust debate. The points of view provided by all parties I think have contributed to the type of act that we have to make a decision on going forward. But, again, our caucus has encouraged the government to investigate ways to ensure a level playing field between incumbents and challengers and, really importantly, to determine ways that the province and municipalities can assist in

educating and informing on the importance of municipal elections so that voters increase their awareness and, subsequently, their turnout going forward. My hope, as we continue to debate Bill 68 and the relative merits of it, is that we talk about the specific amendments that have been debated in this Legislature thus far and hopefully will continue to be debated in committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to congratulate my colleague the member for Niagara Falls on his comments because I think he brought up some very important issues that we haven't talked about nearly enough during this debate. Those are the issues of mental health, which have been exacerbated by municipal downloading, and also the issue of jobs. We know there is a connection between jobs and mental health. In my community of London, which has been one of the communities across this province hardest hit by the collapse of the global economy back in 2008-09, we have seen a net loss of jobs that has not returned. At the same time we are seeing an ongoing crisis of mental health.

This week, I just learned that London Health Sciences Centre was at 152% occupancy in its psychiatric ER, and 26 mental health patients were waiting for beds in my community. A lot of this is connected. We know that mental health pressures are affected by social determinants of health, by the lack of adequate housing, by the lack of jobs, by the lack of secure employment for those who are able to find any kind of work.

We saw the PCs begin the downloading of social housing onto municipalities. We see the Liberals continue that downloading. We see our social housing stock in grave disrepair. Municipalities are crying for funds in order to address the quality of social housing. Speaker, Bill 68 has a lot of words, but it doesn't really address the real issues.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: You know, we're supposed to comment on the comments from the member from Niagara Falls, but, frankly, I'm not sure he talked much about the bill. But that's okay, though, because he highlighted some stuff that I might respond to.

Speaker, I would say to you that when it comes to supporting municipalities—my God, we went through a pretty dark era. I was there—all the uploading. The MOU table that we now have set up for municipalities to make sure that we talk about issues—I know my colleague mentioned the uploads and the transfers of money that have been going to the municipalities on a regular basis in public transit, and the pieces that are important.

I guess I should say before I run out of time, Speaker, that in a way I am glad that the member from Niagara Falls didn't speak much about the bill because that gives me the impression that things are good with the bill and they're going to support it. I may be stepping out of turn here, but I get that sense from the lack of comments.

I wish you would have talked about the 20-week parental leave for municipal politicians, and how important

that is because some council members were worried that after three consecutive meetings they would be out of an elected job. We didn't talk about that.

He did touch a little bit on climate change and how important it is. I'm disappointed he didn't refer to some of the mechanisms in the bill that would allow municipalities the flexibility to work around plans to deal with climate change; give them that flexibility because it's not the same right across the province. We will allow the municipalities the flexibility to come up with plans that are best for their communities.

I see I'm out of time, Speaker. Thank you so much.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'll return to the member—no. The member from Niagara West—Glanbrook—sorry.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Sorry, I believe we do have another hit.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): No, I am going to return to the member from Niagara to wrap up this debate.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I have no problem allowing the young guy to speak. I hope he's going to speak on climate change.

I'm going to address the Liberals really quick, Madam Speaker, if you don't mind, in my last couple of minutes. For them to stand up here and say that we're not talking about the bill—I'm going to disagree with you. And you can disagree with me. That's fair. That's what we do here.

0940

I talked about the 50-50 split. You can tell me how much money you've spent over the last number of years, and that's fair—because you probably have. I don't have your stats in front of me. But I'm going to tell you that for a number of years the 50-50 split, before it was taken away from the municipalities, worked—it worked. Far more money was going back to municipalities in the province of Ontario than you're reinvesting. That's one thing.

To stand up here and say that mental health doesn't fall back on municipalities—are you kidding me? It's one of the biggest crises in this province today, and every municipality has to deal with it. The police, by the way, because of funding, are dealing with mental health. They're spending half their shift in hospitals and they can't leave until that particular patient is taken care of, leaving our streets unsafe. For you to say that I'm not talking to the bill, I disagree with you.

Then, the last thing I talked about, quite frankly, was the casino in Niagara. Those jobs in Niagara pay taxes. Do you know where they pay the taxes to? For my colleagues, in case they don't know, they pay them to the municipality. The mayor, Jim Diodati, and the regional chair, Alan Caslin, have been talking to your government, saying why it's important to make sure we have a major player there: so we protect the jobs, so they pay the taxes, so we can do the roads, the sewers and all the construction that goes on with that.

So I'm going to disagree with your comments that I didn't speak to the bill. I think the issues that I raised

during that 10 minutes are so important to the residents of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'm happy to speak to this bill, Bill 68. This is a good piece of proposed legislation. The part that I first saw, a piece that caught my attention, was the 20-week parental leave for elected officials. I think it's a good piece within this legislation, and there are so many additional pieces that are part of this legislation that I think will be good for municipalities.

Empowering municipalities to address climate change through locally passed laws, broadening municipal investment powers and improving access to justice by allowing integrity commissioners to investigate complaints—this is a good piece of legislation and it's good for municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, listening to the debate in the Legislature today and prior to today, there's no question in my mind that this legislation has a lot of support, not only from the government side but from the opposition side. In fact, the member from Oxford said, "As I said at the beginning, there are a lot of organizations that worked hard on the municipal legislation review to put forward good ideas and recommendations for this bill. I am pleased to see some of these ideas incorporated...." That was from the member from Oxford.

The NDP member from Windsor—Tecumseh said, "This bill is a good bill; it needs some tweaking, but it is a good bill. Earlier, I commended the minister and the previous minister for bringing this forward."

Even through the committee process, it got support from members of the opposition. The MPP for York—Simcoe said, "I think this provides us with a clear case to be made for committee hearings for this bill, in areas of the province, to hear about how these changes will impact the municipalities, large and small, southern and northern."

Again, the member from Windsor—Tecumseh said, "I look forward to taking part in the clause-by-clause participation and the hearings when we get this bill to committee...."

Speaker, as you know, this bill has had over 10 hours of debate here in the Legislature, and as a result I move that the question now be put.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Minister Coteau has moved that the question now be put. I just want to let the members in the chamber know that there were 29 speakers and over 10 hours of debate on Bill 68. Given this information, I am satisfied there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

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

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I believe we'll be deferring this vote to the end of question period.

Vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Orders of the day.

Hon. Chris Ballard: Speaker, no further business.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will recess the House until 10:30.

The House recessed from 0945 to 1030.

ATTACK IN LONDON

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order: the government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I believe that you will find that we have unanimous consent to observe a moment of silence before question period in remembrance of those who lost their lives yesterday outside the British House of Commons.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): With a slight amendment: I'm asking that it be done after introduction of guests.

After introduction of guests, the government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to have a moment of silence for the tragedy in London. Do we agree? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: I would like to introduce, from my riding, the mother of our page Nicholas Bhola. Dharamdai Bhikam-Bhola is in the gallery today here to see her son as a page.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I would like to welcome members of OPSEU: Greg Wilson and Robin Reath. They're here all the way from London to meet with MPPs today about stopping the privatization of the LCBO.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm very pleased to introduce guests of page captain Catherine Rootham from Ottawa West–Nepean: aunt Kathy Ho, aunt Audrey DeMarsico, uncle Alex Rootham and cousin Nicholas Rootham. I'm very, very pleased for you to join us here today.

Mr. Michael Harris: I would like to welcome my legislative assistant Jacqueline Dobson back to the Legislature. It will be Jacqueline's last day in my office as she's heading into the private sector—the real world. I'd like to thank her for her two years of service at Queen's Park.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to introduce Gareth Jones, Denise Davis, Rick Woodall, Anne Makela, Jennifer Van Zetten, Colleen MacLeod, Mark Laroque, Clarke Eaton and Megan Park from OPSEU, who are here today. Thank you all for coming.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my great pleasure to welcome Ms. Sayeh Hassan, who is visiting the House. This afternoon, from 12 o'clock to 1 o'clock, in room 228 she will be holding a session on human rights in Iran. I invite every member of this House to attend.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to welcome, from North Bay, our LCBO's Amanda Pellerin and Judy Jones; and, from the LCBO in Sudbury, James Kensley.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to introduce some of the LCBO workers here with OPSEU today: Frank Gullace, Rob Hawken, Bonnie Jolley and, from Windsor, Mike Peris and Jennifer Van Zetten. Thank you for being here. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Today I would like to welcome Jeffrey Weston from my riding of Barrie, who is here today with the LCBO OPSEU members. Welcome, Jeffrey.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm pleased to welcome Karley George to Ontario's Legislature. She is one of the Daughters of the Vote. Now she's got the bug, and she's coming here all the time.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It gives me great pleasure to introduce what is my constituency staff and almost my extended family: Eathan Quinn, Julia Girmenia, Zahrah Munas, Angus Affleck; and, the newest member of my ministry's staff, Deidre Beaumont. They are over there.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to extend a warm welcome to Dianne Perry from OPSEU from Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I know that we have OPSEU members from across Ontario, and for those who were not named from various points across Ontario here today: Welcome.

Mr. Bob Delaney: On behalf of the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North, I am pleased to welcome guests of page captain Frances MacGregor: her mother, Daphne Mitchell, and her grandparents Nancy and Lori Lorimer. They're in the public gallery.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd like to welcome Rick Woodall, who is here from Muskoka with the LCBO and OPSEU. I look forward to meeting with him this afternoon.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think all members of the House would like to join me in wishing Rob Benzie a very happy birthday.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'd like to welcome a few guests in the gallery this morning: Laura Casselman, the accounts director from Brown and Cohen; and Scott Grant, Ping Wu and Martin Haalstra, all of whom are here from the Professional Engineers Government of Ontario, PEGO.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to welcome Rachel Brunet from OPSEU, in today. We had a great meeting this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Bill Mauro: From the riding of Thunder Bay–Superior North, I would like to introduce the mother and grandfather of page Frances MacGregor: Daphne Mitchell and Lori Lorimer.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's a pleasure to welcome the future leaders of Ontario from the Neil McNeil grade 10 civics class, and their teacher.

ATTACK IN LONDON

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Seeing no further introductions, by motion, could I have everyone rise to pay tribute to and keep in our minds and hearts those who were affected by the attack in London.

The House observed a moment's silence.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On Monday, March 20, 2017, the member from Simcoe–Grey, Mr. Wilson, rose on a point of privilege concerning recent government advertising or announcements on electricity pricing. According to the member, the items—which were issued or authorized by the government, a private utility company and a political party—allude to future price cuts and other changes in the electricity sector. The member alleges that they constitute a prima facie case of contempt because they presume a timeline and outcome of forthcoming legislation. The government House leader, Mr. Naqvi, also spoke to the matter and subsequently filed a written submission. The member from Simcoe–Grey then filed another written submission in reply.

Having had the opportunity to review the written notice of the member from Simcoe–Grey, the written submissions of the government House leader and of the member from Simcoe–Grey, Hansard, items provided by the member from Simcoe–Grey and other relevant precedents and authorities, I am now prepared to rule on the matter.

Before I turn to the substance of the member’s allegation, let me remind the House generally about the nature of contempt as partially set out in the classic definition in *Erskine May* on pages 251, 260 and 261 of the 24th edition:

“Generally speaking, any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any member or officer of such House in the discharge of his” or her “duty, or which has a tendency, directly or indirectly, to produce such results, may be treated as a contempt even though there is no precedent of the offence. It is therefore impossible to list every act which might be considered to amount to a contempt, the power to punish for such an offence being of its nature discretionary....

“Other acts besides words spoken or writings published reflecting upon either House or its proceedings which, though they do not tend directly to obstruct or impede either House in the performance of its functions, yet have a tendency to produce this result indirectly by bringing such House into odium, contempt or ridicule or by lowering its authority, may constitute contempts.”

1040

I will now turn to the substance of the member’s allegation. I have reviewed the items provided to me by the member from Simcoe–Grey. One item, a Ministry of Energy document—it is difficult to determine whether it is advertising—refers to the government’s intention to introduce legislation that would, if passed, provide for changes to the global adjustment refinancing. The other items are two Twitter retweets, a Facebook advertisement, a screen-grab from the Liberal Party of Ontario website, and a voice advertisement that concludes with the words “paid for by the government of Ontario.” Each of these latter items make unqualified and definitive assertions, such as “Your household hydro bill won’t in-

crease beyond the rate of inflation for at least four years” and “25% off starting this summer—Ontario’s Fair Hydro Plan” and “Starting this summer, households will receive an average of 25% off their bill.”

The member from Simcoe–Grey asserts that these kinds of statements in the various communications provided to me amount to a demonstrated contempt, because they predict and presume the outcome of the decision of the House in first implementing the legislative changes required to give effect to these pledges.

The message conveyed to the reader or listener of the various communications is certainly definitive: The reduction of the electricity rates will happen. However, for the Speaker to conclude that the communications constitute a prima facie contempt of the House because of their definitive, unconditional language, as the member from Simcoe–Grey invites me to do, then I must first have found the contempt exists because the role of the House and the outcome of a future matter before it are both taken for granted and assumed to be a foregone conclusion.

Moreover, to combine these conclusions together would further require that the Speaker is also capable of conducting or has some sort of jurisdiction to conduct a legal analysis of the legislative framework that is necessary to produce the results alluded to in the ads and other items. Members know that it is well-established precedent that it is not the Speaker’s role to undertake legal analysis, make legal findings or attempt to interpret the law.

It is therefore not possible for me to determine whether or not the assembly has a necessary role in the implementation of the measures, certainty about which must be a precondition to a prima facie finding that such a role has been or is being undermined, diminished, obstructed, impeded or disparaged.

The statement of the Minister of Energy that he will be introducing legislation at some point, as noted by the member from Simcoe–Grey, does not alter this limitation on my authority or sphere of jurisdiction. It is not open to me to interpret or presume what might be in that possible legislation.

Consequently, I cannot find that a prima facie case of contempt has been established.

Given this finding, it is not necessary to consider the timeliness arguments raised by the government House leader and the member from Simcoe–Grey, apart from reminding members that timeliness in raising a point of privilege continues to be a requirement.

I thank the member from Simcoe–Grey and the government House leader for their contributions to this matter.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CURRICULUM

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Education. The announce-

ment of a financial literacy pilot program is an important first step, but in a Toronto Star article, financial literacy expert Tricia Barry argues that the mandated financial literacy needs to be introduced much earlier—in fact, she suggests, by grade 6. She says, “Elementary students should not be left behind.” But this government is doing exactly that by saddling them with thousands of dollars of debt because of their overspending. In fact, it’s nearly \$23,000 a student.

How long is the Minister of Education going to keep elementary students in the dark about her government’s fiscal mismanagement?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member opposite for this question. I’m very pleased to rise in the House today and to talk about how we’re investing in our students in Ontario in 21st-century learning. Of course, that includes financial literacy.

I committed in November to make financial literacy a mandatory part of the grade 10 curriculum, and that is exactly what we’re doing. In addition, since 2011, in fact, we have made financial literacy a part of our elementary school curriculum starting in grade 4 right through to secondary school to grade 12, so that as students move through the grades they’re acquiring this really good knowledge. We’re taking this a step further by making it a mandatory part of the grade 10 curriculum. We’re ensuring that our students have what they need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Minister, Kimia Kamarhie, who teaches careers at Thornhill Secondary School, had this to say: “Both money skills and digital literacy are critical tools for high school kids and subjects they’re eager to learn about.”

Speaker, we just wish the Liberal caucus members were as eager to learn about money skills.

My question to the minister is, if she had introduced this earlier, would Ontario still be the most indebted sub-national government on the planet?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite himself has said that he’s happy with the new approach—he said that to me, actually, personally—we’re taking to financial literacy. So I know that he supports this direction and this investment.

I do want to let the House know—because we’re very excited about the work we’re doing in 21st-century learning in Ontario and the investments we’re making in our schools, in our teachers, in our students—that just this morning I was at St. Mary academy, with the member from Davenport, to talk about SHSMs, those Specialist High Skills Majors programs that are world-leading programs, teaching skills and real-world knowledge that they will need to build on. We’re going to continue to invest in that, including information and communications technology. And of course, digital learning is a really important aspect of our curriculum in Ontario. We will continue to lead.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the minister: Well, we all know what happens when you don’t have financial

literacy. You get 13 consecutive Liberal budgets that throw hard-working Ontario families into debt. You get 13 consecutive Liberal budgets that make life harder for families and seniors. You get 13 consecutive Liberal budgets that mean people work harder, pay more and get less.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Education be requiring her caucus colleagues to participate in the financial literacy pilot project?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Mr. Speaker, I’m delighted that the member opposite is aware of our pilot project, 29 pilots that will be happening across the province, involving our educators as researchers, involving our students and the input.

We have heard from students in Ontario that they want financial literacy. We’ve been working together to ensure that this is part of our curriculum, a part of the mandatory course in grade 10.

We’re really thrilled with the direction that we’re taking, ensuring that students have the real-world knowledge that they need to succeed. We’re giving them the tools that they need in 21st-century learning.

I thank the member for this question.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Minister of Finance. When the Premier stumped for the Prime Minister during the election, she promised that it would reap benefits for Ontario. But it looks like the Premier traded her favours for nothing more than a campaign stop during the Whitby–Oshawa by-election. Yesterday, the Minister of Finance looked disparaged, deflated and defeated when addressing the federal budget.

Mr. Speaker, what else did the minister ask for that he didn’t receive? Does the finance minister need to rewrite the Ontario budget because the Prime Minister didn’t give him what he wanted?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the federal government came out with their second budget, reflecting on the deficiencies of the previous government that did nothing for Ontario, provided no investments to grow our economy, leaving us empty, as we’ve moved forward and stimulated growth.

We invested heavily. We’ve taken the steps to come to balance this year, recognizing the measures that we’ve done to grow the economy, something that that party across the way has always, always declined. They would rather we cut across the board—100,000 jobs in one year, no less—and without any care for those that matter most.

We have taken the right steps to invest in the economy, control our spending, come into balance, ensuring that we have a sustained future for all Ontarians going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the minister: Well, the finance minister is trying to hold his cards close to his chest, but sadly he does not have a very good poker face. Yesterday he looked visibly upset. He got nothing he

asked for. He didn't get the capital gains tax on housing purchases. He didn't get the health transfer he hoped for. We can only imagine that the release of the federal budget left his entire office scrambling.

Can the Minister of Finance tell us when he's releasing his Ontario budget, or is he now waiting for the re-write?

1050

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the federal government has aligned with the Ontario government in regard to skills and training, in regard to investing in child care, in ensuring that we work through the labour market agreements that enable some of our most precarious workers to now have some support, which they didn't have under the Harris government and under the Harper government in the past. As we consolidate these initiatives, we're going to be able to support more skills and training. These are important initiatives.

When it comes to infrastructure spending—the federal government has again reaffirmed their desire to do so, without incrementality to the province. That, too, is critically important, Mr. Speaker. While the member opposite sits on his hands and makes up numbers, we here are dealing with what's real, and that is the people of Ontario and their needs and ensuring that we deliver for them.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the minister: When the finance minister planned for the upcoming budget, he certainly hadn't planned for a multi-billion dollar hydro scheme. At that time, this government didn't even think that Ontario's hydro crisis was a problem, so that's billions upon billions in new spending. Now his government has failed to successfully lobby in Ottawa. They're missing out on billions in opportunities for Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, is the Minister of Finance now scrambling to put together their budget, and when will Ontarians see this new budget?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the fact that the member opposite has recognized that we are reducing rates 25% across the board. Because of the measures that we have taken to afford to do those measures, Mr. Speaker, and because we've taken the steps necessary to afford them and still come to balance, we're providing for the people of Ontario to help in their everyday lives.

As we proceed throughout that process, regardless of what the federal government has done, we've taken into consideration all of those factors. I want to reaffirm that we are balancing the books, and we've taken the steps to do so without putting in harm's way health care or education or social programs or child care or affordable housing. And jobs, Mr. Speaker: 700,000 net new jobs have come to this province since we've taken office, through that recession, and we're succeeding and surpassing.

HYDRO RATES

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question is for the Acting Premier. The Premier has promised to reduce the burden

of soaring hydro bills at Ontario hospitals by 2%. Let me be clear: That's not good enough. Health Sciences North in Sudbury, where I live, invested heavily in energy conservation, and saw their hydro bill go up by 26%. The Peterborough regional hospital cut their hydro consumption by 25%, and saw their bill go up by 8%.

Does the Acting Premier think that our hospital in Sudbury would have been better off with just a 24% increase, or does she think that the people in Peterborough would be comforted by a 6% increase rather than an 8% increase?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm actually elated that the member opposite has referenced Health Sciences North.

Mr. Paul Miller: This is you excited?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, the member opposite wants to see me even more excited. I think if they just wait a minute, they're going to see that—because Health Sciences North has spent the last two and a half years taking advantage of a number of government of Ontario programs that specifically help them with their energy costs. They've received a quarter of a million dollars in incentives to help with efficiency updates. The result of those upgrades that they've made—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Kitchener-Waterloo.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The result of those upgrades that they've made is that they now save more than \$500,000 per year on their energy costs. So I am getting excited and I am elated with this, because when you combine that with the increase in the funding we've provided—I'm happy to talk about that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton saw a 105% increase in their hydro bill. Under the Liberal plan, they will get a 2% decrease.

Is the minister okay with a 103% increase in a hydro bill?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, we need to remind Ontarians that the electricity costs of hospitals, on average, are approximately 1%. We increased the entire operating budget of Health Sciences North last year by 3.2%, or almost \$9 million. We increased the operating budget, the entire budget, not the 1% that the member opposite is talking about, which is electricity. The entire budget of St. Joe's in Hamilton increased by 3.8%, over \$15 million.

In Peterborough, again, as what happened in Sault Ste. Marie, the CEO of the hospital had to come out and had to actually refute the claims made by the NDP, saying that hydro costs represent less than 1% of their budget and that Peterborough hospital has dramatically decreased energy consumption through various energy-saving programs and measures across the hospital. They've reduced their consumption by 25%, and they have indicated that they are working well and working closely with the government on further measures.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement-ary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: What about the hospital in Niagara? A 96% increase. The hospital in Windsor: a 49% increase. Toronto East General: a 67% increase on their hydro bill.

How can the minister tout the virtue of his government's \$40-billion borrowing scheme that does not address the very real concerns that have been expressed to him repeatedly and publicly by hospitals?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: With the Niagara Health System, we increased their budget—the entire budget, not the 1% of the budget that is applied to electricity—the entire \$381-million operating budget of the Niagara Health System. We increased that budget by a further 2.5%, or \$9.4 million. Again, the hospital in Niagara, as a result of the misinformation that the NDP has been spreading—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: In response to the confusion being spread by the NDP, the executive vice-president of finance and operations of Niagara Falls says that, "Our teams have been able to absorb any increase in costs by continuously looking for efficiencies in our operation...." Even the member of Niagara agreed that the increases—much of that was the result of the doubling in size of the new St. Catharines hospital.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: My next question is also to the Acting Premier. Right here, right now in Ontario, private clinics are charging people thousands of dollars to jump the queue. They are forcing our families and our seniors to wait longer for their care. For-profit companies are charging up to \$100 just to see a doctor. They're charging money to get people a diagnosis. They are charging money for a physician to sign a prescription.

Why does the Acting Premier think that it is okay to make people pay up or wait longer for the health care that they need?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I think it's important to reassure Ontarians and indeed this Legislature that what the member opposite is talking about, I believe what she's talking about, are digital or Internet interactions that are taking place.

No one in this province is allowed to, permitted to, under the law, actually provide financial or receive incentives to receive OHIP publicly insured health care services and programs, so that simply isn't the case—individuals in this province have that legal right, because of medicare, because of our universal health care system and because of the legislation that we put in place in 2004 which makes it illegal for those kinds of activities

to take place. If it takes place in a digital interaction online—except with certain pilot programs we have—it is not currently an OHIP-funded procedure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I think we can all agree that you should never need a credit card to see a doctor here in Ontario.

Right here, right now, under this Liberal government, private clinics are charging thousands of dollars to jump the queue. Companies like Maple and Akira are charging up to \$100 to see a physician.

How can this minister allow private clinics to charge money for basic health care services and force everybody else to wait longer for the care that they need?

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Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, we have to be so careful here.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo, second time.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I don't want to be in a position where I have to withdraw or apologize again. But the kind of confusion that this member is sowing across this province right now—it simply is not the case that individuals in Ontario have to pay to receive OHIP-insured health services. They do not pay to jump the queue; it's illegal.

We're monitoring this so closely. The examples that the member opposite is providing—erroneous examples, I would argue—that suggest somehow that people are able to buy their way to the front of the line, or somehow that people have to pay for prescriptions from a physician, it's simply not true.

Interjections.

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

Final supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I know the minister doesn't get it, but some things are not for sale. That includes the health care that our families need and count on. Charging people thousands of dollars a year—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, come to order. Minister of Agriculture, come to order.

Carry on, please.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Charging people thousands of dollars a year for health care is wrong. Charging people—

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, second time. You didn't hear me.

Mr. Paul Miller: Out you go, out you go.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know the member wants me to do my job.

Mr. Mike Colle: You're in the wrong seat too.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence, come to order. Start the clock.

Please.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Charging people to see a doctor is wrong. Charging people to get a diagnosis is wrong. Charging people to renew a prescription is wrong.

Why is the minister letting this happen? When is he actually going to stop it?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, this kind of accusation is so irresponsible, and even dangerous—these wild and vague accusations. I would like to challenge the member opposite: If she has specific examples which run contrary to the law in this province and the law in this country, I want her to bring them to me directly. I invite her to share them here and now, with names, with specifics, in this Legislature, in the presence of the media, because you don't have those examples. You don't have those—

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

Interjections.

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

New question.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The demand for long-term-care beds is becoming desperate in my riding. In fact, Central East LHIN continues to have the highest ratio of need-to-available beds in the entire province. There is now a wait-list of over 1,700 people in need of long-term-care beds in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. That's double what it was a couple of years ago. And in the Peterborough area, their number is now almost 2,900. The wait-lists are so bad that a large group of concerned Ontarians drove down to Queen's Park this past winter to protest the government's inaction.

Speaker, when will the minister finally act to address the crisis in long-term care?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We are acting. We recognize that there are parts of the province where we need to do more. We need to ensure that the capacity that exists reflects the needs of that local population. That's part of the reason why we're engaged right now in capacity planning across this province, through the LHINs, to look at a number of issues, including the capacity in long-term care.

But since the member referenced Central East, again, we've built more than 10,000 long-term-care beds since coming into office in 2003, including many in Central East: 75 beds at Craiglee Nursing Home, 150 new beds at Yee Hong Centre, 100 new beds at Scarborough Finch, 128 at Hellenic Home for seniors and, also in Central East, 160 further beds in Mon Sheong Foundation.

We know that there's more work to be done. We're redeveloping 30,000 beds. We're already in the process or have completed 13,000 of those 30,000.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: The fact is that the 10,000-beds number that the minister often likes to take credit for was actually the capacity started under the previous PC government. So here we are, 13 years later—13 years of Liberal government—and there's no new capacity plan.

We've been calling on the government for new long-term-care beds for years, but the minister is just sitting on his hands. What's the point of having a long-term-care system that Ontarians can't even get into? They're dying on the wait-lists.

My question again is to the minister: When is he finally going to respond to the suffering families and address the out-of-control crisis in the long-term-care beds in our province?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I think we need to recognize that what we're confronting here in Ontario is the same as what is being confronted across this country, across North America and, indeed, in the world: an aging population that, in many respects, is aging more healthily but who are also having changing needs that we need to make sure we are responding to.

That includes, for example, the investments that we're making in support for individuals living with dementia. That also includes, of course, recognizing that those in long-term-care homes tend to be older now, and they tend to have more complex conditions, so we're investing about \$50 million annually in behavioural supports for individuals in long-term care.

We're dramatically increasing our investments in home and community care, in the order of about 5% per year.

But we're focusing not only on new beds that we've created in long-term care, and the redevelopment, but investments in the important resources that they need in those homes.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a question, and it's for the Deputy Premier. Good morning.

I have a constituent. She's 67. Her husband is a stroke victim. She's trying to save money. She got rid of her electric clothes dryer, switched to natural gas, and it only saved her 10 bucks a month. Her most recent hydro bill was for \$130 of usage, but more than \$100 in delivery charges.

What does the Deputy Premier say to folks struggling to keep up with her government's failed energy policies?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Good morning to you too, sir. This example, and many others that we have heard in

this House for weeks now, illustrate exactly why we are making the changes we are making. It's part of—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —and it reflects our values. People should not be struggling to pay their electricity bills when they have so many other demands. That is why we are bringing prices down by 25% on average.

There is additional support for people who live in rural Ontario and remote communities. There is additional support available for people who are in low-income households. We've got additional supports available for people with medical needs that require additional electricity usage.

It is exactly that kind of story that has compelled us to make this significant reduction in electricity prices.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My constituent takes a monthly prescription pill. It costs her more than \$100. It's not covered by OHIP. There are times, she tells me, when she has to make a decision: "Do I buy more medication or do I pay my hydro bill?"

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She also tells me that there are a lot of seniors in her neighbourhood. When she goes out in the evening and at night, those homes are darker these days, these nights, these evenings because people can't afford to turn on their lights.

She's not the only one struggling these days. When can seniors in Ontario finally get a break from the failed policies of this Liberal government?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The answer is, they've already seen a reduction that came in in the January bill. There will be additional savings, if and when this legislation gets passed. What I would say to the member opposite, who I know actually cares about this issue and the people in his community, is to support this bill.

Their plan is a plan that would take \$4 billion out of the services that people in this province rely on, like health care. The plan to spend \$4 billion would not take one penny off one bill. Our plan will do that—25% on average, and more for people facing particularly high electricity costs.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Yesterday, Ontario made history by holding its first cap-and-trade auction. Soon, 60% of the world's economy will be covered by a carbon price, 90% of which will be cap-and-trade systems. By entering into the carbon market, we're following through on our commitment to responsibly reduce emissions at the lowest possible cost.

Our plan also calls for support for homeowners and businesses to benefit from home energy retrofits, public transit and electric vehicle incentives. These are invest-

ments which, sadly, are non-existent in the schemes that we've seen from members of the opposition.

Speaker, could the minister please speak to the benefits of Ontario's cap-and-trade program?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank—because we don't know the results and we won't for two weeks, but it was technically a huge success—Ontarians, environmental groups, and the nine largest-emitting industry associations, from cement to auto, who worked with us and have supported that and are participating in this, and companies that are not passing costs on, as the opposition would suggest, but are reducing:

—St. Marys Cement and Pond biofuels, to reduce costs and emissions;

—Goldcorp, on electrification of mining;

—Brookfield and EllisDon, net-zero buildings, massively reducing costs of buildings in Ontario;

—exporters reducing costs for small businesses in systemic programs;

—General Motors, using biofuels in St. Catharines;

—UPS and FedEx, reducing costs of delivery in Ontario with lower technology; and

—Nova corporation, doing massive co-gen in Sarnia.

All across our industries and services, people are using carbon markets and cap-and-trade to reduce costs, renew our industrial infrastructure and make Ontario more competitive.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you to the minister for his answer. It's encouraging to hear that our government is taking an approach that's economically sound and transparent.

What's not encouraging, however, are the comments that the PC leader has made on the eve of Ontario's first cap-and-trade auction. When referring to the Western Climate Initiative, the PC leader told the Toronto Star, "We would want to exit from this framework as quickly as possible."

Politicizing an auction a day before it goes live is not just careless but can potentially undermine the auction itself. When pressed by the CBC on his climate strategy, the PC leader was quoted as saying, "We're still going through our policy process on that."

Mr. Speaker, given that our government does have a process in place, can the minister please explain to the House what it entails?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I would agree with the observation by the member that, by suggesting you're going to tear up the WCI on the eve that the market is calculated, you disrupt the market. That wasn't an attack on the government; that was an attack on all of—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am listening very carefully. The member is dangerously close to making an accusation to a member. I would caution him and ask that he go no further with that.

Carry on.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That challenges the market, which everyone is relying on. It's not the government of Ontario; it's Ontarians who are

finding the most cost-effective ways to reduce emissions—businesses to compete.

Our petrochemical sectors, our trucking sectors, who are out ahead of this, and all who support it: They're asking me what would happen if the opposition tore this up and put a carbon tax in place that would start fuel prices at 16 cents higher at the pump, and have no money to sustain these programs. That is awful.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Robert Bailey: Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the Acting Premier: Sarnia–Lambton constituent Carol Cote and a small group of friends have been gathering for years in a Sarnia church to quilt. The group has a social conscience and soon began creating what they call “comfort quilts” for victims of disease, crime or tragic incidents.

The local church was kind enough to provide space in their gym one day a month for the group to meet. They only asked for whatever donation the members of the group could give. Sadly, because of the unaffordable cost of hydro, the church has informed Carol that they will no longer be able to offer the gym without a rental charge, a charge the group cannot afford.

Acting Premier, your energy crisis has now become a barrier even to charitable work in Ontario. Can you honestly say that you've done enough to correct the energy mistakes?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, what I could tell you is that we are the party that has a plan to bring down electricity prices. It is a fair plan. It is about helping everyone; everyone will benefit from this plan. It brings the cost of electricity down by 25%.

Then we're giving people the comfort of knowing that rates will go up no higher than the rate of inflation for four years. This is a plan that we actually can stand behind.

I'm still waiting to see what the PCs' plan is, but I don't think the people in Sarnia–Lambton can wait till your policy convention in November. They want action now, and that's what we are doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the Acting Premier: Unfortunately, your hydro Hail Mary comes too late for Carol and her group.

Over the last five years, Carol and the Sarnia Sisterhood of Quilters have lovingly finished more than 200 quilts for various agencies in the community, hospitals and individuals in need. They've never sought compensation or recognition. They only seek to make a positive mark on their community.

Acting Premier, before your next million-dollar ad buy patting yourself and the party on the back, will you stop and think of the welfare of groups like the Sarnia Sisterhood of Quilters, rather than the welfare of the Ontario Liberal Party?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Once again, we're hearing stories from real people. I have no reason to question that

story. The difference between them and us, though, is that we have a plan and we are delivering on that plan.

The PCs are saying that they are going to rip up contracts. Even they know that that will lead to—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, second time.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —penalties, that that will lead to increased costs. In fact, the PC energy critic said that renegotiating contracts—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Niagara West–Glanbrook, come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —a huge cost to taxpayers, and we're going to continue to see electricity prices rise.

Speaker, they don't have a plan. They're not even able to criticize our plan. But we are moving forward. We are delivering results. We are reducing the price of electricity.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Acting Premier. LCBO employees are professionals who perform an important public service, regulating the sale and consumption of alcohol-related products in the province. They're doing a very good job because, even on the profit side, they've shown growth in 21 straight years. Last year, 2015-16, there was \$2 billion in profit—profit that, because it belongs to us, goes to schools, to health care, to home care. But those profits would also be very attractive to the private sector, for good reason.

My question is, will the Premier commit to not sell off the LCBO?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, let me be really clear here. Notwithstanding what Smokey Thomas has requested, which is to buy the LCBO and privatize it for their own benefit, it is not for sale, Mr. Speaker.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again to the Acting Premier: LCBO stores are clean, safe, highly regulated places to purchase alcoholic beverages.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Come to order.

Please finish.

Mr. John Vanthof: They're a clear gem among this province's crown assets. Despite the Minister of Finance's attempt to deflate or—what's the Premier's word?—conflate the issue, Hydro One wasn't for sale either. The Premier said it wasn't for sale, and then, magically, it was. The question is, is the same thing going to happen to LCBO?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Well, we still own Hydro One and we'll always be the largest shareholder, and we'll reinvest dollar for dollar into our economy to continue to build new assets.

The member opposite has made an important point: The LCBO is a highly attractive organization. Its value is strong, its contribution to the province is strong, and that in itself is why we are not even considering mobilizing anything for the LCBO, except expanding its reach to ensure that it continues to contribute for the benefit of Ontario. Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we're doing.

When it came to Hydro One and other assets, we made the same investment and realized we could do better—and we are doing better on all cases.

LCBO is not for sale.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is to the Minister of International Trade. In trade and in governance as a whole, taking a proactive approach to the issues that matter most to constituents and businesses is of the utmost importance to us. It is a defining characteristic of our government. This approach was exemplified earlier this week when Minister Chan and Minister Duguid travelled to Albany, New York, to join Monique Smith, Ontario's trade representative in Washington, and her Quebec counterpart to meet with New York state legislators to represent Ontario's business interests.

In light of the shifting trade climate, I know that the businesses in my community value the proactive efforts made by our government to boldly protect their opportunities for growth. Can the minister share with this Legislature the importance of a strong New York state trade relationship on both sides of the border?

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker, I want to thank the member from Barrie for asking. As part of our government's many engagement efforts with the US, Minister Duguid and I travelled to Albany, New York, on Tuesday and engaged in seven meetings with New York state legislators. We advocated on behalf of Ontarians seeking an exemption from proposed buy-American provisions that could potentially affect access to procurement contracts.

During these discussions, we stressed the fact that both Ontario and New York state grow together, as our economies are deeply integrated. In fact, Ontario is the destination for 80% of all goods exported from New York to Canada. Trade matters to Ontario and a strong and balanced relationship with our US partners serves to benefit workers and businesses on both sides of the border.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Minister of International Trade for his efforts and his response.

Minister, New York state's buy-American policy is part of their budget bill that will be passed at the end of this month. This policy will prevent non-American com-

panies from bidding on New York state government procurement. This kind of protectionist policy is rightfully of concern to Ontario businesses. We understand that your trip surrounded efforts to ask New York state legislators to exempt Canada from this policy. My question to the minister is, how did the meetings go and what happens next?

Hon. Michael Chan: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to begin by thanking my colleague the Minister of International Trade, and the minister of economic development for Quebec, Dominique Anglade, for travelling with us and working with us in our efforts in Albany this week.

As New York state is our number one international customer and we are their number one international customer, I want to say that the minister and I are very proud to stand up for our business community here in Ontario and strongly make the case that Canadian businesses need to be exempt from the "buy-American" policy or it could very well cost New York state jobs as well. It's very important they get that message.

I'm pleased to report to all members of the Legislature that our message was very well received. In fact, I was pleasantly surprised by the knowledge of that by the folks that we met with. We'll continue to pursue this—

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

COURT FACILITY

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Attorney General. The Attorney General is well aware that Halton region is in urgent need of a new courthouse. The existing courthouse in Milton is aging, overcrowded and inadequate to deal with the needs of a rapidly growing Halton region.

Working with local stakeholders, we have been advocating for a new courthouse for more than two years now. As one of the Halton-area MPPs, I have raised this issue in the Legislature many times.

My question is very simple. Why is it taking the Attorney General so long to announce approval of the new Halton courthouse we so desperately need?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member opposite for a very important question. Indeed, a new courthouse in Halton is a top priority for my ministry.

I want to give a big thank you to the members from Oakville, Burlington and Halton for their ongoing advocacy on behalf of the community, working along with the member from Halton Hills in making sure that we have a new courthouse in Halton.

I've had the opportunity to meet with the local community as well and with the local government to understand the need of Halton, along with the members from Oakville, Burlington and Halton and the member from Halton Hills, to make sure that we have all the processes in place.

In the supplementary I will speak to exactly what steps we have taken so that we have a new courthouse in Halton.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Mr. Speaker, we have been assured repeatedly by both this Attorney General and his predecessor that a new Halton courthouse is his ministry's top priority. However, despite these assurances, we're still waiting. And while we're waiting, access to justice in Halton region is compromised.

According to the Halton county law society, litigants are often required to travel to Brampton or Guelph because the current courthouse simply can't handle the volume of cases. In fact, there have been examples where criminal cases have been thrown out because it was taking too long to get them to trial. Surely the Attorney General would agree this is unacceptable.

Will he commit to this House that a new Halton courthouse will be approved and announced this year?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As I said earlier, a new courthouse for Halton region is on the top of the ministry's priority project list. Again, I want to acknowledge all the work that the members from Oakville, Burlington and Halton have done on this very important issue. As a result of that work, we have appointed a design expert who has been hired to develop the design requirements for a new courthouse and has met with Infrastructure Ontario as part of the design process.

There also have been meetings between the design expert, the users of the court and the local community to better understand their needs. Those consultations, which began in August, have put the ministry in a good position to move forward with the project implementation of the Halton region consolidated courthouse.

We recognize, Speaker, that there is a clear need to address facility challenges in Halton region, and I assure the member opposite, as I've assured the members from Oakville, Halton and Burlington, that this is our top priority and we will get it done.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Acting Premier. More than a year ago, London Health Sciences Centre, CMHA Middlesex and Middlesex-London EMS came up with an innovative project to divert 3,000 mental health patients each year from the emergency room to the CMHA crisis centre.

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The project has stalled because provincial legislation only allows ambulance transfer of patients directly to a public hospital and not to a community-based crisis centre. LHSC, CMHA and EMS have been asking for months for the Minister of Health to approve the project as a pilot, to allow it to go ahead.

The minister told the media yesterday that the project is already under way, but in fact it is waiting on his desk for sign-off.

Will the minister commit to signing off today, so that the project can proceed immediately?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I did have the opportunity to speak to this; I believe it was yesterday. The work that CMHA, the Canadian Mental Health Association, is doing in London with the brand new crisis centre that we funded to the tune of \$1.2 million is remarkably important, because it provides crisis intervention for adults and youth aged 16 and up, in both London and Middlesex county.

They have put forward a proposal that we're looking at, which would permit emergency medical services to—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Transport.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —thank you—transport patients in crisis directly to that crisis centre. The member herself has acknowledged that it is currently illegal to do that. It would require a legislative change to the Ambulance Act. It obviously would have implications province-wide, but it is something that we're looking at.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The mental health crisis in my community keeps getting worse. On Monday this week, the LHSC psychiatric ER was at 152% capacity, with 26 mental health patients waiting for beds.

This ER diversion project could save about \$2.5 million annually by reducing the need for ambulances to transfer patients to the ER first and then wait, sometimes for hours, before they can transfer patients to the crisis centre.

After he signs off on the pilot—hopefully, today—will the minister commit to reinvesting the \$2.5 million in savings back into the community, so that the crisis centre has enough nurses to care for the expected 3,000 patients, and LHSC can start putting patients in beds instead of hallway stretchers?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, I wish it was that easy. First of all, if I was to approve the pilot that the member opposite is advocating for—and I have to say that the member from London—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: North Centre.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —North Centre has been a strong advocate for this, and we have had conversations about it.

But I can no more sign off on a pilot—which is nowhere near my desk by the way. I can't sign off on that, because it would be breaking the law.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm asking for quiet.

Carry on.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: But this is a very important project, and it points to the success of—

Interjection.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important project, and it points to the success of the crisis centre that we, this government, funded—those beds that are available, the supports that are available in the community.

I'm taking this very, very seriously. There's a lot of support for this, including from the member to the left of

me. The ministry is looking at this, but it does have bigger implications in terms of, it is currently illegal, and it would require legislative changes to the Ambulance Act—

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

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Harinder Malhi: My question is to the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. The number of First Nations communities in Ontario without access to safe drinking water is unacceptable. As the Premier stated yesterday during question period, this matter is of high priority to our government.

I know that the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation as well as the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change are both working hard to address this issue.

Can the minister please elaborate on what our government is doing to ensure that our First Nations communities have access to safe and clean drinking water?

Hon. David Zimmer: We are committed to a trilateral process with Canada on a five-year plan to provide First Nation reserves with access to safe drinking water and to develop a longer-term strategy to ensure that solutions are implemented and long-lasting.

Ontario is pleased with Ottawa's \$2-billion investment in water treatment plants on reserves across Canada. Since 2015, Ontario has spent or committed a total of \$23.74 million in provincial money to on-reserve drinking water projects in Ontario, but more work needs to be done. This trilateral process with Canada and First Nations will continue to identify options, to expedite and ensure that safe drinking water is a priority.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Harinder Malhi: It's assuring to hear that our government is working hard and placing a high priority on this matter. All Ontarians must have access to safe water, especially our partners in indigenous communities. Although there is much work left to do, I am encouraged to know that this government is taking the necessary steps to solve this issue.

I know that this is also an important matter for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, and they are also involved in the trilateral process.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please elaborate on the specifics of what the ministry of climate change is doing, what they've done, and what they are currently doing?

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, I refer this supplementary to the very effective Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just his title, please.

Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The role of our ministry in working with Minister Zimmer's ministry, the federal government and First Nations is important. What we're involved in is getting the planning and the assessments

ready to support the capital infrastructure being undertaken by the federal government—reaffirmed in its budget.

We are carrying out water sampling in eight communities; we are doing the profiling of water microbiology and chemistry in 14 more within the next two months. We are doing the on-site assessments and visits to provide recommendations for seven communities so they can establish their water treatment facilities. We are providing expertise and support to 10 councils and First Nations organizations to help them accelerate the movement of water projects forward. And we are providing comprehensive training across Ontario's First Nations for facility operators to operate the plants once they are repaired and new ones are established.

This is a powerful and transformative partnership with First Nations and the federal government, finally getting clean water to communities that have been waiting too long for it.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Mayor John Tory wrote what I've been saying for a long time. He said, "I've talked to hundreds of people about the Scarborough subway extension but I've also listened to those people and I've heard the message loud and clear from Scarborough residents—Scarborough needs better transit...." Mr. Speaker, they need better transit now.

When will this government get a shovel in the ground and start building the Scarborough subway?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member opposite for his question. I believe that everybody in this chamber knows that our Premier and our government—including our members from Scarborough, of which we have almost every riding covered in this caucus—were first at the table with respect to providing \$1.48 billion to help support a transit expansion for the subway expansion in Scarborough.

We continue to work very closely with the city of Toronto, with Mayor Tory and with our federal partners as well to make sure that we continue to expand transit, that we build the subway extension in Scarborough, and that we continue to build transit in every corner of Toronto, right across the GTHA and, frankly, in communities like Waterloo, Ottawa and so many others.

I look forward to the follow-up question from the member opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Mayor Tory talked about his time at the Scarborough Town Centre RT station, and I was with him that time. Said he: "I talked to people as they made the mad morning rush to transfer from a bus to the RT just so they could then transfer

again to the subway at Kennedy Station. The vast majority of those riders were ready for some transit relief now.”

Mr. Speaker, Scarborough is ready for transit relief now. When will the construction begin?

1140

Hon. Steven Del Duca: You know, Speaker, I try to be nice in this House from time to time when members are asking questions that actually make a lot of sense. I don't really understand that member's perspective. He is a former city of Toronto councillor. He would of course know that the city of Toronto is leading on this particular project. He understands it's a project the city of Toronto is not only leading on—the TTC would build. I think if anybody reasonably checks the historical record, they would understand that that particular member, throughout his long political career, has had a multitude of positions on this particular item.

There's only one party here, on this side of the House, that has been consistent on this. We are going to build the Scarborough subway extension because of members on our side of the House who represent Scarborough, and do it proudly, and because our Premier is the only political leader in Ontario committed to building our province up.

Interjections.

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

New question?

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Acting Premier. We know that our public libraries provide extraordinary value to their communities. Whether it's employment skills upgrading or the integration of new Ontarians, or whether it's providing free space for seniors' groups or the early development of literacy skills, our public libraries create community across this province.

However, in Waterloo, our public libraries' hydro bills have been rising, with no end in sight. In fact, I've heard first-hand over the last three years that the increases in their hydro bills have been staggering. In 2014-15, Waterloo Public Library's electricity costs rose by 18%; the following year by 26%. Public libraries' operating budgets are being squeezed and public service is being sacrificed.

My question is simple. To the Acting Premier: Can you tell Ontarians why she's allowed energy costs to impact public libraries in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Again, we hear a story about the impact of high electricity rates. We understand those stories; we hear them ourselves in our own communities. That is why we are taking action to significantly reduce the electricity bills for organizations, for individuals and for businesses. Libraries would be included in that.

My question back to the member is—you don't have a plan that will take a penny off a bill. Your plan is to

actually spend \$4 billion more for something that will not take one penny off one bill, including the bill of that library.

We have a plan. We're moving forward. We would welcome the support of the members opposite for our plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: With all due respect, we haven't seen your plan. You have not tabled this legislation in this House. If anybody has a credibility problem, it's that side of the House on this file.

Back to the Acting Premier: Our public library budgets are being compromised because of your out-of-control hydro rates. Your government's public library operating grants fund less than 5% of library operating budgets.

In Toronto, library utility bills increased by almost \$700,000 between 2014 and 2015, and they're projecting a significant increase this year. Rising electricity bills and chronic underfunding have created a crisis for libraries. Out of desperation, Toronto public libraries are now opening without staff. Imagine: libraries without librarians.

Acting Premier, why is your government forcing libraries to choose between paying their bills or staffing their libraries?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I'm always happy to stand in this House and talk proudly about our support for public libraries. I know the member opposite will join me in not only celebrating that support but supporting it when it comes forward as we table our budget and in our ongoing conversations. I know that I can count on your support for our public libraries.

Here is just a sample of what we've done since 2003—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: We already heard that.

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

Finish, please.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: In the spirit of quiet conversations in libraries, perhaps we can continue in that vein to talk precisely about what we've done for public libraries. I'm happy to start—that since 2003, over half a billion dollars this government has invested in our public and our First Nations libraries, \$33.5 million last year alone. That support is going to continue, and we're proud of it.

FARM SAFETY

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Ontario's agri-food sector supports close to 800,000 jobs and contributes more than \$36.4 billion towards the province's GDP. The agri-food sector is one of the

biggest employers in my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore and also includes the Ontario Food Terminal, all of which is powered by Ontario's farmers.

This past week, Canadian Agricultural Safety Week took place, with the goal of raising awareness of farm safety across Canada. Our government commends their efforts here in Ontario and across the country.

Can the minister please provide this House with more information on how Canadian Agricultural Safety Week is working to improve safety on farms across Canada each year?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore for his question this morning. I know that during his work as MPP for that riding, he goes door to door to promote backyard gardens in his riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Canadian Agricultural Safety Week happens every year with the goal of raising awareness of farm safety in Canada. Our government commends their efforts here in Ontario and across the country. I'm proud to stand with the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture to recognize the importance of farm safety. Their three-year farm safety campaign, Be an AgSafe Family, has been crucial, providing resources and raising the profile of farm safety across Canada.

Last year, the campaign's focus for Canadian Agricultural Safety Week was on children. This year the focus is on adult farm safety. In 2018, the focus will be on promoting farm safety for seniors.

I want to conclude: I even made a wonderful short video highlighting the importance of agricultural safety week. I posted my video—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. You will conclude.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on a point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I apologize for not doing this earlier, but I did want to welcome to Queen's Park today OPSEU member Brian Hickman, who is a liquor store employee in Eganville, in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Thank you for joining us today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nickel Belt on a point of order.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Through my question, the Minister of Health had asked for information on the two-tier system. He's asked that I send it over—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not a point of order. You can do that on your own.

Point of order.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: If I may, I just want to very quickly acknowledge that ministry officials from the Ministry of Education who have worked on Bill 92 are here in the gallery and watching. I just want to thank them for their work.

DEFERRED VOTES

SCHOOL BOARDS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AMENDMENT ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 92, An Act to amend the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014 and make related amendments to other statutes / Projet de loi 92, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2014 sur la négociation collective dans les conseils scolaires et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1148 to 1153.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On March 22, 2017, Ms. Hunter moved third reading of Bill 92, An Act to amend the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014 and make related amendments to other statutes. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Miller, Norm
Anderson, Granville	Fraser, John	Moridi, Reza
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Hoggarth, Ann	Murray, Glen R.
Baker, Yvan	Hoskins, Eric	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Ballard, Chris	Hunter, Mitzie	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Nicholls, Rick
Bradley, James J.	Kiwala, Sophie	Oosterhoff, Sam
Chan, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Pettapiece, Randy
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Potts, Arthur
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Leal, Jeff	Qaadri, Shafiq
Clark, Steve	MacCharles, Tracy	Rinaldi, Lou
Coe, Lorne	MacLeod, Lisa	Sandals, Liz
Colle, Mike	Malhi, Harinder	Smith, Todd
Coteau, Michael	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Crack, Grant	Martins, Cristina	Takhar, Harinder S.
Damerla, Dipika	Martow, Gila	Thompson, Lisa M.
Del Duca, Steven	Matthews, Deborah	Vernile, Daiene
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Walker, Bill
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	McDonell, Jim	Wilson, Jim
Dhillon, Vic	McGarry, Kathryn	Wong, Soo
Dickson, Joe	McMahon, Eleanor	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dong, Han	McMeekin, Ted	Yakabuski, John
Duguid, Brad	McNaughton, Monte	Yurek, Jeff
Fedeli, Victor	Milczyn, Peter Z.	Zimmer, David

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gates, Wayne	Miller, Paul
Bisson, Gilles	Gélinas, France	Sattler, Peggy
DiNovo, Cheri	Gretzky, Lisa	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	Hatfield, Percy	Vanthof, John
French, Jennifer K.	Mantha, Michael	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 75; the nays are 14.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on government orders number 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12.

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

The division bells rang from 1156 to 1157.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On March 22, 2017, Ms. Sandals moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Finance.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	McMahon, Eleanor
Anderson, Granville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMeekin, Ted
Baker, Yvan	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Ballard, Chris	Hoggarth, Ann	Moridi, Reza
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	Murray, Glen R.
Bradley, James J.	Hunter, Mitzie	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Chan, Michael	Jaczek, Helena	Naqvi, Yasir
Chiarelli, Bob	Kiwala, Sophie	Potts, Arthur
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Qaadri, Shafiq
Coteau, Michael	Lalonde, Marie-France	Rinaldi, Lou
Crack, Grant	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Del Duca, Steven	Malhi, Harinder	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Vernile, Daiene
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Martins, Cristina	Wong, Soo
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill	Zimmer, David
Dong, Han	McGarry, Kathryn	

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Nicholls, Rick
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Oosterhoff, Sam
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Michael	Pettapiece, Randy
Bisson, Gilles	Hatfield, Percy	Sattler, Peggy
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Hillier, Randy	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Taylor, Monique
Coe, Lorne	Mantha, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
DiNovo, Cheri	Martow, Gila	Vanthof, John
Fedeli, Victor	McDonnell, Jim	Walker, Bill
Fife, Catherine	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Paul	Yurek, Jeff
Gélinas, France	Munro, Julia	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 53; the nays are 38.

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

We have a deferred vote on government order number 5. On March 22—

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have to finish reading it; sorry, guys—Ms. Sandals moved concurrence

in supply for the Ministry of Transportation, including supplementaries. All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized—

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 53; the nays are 38.

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

We have a deferred vote on government order number 7. On March 22, 2017, Ms. Sandals moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, including supplementaries. Same vote?

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 53; the nays are 38.

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

We have a deferred vote on government order number 8. On March 22, Ms. Sandals moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Energy, including supplementaries. Do we have same vote?

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 53; the nays are 38.

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

We have a deferred vote on government order 9. Ms. Sandals moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Same vote?

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 53; the nays are 38.

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

Deferred vote on government order 10. Ms. Sandals moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Education, including supplementaries. Same vote?

Interjection: Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 53; the nays are 38.

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

We have a deferred vote on government order number 11. On March 22, 2017, Ms. Sandals moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. Same vote?

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 53; the nays are 38.

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

Deferred vote on government order 12. On March 22, 2017, Ms. Sandals moved concurrence in supply for the Office of Francophone Affairs. Same vote?

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 53; the nays are 38.

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

Motions agreed to.

MODERNIZING ONTARIO'S MUNICIPAL LEGISLATION ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LA MODERNISATION DE LA LÉGISLATION MUNICIPALE ONTARIENNE

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

Bill 68, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to municipalities / Projet de loi 68, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les municipalités.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion for closure on the motion for second reading of Bill 68. Same vote? I heard a no.

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

The division bells rang from 1203 to 1204.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On November 29, 2016, Mr. Mauro moved second reading of Bill 68, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to municipalities. Mr. Coteau has moved that the question be now put. All those in favour of Mr. Coteau's motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	McMahon, Eleanor
Anderson, Granville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMeekin, Ted
Baker, Yvan	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Ballard, Chris	Hoggarth, Ann	Moridi, Reza
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	Murray, Glen R.
Bradley, James J.	Hunter, Mitzie	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Chan, Michael	Jaczek, Helena	Naqvi, Yasir
Chiarelli, Bob	Kiwala, Sophie	Potts, Arthur
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Qaadri, Shafiq
Coteau, Michael	Lalonde, Marie-France	Rinaldi, Lou
Crack, Grant	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Del Duca, Steven	Malhi, Harinder	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Vernile, Daiene
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Martins, Cristina	Wong, Soo
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill	Zimmer, David
Dong, Han	McGarry, Kathryn	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those against, please rise.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Nicholls, Rick
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Oosterhoff, Sam
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Michael	Pettapiece, Randy
Bisson, Gilles	Hatfield, Percy	Sattler, Peggy
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Hillier, Randy	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Taylor, Monique
Coe, Lorne	Mantha, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
DiNovo, Cheri	Martow, Gila	Vanthof, John
Fedeli, Victor	McDonnell, Jim	Walker, Bill

Fife, Catherine
French, Jennifer K.
Gates, Wayne
Gélinas, France

McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Munro, Julia

Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 53; the nays are 38.

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

Mr. Mauro has moved second reading of Bill 68, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to municipalities. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1207 to 1208.

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

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMahon, Eleanor
Anderson, Granville	Fraser, John	McMeekin, Ted
Armstrong, Teresa J.	French, Jennifer K.	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Baker, Yvan	Gates, Wayne	Miller, Paul
Ballard, Chris	Gélinas, France	Moridi, Reza
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gretzky, Lisa	Murray, Glen R.
Bisson, Gilles	Hatfield, Percy	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Bradley, James J.	Hoggarth, Ann	Naqvi, Yasir
Chan, Michael	Hoskins, Eric	Potts, Arthur
Chiarelli, Bob	Hunter, Mitzie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Coteau, Michael	Kiwala, Sophie	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	Kwinter, Monte	Sattler, Peggy
Damerla, Dipika	Lalonde, Marie-France	Sousa, Charles
Del Duca, Steven	Leal, Jeff	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	MacCharles, Tracy	Taylor, Monique
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Malhi, Harinder	Vanthof, John
Dhillon, Vic	Mangat, Amrit	Vernile, Daiene
Dickson, Joe	Mantha, Michael	Wong, Soo
Dong, Han	Martins, Cristina	Wynne, Kathleen O.
	Matthews, Deborah	Zimmer, David
	Mauro, Bill	
	McGarry, Kathryn	

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hillier, Randy	Oosterhoff, Sam
Bailey, Robert	MacLeod, Lisa	Pettapiece, Randy
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Martow, Gila	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	McDonnell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
Coe, Lorne	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Fedeli, Victor	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Harris, Michael	Nicholls, Rick	Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 67; the nays are 24.

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

Second reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Bill Mauro: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

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

The House recessed from 1211 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to rise to recognize all the people who here today in the galleries for my statement on George Leslie Mackay, recognizing his 173rd birthday. In the gallery are Director General Catherine Hsu and Deputy Director General Nicolas Hong from the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office, as well as the director of the cultural centre, Lee Shu-ling. There are also representatives from the Canadian Mackay Committee and a number of important local Taiwanese organizations.

I want to thank everyone for being here today to celebrate the birthday of George Leslie Mackay.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome all our guests. Thank you for being here.

Further introductions?

Hon. Chris Ballard: I just want to introduce Wasim Jarrah, a valuable member of the Newmarket community and a constituent of mine.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GEORGE LESLIE MACKAY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize an Oxford hero, George Leslie Mackay. This week would have marked Dr. Mackay's 173rd birthday. All these years later, he's still remembered not just here in Ontario but throughout Taiwan as a hero.

As a young man, George Leslie Mackay travelled to Taiwan, which was then known as Formosa, as a missionary. He fell in love with this island. He learned the language, married a woman from Formosa named Minnie and set about helping people in any way he could, including by practising dentistry, pulling over 10,000 teeth.

He said, "I was pulled by an invisible string to an unknown place. But when that beautiful view of the green mountains on the island came to me, all was cleared that this was where my life would like to be."

George Leslie Mackay returned to Oxford several times over the years. During his time at home, he raised money to build a hospital and schools in Taiwan, including the first school for girls and a university. He is also credited with helping to create the first newspaper. During his time back in Canada, Dr. Mackay also had a significant impact through his work to fight discrimination and to oppose the Chinese head tax.

Today, Dr. George Leslie Mackay's legacy lives on in the schools he created, the modern hospital that bears his name and in the strong friendship between Taiwan and my riding of Oxford. It is a friendship and a legacy that we will continue to celebrate.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to make a statement today.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I respectfully suggest to our gallery that our rules here are that members visiting cannot participate in any way. Thank you for your understanding.

PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Mr. Speaker, anyone who has had the honour of sitting where you do, as I have in the past, can attest to the fact and to the quote that Winston Churchill made of parliamentary democracy. He said, "It's the worst possible system, except for all the others."

I had the absolute privilege and honour this week of visiting a very young parliamentary democracy in Kosovo—only nine years old—and to take part in an amazing initiative hosted by the National Democratic Institute, among others, called the Week of Women.

At only nine years of age, Kosovo's system is one of proportional representation, with 30% women MPs. They are engaged in the monumental task of building a parliamentary system from the ground up. I'm delighted to say Kosovo has accomplished a great deal. It's a vibrant first-world, secular, European nation with a majority of Albanian Muslims and a minority of Christians and other religions and nationalities.

It was a privilege to share some of our ways of doing both politics and government. They're eager to learn and in awe of Canada, which—we should all be proud to know—has an exemplary reputation there. On this, our 150th year of parliamentary democracy, it's most flattering that a country that could have chosen any method of organizing themselves picked ours. Thank you, Kosovo, for being such an example. And to my colleagues here of all political persuasions, know that although we differ on how our parliamentary democracy should look, we should all be thankful that we have a system that is the measure of democracy the world over.

BANGLADESHI COMMUNITY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I'm pleased to rise today and bring attention to something wonderful that has been going on throughout Ontario this past month: the celebration of Bangladeshi heritage. Last year I brought forward a bill, Bill 44, An Act to proclaim the month of March as Bangladeshi Heritage Month in Ontario. It's wonderful to see this bill coming to fruition.

Bangladeshi Canadians have made many important contributions to our province, and March has given us the opportunity to highlight their vital role in strengthening the multicultural fabric that keeps Ontario's communities

strong. They are our friends, our neighbours, our doctors, our artists, our scientists, our business and community leaders.

In my riding of Scarborough Southwest, they represent the largest denominated visible minority, and their impact has been particularly significant. Their infusion of culture, shared values and incredible work ethic have strengthened this riding and made it a more vibrant community in which to live.

I'm proud that this Legislature recognizes their incredible contributions to our province. Next Monday, the 27th, we'll be celebrating this historic occasion with a flag-raising ceremony, and a reception to follow. I encourage all members to attend, and I look forward to celebrating with them and with members from the Bangladeshi community.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Steve Clark: A terrible crash on Highway 401 in my riding last week brought into sharp focus the tremendous debt we owe our brave first responders. As a snowstorm raged, several tractor-trailers and other vehicles collided. One of the trucks in the tangled wreckage was hauling a hazardous chemical. Acid was spilling onto the scene as first responders rushed to help victims.

Initial reports from the site were terrifying to read. I can't even imagine being there at the time. First responders were exposed to acid spilling from the truck, as were many motorists and truckers trying to help. The bravery on display as emergency services got to the injured, got them to safety and contained the spill was really extraordinary.

But praise goes beyond the courage witnessed at the scene. In the nearby village of Lansdowne, a decontamination area was set up to treat those exposed to the acid. That community responded as only rural Ontario can. Everyone from business owners to residents chipped in to comfort people caught up in the disaster. The coordination—from the crash site to Lansdowne and at hospitals in both Kingston and Brockville, where the injured, including 13 first responders, were treated—was remarkable.

I commend all involved, not only that day, but the township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands for having an emergency plan and being prepared. Tragically, one tractor-trailer driver lost his life, but if not for the combination of bravery and preparedness, the toll could have been much higher.

KIVI PARK

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today I want to talk about Kivi Park. It is in my riding of Nickel Belt. It has year-round outdoor recreational activities that exist thanks to the tremendous generosity of Mrs. Lily Fielding. Kivi Park is well on its way to becoming a best-in-its-class park, and it will draw tourists from all over Ontario. I invite you, Speaker, to come and check it out.

Last August, for her 100th birthday, Mrs. Fielding provided millions of dollars to purchase 312 acres of property to build a park in her parents' memory. Her parents, John and Susanna Kivi, were Finnish immigrants who had a farm in the Long Lake area, where Lily was raised. In recognition of her generous contribution, Mrs. Fielding and her family received the Community Builders Award of Excellence in the hall of fame category.

Kivi Park has two outdoor rinks, and you'll be interested to know that we have an outdoor Zamboni. We have an Olympic-sized ice rink, and another one is being built. There are snowshoeing and cross-country ski trails, and in warmer months they are used for hiking, mountain biking and walking, and a lot of dog owners like to walk their dogs.

1310

It is an incredible playground for young children like you have never seen, and the future plans include a baseball diamond, a tennis court and an upgrade to the soccer field. All the community uses it: the Kivi Park Winter Karnival, the Northern Cancer Foundation, and cystic fibrosis.

I want to say a huge thank you, Mrs. Fielding. You are my hero. Thank you for what you do, what you have done and continue to do for us.

BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB OF PEEL

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Today I rise to speak about the Boys and Girls Club of Peel. Last month the Boys and Girls Club hosted a great Black History Month celebration called "More than Our Struggles." The Boys and Girls Club of Peel chose to celebrate Black History Month in their own unique way by celebrating with their youth leaders, mentors and members of the community.

A youth-driven, youth-led event to celebrate Black History Month, this event was held in the community room at Fair Oaks Place. It was a great opportunity to attend and see youth in action as they gave back to our communities and set positive examples for our younger youth in Brampton. Congratulations to all of those who participated.

I was pleased to talk about Ontario's expansion of two programs to help more high school students get the skills and knowledge they need for the jobs of the future and earn credits towards the next step in their post-secondary education.

Changing the lives of young people since 1983, the Boys and Girls Club of Peel has been doing fabulous work. They engage at-risk youth and families from low-income communities and provide a safe place for these individuals to participate in impactful, fun activities that support the development of confidence, learning and positive relationships.

Last month, the Boys and Girls Club also hosted their annual celebrity cooking event with author, TV host and celebrity chef Robert Rainford.

The Boys and Girls Club of Peel utilizes a respectful, inclusive and engaging approach to serving the com-

munity. Programs are developed to support children, youth and families in high-need and low-income communities across the region. Their services continue to support a large number of families and to empower individuals to achieve their goals.

Congratulations on celebrating another great year, and many more to come in Brampton and in the region of Peel.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I'm pleased to rise today in the Legislature to represent the fine residents, parents, students and teachers of Niagara West–Glanbrook. All this week in Niagara the teachers of the Niagara Catholic District School Board have been locked out. Close to 15,000 elementary schoolchildren and their parents are suffering the consequences of this lockout.

The Niagara Catholic District School Board is the only Catholic board in the province that has yet to reach an agreement with its elementary teachers. I call on the Minister of Education to take immediate action to ensure that the elementary schoolchildren of the Niagara Catholic District School Board receive the education they deserve.

This is just one more example of how the Liberal government's two-tiered bargaining system has been a failure. The Liberals have botched everything they've touched on the education file. Students, parents and teachers are noticing. Constituents have been contacting me to express their well-founded frustration over this situation. They do not know how long the lockout will continue, and they're worried about the negative impact on their children.

Parents and schools have already suffered enough at the hands of this negligent Liberal government. They need and deserve effective action now.

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Arthur Potts: Efharisto para poli, Mr. Speaker, and Kalimera to all of my friends and colleagues who are in the Legislature today, because today I rise to celebrate and acknowledge the important contributions of Ontario's Hellenic community as they mark Greek Independence Day.

March 25, 1821, is regarded as the beginning of the Greek War of Independence from the Ottoman Empire. The eight-year struggle ended almost 400 years of Ottoman rule and united a divided and embattled people.

At 2 p.m. today, that spirit of unity, pride and independence will be recognized at the raising of the Greek flag on the south lawn. On Sunday, thousands of Greeks, along with their neighbours, families and friends, will parade along the Danforth to celebrate their history and culture. I'm looking forward to joining them in these celebrations, and if you're in Toronto I encourage you to do the same.

Our province is home to more than 130,000 Ontarians of Greek descent, many of whom live in the eastern part

of Toronto, including my riding of Beaches–East York. Over the years, they have proven themselves to be successful entrepreneurs, community leaders, philanthropists and even politicians.

Ontario's Greeks embody our province's belief in strength through diversity. They honour the religious, cultural and local traditions of their ancestral home but have spent decades sharing those traditions with the larger community and embracing the needs of others.

I have been honoured to be a part of many Greek family and community celebrations and ceremonies, and I look forward to celebrating with them again this weekend. So join me in thanking Ontario's Greek community for their contributions to the province and their ongoing commitments to making our province a better place for all Ontarians.

GRANDVIEW CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'd like to speak about the Grandview Children's Centre. It's the only facility in the region of Durham where children and youth with special needs can receive the therapy that they need.

There are 2,000 children in Durham region waiting to receive therapy at Grandview, and Grandview needs to grow now to better serve children and youth with special needs and their families. By the year 2031, more than 10,000 children will need Grandview's services.

The region of Durham is doing its part. The land has been donated and \$8 million has been raised. However, other levels of government also need to step up to help these children and their families with special-needs demands. They've been waiting nine years.

I call on the Liberal government to provide Grandview with the resources it needs to better serve Grandview children and families. Build Grandview now.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SUPPLY ACT, 2017

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2017

Mrs. Sandals moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 111, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017 / Projet de loi 111, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2017.

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.

Hon. Liz Sandals: The Supply Act is one of the key acts in the Ontario Legislature, and, if passed, it would

give the Ontario government the legal spending authority to finance its programs and honour its commitments for the fiscal year that is to close at the end of March.

PETITIONS

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Jim McDonell: In line with a meeting with school boards tonight, I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas a staff report has recommended Upper Canada District School Board close numerous schools across eastern Ontario; and

“Whereas access to quality local education is essential for rural communities to thrive; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Education removed community impact considerations from pupil accommodation review guidelines in 2015; and

“Whereas local communities treasure their public schools and have been active participants in their continued operation, maintenance and success; and

“Whereas the Ontario government should focus on delivering quality, local education services to all communities, including rural Ontario;

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

“(1) To reinstate considerations of value to the local community and value to the local economy in pupil accommodation review guidelines; and

“(2) To work with all school boards, including Upper Canada District School Board, to prevent the closure of rural public schools.”

I agree with this and will pass it off to page Joshua.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Catherine Fife: “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 off-loaded into private clinics not subject to hospital legislation; and

“Whereas funded services are being cut from hospitals and are not being provided in the community; and

“Whereas cutting skilled care means patients suffer more complications, readmissions and death;

“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 fully support this petition, will sign it and give it to page Angel.

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PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition that is addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas there are critical transportation infrastructure needs for the province;

“Whereas giving people multiple avenues for their transportation needs takes cars off the road;

“Whereas public transit increases the quality of life for Ontarians and helps the environment;

“Whereas the constituents of Orléans and east Ottawa are in need of greater transportation infrastructure;

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

“Support the Moving Ontario Forward plan and the Ottawa LRT phase II construction, which will help address the critical transportation infrastructure needs of Orléans, east Ottawa and the province of Ontario.”

Speaker, I’m pleased to sign and to support this and to send it down with page Matthew.

GRANDVIEW CHILDREN’S CENTRE

Mr. Lorne Coe: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Grandview Children’s Centre is Durham region’s only outpatient rehabilitation facility for children and youth with special needs; and

“Whereas Grandview Children’s Centre’s main facility was originally constructed in 1983 to serve 400 children and now has a demand of over 8,000 children annually; and

“Whereas growth has resulted in the need for lease locations leading to inefficient and fragmented care delivery; and

“Whereas it is crucial for Grandview Children’s Centre to complete a major development project to construct a new facility in order to meet the existing as well as future needs of Durham region’s children, youth and families; and

“Whereas in 2009 Grandview Children’s Centre submitted a capital development plan to the province to construct a new facility; and

“Whereas in 2016 the town of Ajax donated a parcel of land on which to build the new Grandview; and

“Whereas the Grandview foundation has raised over \$8 million; and

“Whereas since 2009 the need for services has continued to increase, with over 2,753 children, youth and families currently on the wait-list for services;

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

“That the province of Ontario prioritizes, commits to and approves Grandview Children’s Centre’s capital development plan so that the chronic shortage of facilities in Durham can be alleviated.”

I agree with the content of this particular petition. I’ll date it, affix my signature and provide it to page Charlotte.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

“Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

“Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

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

“To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners’ Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types.”

I couldn’t agree more. On behalf of the thousands of dogs that have lost their lives already under this cruel act, I sign it and give it to Zara to be delivered to the table.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a great petition here for amending the vacant unit rebate on commercial property taxes.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the vacant unit rebate on property taxes is widely acknowledged as contributing to the high number of empty neighbourhood retail storefronts...; and

“Whereas the vacant unit rebate precludes short-term and flexible leases, which have been proven to revitalize neighbourhood commercial strips by providing a more accessible entry point and fostering entrepreneurship; and

“Whereas the vacant unit rebate is widely acknowledged as a contributor to the lack of interest or necessity among landlords in lowering commercial lease rates...; and

“Whereas the city of Toronto, in the course of public hearings in 2015, formally requested the province of Ontario amend the vacant unit rebate provision ‘for commercial and industrial properties, in order to enable the city to establish graduated vacant unit rebates that will induce and incent owners and tenants to meet

eligibility criteria that align with the city’s economic growth and job creation objectives’; and

“Whereas there are millions of dollars in property tax revenue being lost that could help alleviate problems of homelessness, food security and other local issues...”

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

“That the province of Ontario amend the City of Toronto Act, granting the city of Toronto the power to delineate a specific category for neighbourhood retail commercial properties, and allowing them to set, amend and/or eliminate the vacant unit tax rebate...”

I believe very strongly in this petition, will sign it and send it down with page Kishan.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND CONSCIENCE

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas recent political events have demonstrated the disregard that a few policy-makers have for the sincere beliefs of some religious groups;

“Whereas in a ‘post-truth’ world it is essential for people to be empowered to follow their consciences in resisting leaders who seek to impose their personal view of the world on all others;

“Whereas it is a basic Canadian value to tolerate those whose cultural traditions and beliefs may differ from our own;

“Whereas Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau wisely made these the first liberties articulated in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms:

“‘Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:

“(a) freedom of conscience and religion;

“(b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication’;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, all medical students at the Mississauga Academy of Medicine, University of Toronto, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To preserve and protect in all legislation the freedom of religion and conscience of all Ontarians;

“To defend the right of all Ontarians to live and work in accordance with their sincerely held beliefs, without penalty or discrimination; and

“To make Ontario a welcoming place for all citizens and newcomers.”

I support this petition. I affix my signature to it and I will give it to page Joshua.

LUNG HEALTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: I am pleased to present this petition that was sent to me by Chris Yaccato from the Lung Association. It reads as follows:

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.8 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 390,700 of whom are children and youth between the ages of 0-14 living with asthma;

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

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

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

“To allow for depositions on MPP Ted McMeekin, MPP Jeff Yurek and MPP France Gélinas’ private member’s bill, Bill 71, Lung Health Act, 2016, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“As the bill had already been debated at committee in” its “original form ... to expedite through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 71 and to seek royal assent...”

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

DENTAL CARE

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This is a petition to expand public dental programs.

“Whereas lack of access to dental care affects overall health and well-being, and poor oral health is linked to diabetes, cardiovascular, respiratory disease, and Alzheimer’s disease; and

“Whereas it is estimated that two to three million people in Ontario have not seen a dentist in the past year, mainly due to the cost of private dental services; and

“Whereas approximately every nine minutes a person in Ontario arrives at a hospital emergency room with a dental problem but can only get painkillers and antibiotics, and this costs the health care system at least \$31 million annually with no treatment of the problem;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to invest in public oral health programs for low-income adults and seniors by:

—ensuring that plans to reform the health care system include oral health so that vulnerable people in our communities have equitable access to the dental care they need to be healthy...”

Speaker, this makes a lot of sense. I’m going to put my signature to it and I will hand it over to Ayesha.

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SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Todd Smith: It’s a pleasure to rise and finally get to present this petition in the Legislature. It’s about rural school closures.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas rural schools play an integral role in their communities by attracting new people to small communities and providing an education; and

“Whereas rural schools are so much more than schools to these communities because they provide a community space for a number of activities; and

“Whereas rural communities have faced hospital bed closures and forced industrial-scale energy project construction among other policies that the government has pursued which stifle growth in rural communities; and

“Whereas the current accommodation review committee process is being forced through on a shortened timeline and only after the government made regulatory changes that make it easier to close a small rural school;

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

“That an immediate moratorium be established on the accommodation review committee process, that planned school closures be halted and that the government be forced to consider the long-term impact closing these schools will have on the communities they serve.”

I agree with this petition 100% and will present it, through Matthew, to the table.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I have a petition.

“Hydro One Not for Sale! Say No to Privatization.

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I sign this petition and give it to page Sophie to deliver.

ELEVATOR MAINTENANCE

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas elevators are an important amenity for a resident of a high-rise residential building; and

“Whereas ensuring basic mobility and standards of living for residents remain top priority; and

“Whereas the unreasonable delay of repairs for elevator services across Ontario is a concern for all residents of high-rise buildings who experience constant breakdowns, mechanical failures and ‘out of service’ notices for unspecified amounts of time;

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

“Urge the Ontario government to require repairs to elevators be completed within a reasonable and prescribed time frame. We urge this government to address these concerns that are shared by residents of Trinity–Spadina,” and across the province.

I will affix my name to this petition and send it to the table with Franny.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The time for petitions has expired.

VISITOR

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I want to recognize our former colleague Tim Hudak, in the west gallery, from the 36th Parliament, Niagara South; 37th and 38th, Erie–Lincoln; and 39th, 40th and 41st, Niagara West–Glanbrook. Welcome.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

TAX FAIRNESS

FOR REALTORS ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR L’ÉQUITÉ FISCALE POUR LES COURTIERS EN VALEURS IMMOBILIÈRES

Mr. Smith moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 104, An Act to amend the Business Corporations Act and the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 with respect to personal real estate corporations / Projet de loi 104, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sociétés par actions et la Loi de 2002 sur le courtage commercial et immobilier relativement aux sociétés personnelles immobilières.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Smith has moved second reading of Bill 104, An Act to amend the Business Corporations Act and the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 with respect to personal real estate corporations. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. That is a long-winded title for this bill. We actually like to refer to Bill 104 as the Tax Fairness for Realtors Act.

This is the third time I’ve introduced the bill in the Legislature, so we’re hoping to score a hat trick here this

afternoon and have some success with our colleagues from the third party and from the government side as well.

I want to start by thanking the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, who is a co-sponsor of this bill, and also the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, who again is a co-sponsor of this bill. This bill has support from members of all three caucuses here, and we look forward to its expeditious passage later today.

As you have done already, I would like to recognize Tim Hudak, the former member from Niagara West–Glanbrook, in his new role with the Ontario Real Estate Association. He has a view from the penthouse here this afternoon and not from the floor. He has done some great work already with the Ontario Real Estate Association.

I’ve had the pleasure of working with the Ontario Real Estate Association for quite a few years now, actually. I’ve been here for almost seven, and one of the first groups I met with, after being elected, were my local realtors. We were very successful once in passing a bill that made life a little bit easier for realtors, and I’ll talk a little bit about that during my discussion here this afternoon.

Madam Speaker, I spend a lot of time in hockey rinks. As you know, I have two young girls who play rep hockey, so I travel not just in my local Quinte region, but all across the provinces. The one thing that I notice, especially here in Ontario, as I head into a rink, is that I see the names of realtors everywhere. The names of realtors are on the hockey boards at the arenas in Cobourg, Courtice, Peterborough, Windsor and Stoney Creek. They’re on the backs of jerseys of hockey players as well, sponsoring individual players.

A lot of the people I meet at hockey rinks are real estate agents as well. They have kids who are playing hockey. Some of them, as hockey moms especially, can be kind of boisterous; the hockey dads can be as well.

But the one thing I would say about this group of people is that real estate agents are enormous supporters of their community. I know what people are saying when they see them on the sides of arena boards, and they see them on the backs of jerseys: “Well, that’s advertising, and that’s not anything new.” It is extremely important that they advertise, but we hear stories in this place every day about how hard it is to keep arenas and community centres open because of the rising costs of electricity and other items. Yes, it’s advertising, but it certainly is going to keep our buildings open in our municipalities, especially the small municipalities that are helping to keep the lights on for the next period.

I was just in Madoc last week for an all-Ontario hockey series. Congratulations to the Centre Hastings Grizzlies. I saw the names of Steve Bancroft and many other realtors along the walls and the sidelines up in Madoc.

It’s also advertising on a jersey as well. But how many times, when September rolls around every year, do you read a news story about how expensive minor hockey is getting? Without those ads and without that revenue, it

would just get eaten up in bigger and bigger registration fees.

I know I'm supposed to be on my feet, talking about the fairness issue, and I am going to talk about that, but I wanted to highlight some of my own motivations.

I'm spoiled in my riding. In every community in it, real estate agents are core members of volunteer efforts, philanthropic efforts and civic efforts, to make sure the community they live in is a better place to live.

A few of them are here today, either in the gallery or in the overflow room that we've set up on the fourth floor. I'd like to acknowledge just a few of them. I apologize, because I am going to miss some.

My friends Val Miles, from Bancroft, and Dana Yonemitsu, from North Hastings, are here. I don't think a month goes by where I don't get an email from Dana or Val because they're involved in some new charity endeavour in North Hastings.

Edie Haslauer, Natasha Huizinga, Lisa Comerford, Shannon Warr-Hunter, Al Russell—I just saw him downstairs—Ken Arseneault and Cathy Polan are all here from the Quinte and District real estate association.

I've also got dozens of friends from across Belleville, Prince Edward county, Quinte West and literally right across Ontario who are here today, and others who couldn't be here today. This bill is an acknowledgement of their efforts in their communities as well.

In six other provinces, real estate agents are able to personally incorporate. There exists no viable reason that I'm aware of why it has taken this long for Ontario to catch up. Personally, as I said, this is my third time introducing this bill since 2014.

There may have been some concern about the cost previously, but recent studies have shown that it's entirely likely that this change is revenue-neutral and actually could potentially have a positive impact of over \$9 million to the province's GDP. Similar studies also show the potential creation of between 33 and 89 jobs across the province. Those are very modest numbers, but every one of these jobs matters, especially in small rural communities.

As a former small business and red tape critic, there's another aspect of this bill that I'd like to highlight, and that's how we lined up the legislative framework for Ontario's personal incorporation regime with British Columbia's.

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I can vividly remember having people come into my office, in my former role, and tell me that one of the biggest problems with regulations across Canada was how rarely you could get two provinces, particularly two big provinces, on the same side. As a result, you started to multiply the regulatory burden.

Having 10 different provincial regulatory frameworks barely made sense before the digital age, and it makes no sense now. Capital is more mobile than ever. Consumers are able to complete transactions electronically—something that the member from Ottawa Centre and I worked on a couple of years ago—and work with real estate

agents anywhere in the country, separated from the telephone tether or the fax machine. With Mr. Naqvi, we worked together on the e-signature bill, which allows real estate transactions to be done over iPads and the latest technology. Transactions that took days or weeks can now be done in hours.

It's also important to note the number of professions that we already allow to personally incorporate: lawyers, health care professionals, accountants, mortgage brokers and financial advisers. Drawing the line where we currently have it doesn't only seem unfair, it also seems a little bit random.

I want to return to the people who inspired me to bring this bill forward. I want to go back again, if I could, to the hockey rink, one of my favourite places to be. I don't get to spend enough time at the hockey rink anymore. I used to love coaching hockey. I've brought this bill forward twice before, but there are always other issues that I wanted to use for my ballot date as well. There are significant issues in my riding that I wanted to bring forward.

Today came about, actually—last spring, I was at a Wellington Dukes game. That's a local junior hockey team in Prince Edward county. A couple of the realtors who were in the crowd at the Dukes game came to me and they said, "Hey, what's happening with your personal real estate corporation bill? When are you going to debate this bill again? We really, really want this to happen." It seemed as if the next event that I went to, there were more realtors there who were saying, "Hey, whatever happened with your personal real estate incorporation bill? When are you going to introduce that again? Are we going to be able to incorporate like six other provinces can?"

They really want this bill passed, and I understand why. They wanted this bill to finally get back on the floor of the Legislature and hopefully make it to committee and become law. Hopefully, Madam Speaker, today is that day. We've talked about fairness. We've talked about the great people in my riding who have asked me to bring up this bill. But I want to address where the money is going to go with a couple of statistics that were dug up in preparation for debate here this afternoon.

As I mentioned earlier, our realtors, our real estate agents in our communities are at all of the community events that I go to. You can't go to an event where there's not a real estate agent there either organizing the event, attending the event or selling tickets to people on their Rolodex to make sure there are great crowds at these events. Real estate agents really do care about their community. Here are a couple of stats for you: 67% of all agents and brokers make donations to charity every year—that's a pretty large number—and 45% volunteer in a community group or organization every year. That means they are giving of their time; almost half of them are giving a lot of their time to volunteer on these committees. Those numbers are pretty good as well.

The rate of volunteerism and donations for those agents under the age of 35 actually well exceeds mil-

lennial numbers across the country. In those small communities that I was talking about earlier, the numbers go from 67% and 45% to 73% and 55%. Quite often, we hear that our young people aren't as engaged as they could be and they are not volunteering their time and we're worried about losing our volunteers, but those numbers are pretty staggering from the real estate sector. I think it just goes to show the commitment that our local real estate agents have to our communities.

There are a lot of communities in this province. I've talked about just a couple of them: Bancroft, Wellington and Picton, where the Rotary, the Kiwanis Club and the hospice foundation might not exist without the help of local real estate agents.

Another example of this at the provincial level is the Realtors Care Foundation. Since its original inception, the foundation has granted more than \$15 million on behalf of Ontario realtors to shelter-based organizations across the province. The foundation is funded primarily through donations, directly from member dues, called the Every Realtor Campaign. Member boards donated \$1 per member per month from 2012 to 2015. Realtors across Canada have raised over \$91 million for the Realtors Care Foundation—pretty phenomenal.

The reason I keep bringing this up is because I wanted to handle the question of where the money is going—it's a question that we're so often seized with in this House—meaning the money that will be coming back to the community. I think we can assess where the money is going to go by where the money has gone.

The reason real estate agents invest in their communities is to build their business, but the best ones—and I'm grateful to count some among my very, very good friends—see their community as their business as well. Giving realtors the same right to personally incorporate that we have given other professions, and the same right that they have in other provinces, seems to me to be the right thing to do—and not just the right thing to do; it seems like the fair thing to do, and that's why we're here this afternoon.

I'd like to thank all of those people who came from Quinte and Bancroft and made the trek here to the Legislature today. I hope that we'll have good news for you at the end of the debate.

I look forward to the comments, especially from my co-sponsors, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, and all members who will be speaking to this bill here this afternoon.

I hope we can come together and make sure that we get some real fairness for realtors in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure for me to speak in support of Bill 104, the Tax Fairness for Realtors Act. I'm so pleased to be co-sponsoring this piece of legislation. We don't do this very often; it's a very rare occasion. But sometimes it takes our collective efforts to get something done in this place. I'm very pleased to be standing in my place in support of Bill 104.

I know that we're joined this afternoon by real estate professionals from across Ontario. Thank you for making the trip to Queen's Park.

I also want to acknowledge former parliamentarian Tim Hudak, who is here. He seems to be weathering his "recovering politician" status very nicely.

I also want to mention two realtors in particular for coming from Kitchener–Waterloo: Charlotte Zawada and Bill Duce.

I would like to start by talking about the important work that real estate professionals do in the province of Ontario. As anyone who has bought a home or leased a property knows, the relationship that you have with your realtor is not only critical, it's very, very personal, and there's a great deal of trust involved. We are pleased that you have placed your trust in us, as legislators, to balance the scales for realtors with Bill 104.

At the root, this is about fairness. Many other regulated professionals can incorporate their businesses personally, like doctors, lawyers, chartered accountants, mortgage brokers, insurance agents, social workers, architects and engineers. For too long, realtors have been left out of this group. Ontario is overdue to harmonize its rules with BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec and Nova Scotia, all provinces that have made changes since 2008 to allow personal real estate corporations in their provinces.

We know the important role that realtors play in our local economies. I wanted to take a little time just to talk about that role and what this bill will mean to local realtors, from the perspective of a real estate professional in Waterloo.

Chris Stanley is a young realtor, five years in the business, and he works out of McIntyre Real Estate Services in Waterloo. It's a small brokerage firm, and each member of the team relies on their areas of expertise to be successful.

Forming personal real estate corporations will make it easier for Chris and his colleagues to invest back in refining their areas of expertise, particularly with a focus on technology. Because they're smaller, they are constantly trying to keep up with the needs of their clients, and that means having to come up with ways to keep track of what they need. They are investing in software that will make that easier and faster for them.

The other thing that a personal real estate corporation will allow Chris to do is to think about hiring someone new to his team. He's looking at young people, people from outside the real estate world who are looking for a new career or an opportunity. This is, by all accounts, a rewarding career. Charlotte just told me over lunch today that she doesn't feel that her work as a real estate agent is work. It's a career that helps other people reach their potential, and it's a lifestyle and it's very rewarding. That's exactly the kind of thing this Legislature should be finding ways to do together. It doesn't happen nearly enough.

At the end of the day, Chris said, even in a hot housing market like the one we are reminded of daily here in

southwestern Ontario and in Toronto, a realtor's job is an emotional one. Clients who have had their third or fourth offer rejected are in an emotional place, quite often. Part of what realtors do is help give clients more faith in the process and in Ontarians searching for a new place to call home. I should also mention that Chris told me that a personal real estate corporation will give him more of an opportunity to give back, and we've already heard about the generosity of real estate agents across the province.

1350

Chris is already on the board of Reception House in Waterloo, helping with the resettlement of Syrian refugees. He already knows the importance of giving back, but he wants to do more. Bill 104 would help him, even just a little bit. That's important, and I think it's worth getting on the record, Madam Speaker.

I also want to mention that Chris shares something in common with two members co-sponsoring this bill. Not only does he live and work in the fine community of Waterloo, he was born and raised in Belleville, which is a city I believe the member for Prince Edward–Hastings knows well.

In my opinion, the impact that this bill will have on what real estate agents can do in their local communities is even greater than the estimated \$9 million to \$24 million that a study suggested that personal real estate corporations could add to Ontario's GDP. After all, real estate agents live in the communities in which they work. In order to be successful, they need to be active, engaged members of their communities. From talking to Chris and other realtors from Kitchener–Waterloo and across the province, Bill 104 will make it just a little bit easier for them to give back to their communities.

I'm proud to stand in my place today to offer my support for Bill 104 for real estate professionals like Chris Stanley, like Charlotte and like Bill. We can do something positive here today together as legislators. Let's get it done and let's make it law.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: It's my honour to co-sponsor this bill again with my colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings and the member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

He started talking about hockey. I happen to have the good fortune of attending and coaching and teaching at the birthplace of hockey: St. Michael's College School in Toronto. Hockey goes back to the 1830s. I had the pleasure of going to school with guys like Dave Keon and Frank Mahovlich and of teaching Red Kelly's sons.

Tonight, my niece is playing in the OFSAA, the Ontario finals, for senior girls' hockey, representing Bishop Allen high school in Mississauga. I have to go to that. Then I have my grandson playing in the Toronto city finals in Atom. I don't know how I'm going to make it. One is at 6 and one's at—you need a good vehicle when you're a hockey grandparent or a hockey parent.

I want to tell you a little personal story because, as the two previous speakers mentioned, there are many sides to

real estate agents. They are many-faceted people—all walks of life and all nationalities.

Two weeks ago, I was telling Ettore Cardarelli, who's with the executive board of OREA, I had a long-time friend of mine—I'll just say that his name was Paul. He's a real estate agent; he has been one for 50 years, almost. He was very active in his church here in Toronto. He was involved in all the ratepayer groups and police liaison committees. He came to my office two weeks ago and said, "I'm very embarrassed, Mike, but I don't have any income. I haven't sold a house in three months, and I want to get on social assistance."

These are the real estate agents you don't hear about. You hear about the ones that are successful, and God bless—but there are so many real estate agents who basically go from sale to sale. In Toronto right now, in the GTA, sure, you hear about 20 offers, as Ettore told me—20 offers on a deal. One agent makes a commission; the other 19 get zero. Nobody ever talks about those that get zero. There are so few listings in the city of Toronto. I've never seen so few for sale signs. I'm sure it's the same thing in Parkdale. You would see for sale signs up and down every street in Toronto. It's a rarity that you see a sign. So that means that there is less work and less income, so there's a lot of real estate agents who are suffering. Again, those are the ones who never get talked about, and many of them don't want to tell you they're having a hard time, but, in these very buoyant times for housing prices and condo prices, there are many struggling men and women in the real estate industry—many of them. Those are ones that we should also be mindful of.

I want to say that back in 2006, I was working in the Ministry of Finance as parliamentary assistant. We passed legislation regulating the mortgage brokers of Ontario. It was the Wild West of mortgage brokers. Everybody was claiming to be a mortgage agent and they were getting all kinds of money out with no real financial basis for it, so we had to control it. We put it in the Mortgage Brokers Act, which was passed in 2006.

In that act, we allowed mortgage brokers to incorporate. There was no opposition; there was no concern from the Ministry of Finance and third parties. They said, "Yes, that makes sense. Let mortgage brokers incorporate." They have. They've been incorporated since 2006.

As we know, doctors are all incorporated. We passed that law. Lawyers have been incorporated for a long, long time. Insurance agents and brokers can be incorporated. The question I've always asked, and I've asked it in the House before, and to my colleagues, is, "Listen, if you're doing it for all these other professionals, why are real estate agents not allowed to have the same opportunity?" That is really one of the core issues here: allowing them to do what other comparable professionals have been doing for years, with no real concern about the impact on the economy and the cost. To me, it's an investment that the province makes in small business. Really, your real estate agents are your prototypical small business men and women.

The one thing about that industry is that it gives great opportunity to new Canadians. You see all over—if you go to Brampton, you go to Mississauga, so many newcomers are given an opportunity to be in business through the real estate industry. They also are very, very involved in their communities. That's the other good thing about this bill: It really is supportive of these small business people.

The other thing, as you know—I don't know what the breakdown is, but I think there are about as many women real estate agents that I've run across as I have males. It's a great opportunity for women to get into the industry. You don't see as many in some of the other comparable industries. That's another aspect of this industry, the real estate industry.

I know the member from Prince Edward–Hastings talked about his friends. I would be remiss if I didn't mention some of my long-term neighbours who are in real estate. I know Ezio Cimicata. He not only sells real estate, but every Friday he also goes to the Columbus Centre and they have a sing-along with all of the seniors. He takes time off work—I'm not trying to say that all real estate men and women are Mother Teresa; they're regular people. So I have to mention Ezio Cimicata, who has been in real estate, I think, for 30 or 40 years.

I also want to mention another person I knew who just started in real estate back in the early 1970s. Everybody said, "You're never going to have a chance. You're never going to do well. It's too tough an industry. You're a woman. What are you going to do?" This person is probably one of the top 10 real estate salespersons in Canada: Josie Stern. You've probably heard of her. She's from Toronto. She has done extremely well. I have to mention Josie Stern. She started from nothing, going door to door, and now she has developed a reputation as being a good representative of her clients, with a lot of integrity. I'm going to send this Hansard to Josie, because she also gets very involved in supporting the community, as does Ezio. I wanted to mention those two local agents.

I just think that this is an opportunity really for us to understand that this incorporation essentially makes it a little easier for people in a very tough industry to get a few tax breaks—not big ones. We're talking about things that just make life a little easier if you're in small business, because the difficulty everybody has in small business is taking all of their life savings and putting it into a business. You have to pay for the office, the overhead, the staff. This legislation just makes it a bit easier, as it involves some measures that enable someone to ensure that they can do their business in a way that is somewhat profitable, so they can pay their salaries and take home some money.

1400

That's what it does. It really makes it a little easier for them. Instead of being a one-person operation, they might hire a couple of staff and they might just be able to expand what they do in a bigger—it's not about the big Re/Maxs of this world. We're talking about the individual agents and brokers here, who are all across

Ontario. This would facilitate their ability to essentially earn money and be successful.

As I said—just to finish up now—it is a very tough business. To be successful in real estate, you make that one sale that looks—so many people get their licence and they try it and say, "God, I can't get a client. I can't sell houses." It is a very challenging business. Even in these so-called good times, there are very few listings.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity to weigh in on this bill. I wanted to talk about Bill 104. Of course, as we all know, this bill amends the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act. This will allow individual realtors to establish personal real estate corporations.

Certainly, you've heard from the members—in all three parties, as a matter of fact—who spoke of the fact that this personal incorporation already exists for lawyers, chartered accountants, mortgage professionals and others. I use the word "professionals." I don't know that you need to hear from me about that technical aspect. I know that our own MPP took that from top to bottom and covered those details.

What I want to speak about, for the few minutes that I have, is just to talk about the professionalism of this sector, and the personal experiences that Patty and I had. We got married in 1986. I'll tell you, Speaker, I'm a good Italian boy. I lived at home until the day I got married. When I met Patty and knew she was the one, we started shopping—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Were you 40, 45?

Laughter.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: No. I'll admit that my brother was over 40, but I was 30 years old. I'll admit that here. I was 30 when I got married. Thank you, Catherine. Very thoughtful of you.

I think back to those days. It was 30 years ago that we got married. The first person whom we met, as this newly engaged couple, was our realtor. She was the first person we met, as this hand-holding 30-year-old couple. It was just a really—

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It was. We were 30.

Interjection: It's very romantic.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: We still hold hands.

Here we are, looking at houses, and I know that the realtor was looking at the two of us, because we were giddy all the time. It was just such great memories of the experience that we had and how she guided us through the things that we needed to do: to make sure we were going to be able to spend the proper amount of money; to make sure that we had the home that was going to meet our needs—not only of that day, back in 1986, but also of the needs of the future that we planned together. She was a big part of our life.

I remember—if you were giggling at the earlier stories, Minister, you're going to love this one: After we had found the home—this realtor had got us what we

believed was the most perfect home for us—we would drive by it often. In fact, we used to park in front of it and—

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Not in that sense. We would look up, and I remember—Patty will giggle if she's watching this—that she would call me “homeowner fiancé.” It was one of those little terms of endearment that we still chuckle about 30 years later, that we used to call each other “homeowner fiancé,” because we had met a realtor and bought our first home.

Ten years later, when it came time for another home, we used the professionalism of our realtor to help us put our home on the market and guide us through what was necessary in making the best sale we could for ourselves and for him at that time.

Speaker, I have to tell you, we are always indebted to the realtors that we have met in our lives, in the two homes that we've owned together, and we acknowledge their professionalism.

I know you're going to get all the technical arguments in the toing and froing of this, because this bill really should pass, Speaker. I congratulate everybody for bringing this forward and for speaking on it today. We thank the realtors.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm happy to add my comments to Bill 104, on tax fairness for real estate professionals. I commend my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo for her collaborative work in helping to bring this bill forward once again, as well as the other two members from the Conservative and Liberal Parties.

This bill is forward-thinking, and frankly, it's about time. We know that other provinces—as mentioned before, we've got BC, Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and Nova Scotia—have all enacted similar legislation for over a year now.

Other regulated professions, as you mentioned, like chartered accountants, lawyers, health professionals, social workers, mortgage brokers, insurance agents and a little bit more—the list goes on—have been able to personally have incorporations, yet this government has remained steadfastly silent on this issue in particular—up until now. Thank you to the member for bringing this forward again.

As an insurance broker myself, I dealt with real estate agents on a daily basis. We insured the homes; real estate agents sold the homes. We had that professional relationship, in order to have a contract under the insurance provision in order to make sure the sale of the home could actually go through, because that was one of the things you needed to sell or buy a home.

I also want to say a particular thank you to the Ontario Real Estate Association for their efforts, coming to Queen's Park and lobbying MPPs so that we're here now seeking the changes we've been asked for on the personal real estate corporation.

This legislation has been brought to this chamber on two previous occasions since 2008, yet this government has continued to let the issue die on the order paper over and over again—up until now, but we're really looking forward to results. We hope this third time will be a charm.

I have met with local real estate agents in my riding of London–Fanshawe, and they made their position very clear. They are rightfully feeling excluded and overlooked by this government. They talked about how they wanted to make sure this got pushed through the Legislature and how quickly this thing can happen. Of course, we had a discussion about how it's up to the government to bring these things to committee and have them up for consultations etc.

KPMG's own study showed that this legislation offers the potential, as mentioned, to increase income into the Ontario gross domestic product, as well as job creator potential. It could be realized in roughly a 10-year period, depending on the realtor uptake. For my riding of London–Fanshawe, with persistently high unemployment rates, due in no small part to the Liberal government's agenda—and I have to say that because there has been a lot of manufacturing that has left London–Fanshawe and as a result, we've seen a lot of unemployment. It's very slow economic growth that we've seen, and it's very stagnant.

This government really needs to stop playing favourites with business and small business sectors. It's time that we create a baseline of fairness for everyone. We need to level the playing field. We have watched the Liberals sell off water for mere pennies to large corporations. We've watched them give billions of dollars away in tax and corporate write-offs to companies that packed up and crossed the border without living up to their commitments to employees. We have the opportunity here today to show real estate agents across the province that we support them and the vital work that they do in our communities.

1410

We've mentioned this before. Real estate agents give back to their communities. They actually participate in the health of our neighbourhoods. I'll use a few examples in London, particularly the London and St. Thomas real estate association. They are the real estate agents that came to see me. Their members support vital community organizations, including women's shelters, youth sports and recreation teams and programs that provide nutritious meals and snacks to thousands of children.

One of the things that I had taken away from that discussion is that they're very proud of the work they do as real estate agents for their healthy communities. It really came through when I was speaking to them about how honoured they are that they're able to do this kind of thing through their work as real estate agents.

I think it's time that we support those who are supporting our communities and afford them the basic protections offered to so many other professions in Ontario. I hope we can all do the right thing today and pass this bill for tax fairness for real estate agents.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to add, in the couple of minutes I have left in this discussion, to the debate today. First of all, like my predecessors, I want to thank folks from the real estate community for being here today. I know behind me, I think, I have a fairly large contingent from the Quinte region, which I share with the member from Prince Edward–Hastings. Frankly, I'm not sure if you noticed, but a few minutes ago he was over here twisting my arm. I told him, "Todd, go back to your seat. You don't have to twist my arm."

I would say that I've heard from the real estate community, same as my colleagues. As a matter of fact—I won't name any names—but Sunday at church somebody from the real estate community in my town approached me. That's the best place to be, because obviously you've got to say the right things when you're in church, right?

To be fair, being a small business owner all my life I know the importance, both from a business standpoint and from a structure standpoint, of how to be recognized to be able to incorporate. Frankly, I think it opens up new opportunities for business as well. I would say that the debate this afternoon is vital. It's important that they're here to show their support for what we're trying to do in this House.

For the folks who don't know, who are here, this is part of private members' business. I have another one coming up right after this that I'll be speaking about. It's kind of refreshing that we tried to make this a non-partisan event. Unfortunately, sometimes it gets strayed a little bit, but that's okay. I look forward to the conclusion of this debate and to the vote coming later on today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the debate this afternoon. I want to thank the member from Prince Edward–Hastings and also his co-sponsors for bringing forth this bill. I may be biased in this regard, but for those of you who don't know, I actually was a realtor.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, yes. Not for very long. Not for very long.

When my wife and I sold our hardware business in 2001, we had worked together in the hardware store for 10 years as owners and before that with myself as the manager. When we sold the hardware business, we had worked together every day. We decided, well, we'll both go and get our real estate licences. You know, while we had them, I always thought that I was a better negotiator than my wife, but she could actually take a home—she was working with a buyer and would look at the home and tell them all of the potential things that could be done to make this a home. Myself, I can hardly remember if somebody painted the place. I was gone away one time for a week golfing with my brother. When I came home, I didn't realize for a month that my wife had had the

house painted inside. That's how much attention I pay to those kinds of details.

But I did think I was a better negotiator. Today she'd be better in both regards. The point I'm trying to make is, I lived that life for a short period of time. Then I had to make the decision of whether to get involved in politics.

My wife is an independent business person. As a real estate sales representative, she has her broker's licence. Yes, she uses the letterhead of a larger company, Royal LePage—I don't know if I can say that—

Interjection: No.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh boy, I'm in trouble now.

She pays her own CPP, both sides. There are no benefits, nothing but the commission that is left when the brokerage takes their share at the end of the day. If she was to lose her job, she can't get EI; she doesn't pay into EI. She is an independent business person. What my colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings is doing is saying, "Let's recognize these people for what they are, and if they want to incorporate, if they choose to incorporate, then give them that opportunity."

My wife—I can't speak for her in here, but I'm pretty comfortable in saying she would never be incorporating. She's very small. She works out of our home. She belongs to a brokerage, but she works out of our home. She's not interested in incorporating.

But there are people in the business who would love to have that opportunity. So when other professions are given that opportunity, why is the real estate profession denied it here in the province of Ontario? They have been given that opportunity and allowed to incorporate in other jurisdictions, including British Columbia, so there's no good reason for the government to stand as an impediment to allowing realtors to incorporate in Ontario.

As I said, I'm somewhat subjective on the issue—I'm not entirely objective—but it's not going to affect my wife, because she's not going to incorporate. But other people who are in the same business that she's in might want to do it.

I'm always just happy that I'm allowed back in the home, that she hasn't sold it out from under me.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, I also would like to share a little history. When I worked at Stelco for many years—I know this is not a good word with realtors—I was a part-timer with my wife in real estate. We were fairly successful, but obviously, the way I went in life changed and we ended up doing other things.

One of our quotes was, when we were in real estate—you'll like this; you might want to use it—"From tent to townhouse to Taj Mahal, your first-rate move is to Carole and Paul." We used that, and we actually got five listings off that, so that was pretty good.

The realtors certainly need this. It's important to them, because a lot of times, you might make a lot of money in one year, and it might be a tough year in real estate the next year, and you're struggling. They certainly need options where they can improve their situation financial-

ly. This is an opportunity to move them in the right direction.

I'm excited for them. I lived the experience for a few years. I know their struggles. Certainly, they deserve as many breaks as any other profession in this province. I wish them all the best.

I can assure you that the NDP are fully behind you.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to stand and speak to Bill 104, the Tax Fairness for Realtors Act, introduced by my good friend, colleague and seatmate, the member for Prince Edward–Hastings.

It's also great to see co-sponsorship from the other two parties.

Madam Speaker, this is a very important bill. I know it has been introduced a number of times in this Legislature. I know that our friends at the Ontario Real Estate Association have been advocating for this change since 2008. Hopefully, this time around, we can make it a reality and move it forward. I think it's a very real possibility today, as the bill has continued to gain a lot of traction in recent weeks. I received an outstanding amount of engagement from my constituents on this bill, and I know, in talking to my colleagues from across the province, it's the same thought process, and they're very affirmative on doing this.

My Queen's Park office alone has received more than 100 inquiries offering support just in the last week. I'm sure, as I said, that many of my other colleagues in my party, the third party and the Liberals have received a very similar outreach.

This legislation will be doing vital work in bringing Ontario up to speed with many other provinces. British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec and Nova Scotia already permit realtors to incorporate or form PRECs, personal real estate corporations. A PREC would allow a real estate licensee to access the advantages of incorporating, such as more consistency in income, and tax streams.

1420

Ontario is always, and in many cases, a leader across many industries. That's wonderful, and we should always strive to be that. But there are also times that I believe we can learn. I believe that sometimes when you see such an overwhelming standard set by other provinces, it's an opportunity for us to capitalize on a good idea that brings Ontario in line with our neighbours.

Home ownership is part of the Canadian dream, an inspiration we want to see open to all, and realtors play a critical piece in that picture as they work to help families achieve that goal while supporting strong local communities.

In my riding, I'm hearing a lot from our realtors. I want to pass this, Madam Speaker. I'm going to defer some of my time to my colleague Michael Harris from Kitchener–Conestoga, who I believe wants to speak.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: I welcome more of those who have an opportunity to get into this debate.

I, too, like my colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound—of course, I want to thank the architect of this bill, my colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings, on why this is an important move to give those same benefits that others have in our communities to real estate agents.

I've also heard from real estate brokers from my riding, and I'd like to reference one of them here today. Brad Enns is a sales representative for McIntyre Real Estate Services Inc. in Waterloo region. Since starting in real estate four years ago, he has always been interested in forming a PREC and is puzzled as to why Ontario does not allow them. As he says, "It would be a good benefit as I build my team, tax advantages, reduce liability, as we essentially run our own business. I believe we should have the option to do this as I believe many other professions have the choice." That was Brad's comment on why we should move forward with this bill.

I think it's clear that realtors have been waiting a long time for this legislation to become law, that it will bring us in step with the rest of Canada, and it just makes good sense.

Again I'd like to thank real estate agents in my community of Waterloo region—very generous. Of course, we see an aggressive market today in real estate, and utilizing the services of a professional real estate agent helps families in what will likely be one of the biggest purchases of their lifetime. We agree with the extension of these benefits to them, and I'd like to thank my colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings again for bringing forward this important piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Prince Edward–Hastings to wrap up.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thanks to all of those who brought forward some great remarks about Bill 104, the Tax Fairness for Realtors Act, here this afternoon. Again, this is the third time, and we hope the third time is a charm. I'd like to thank my colleagues who spoke and co-sponsored from Kitchener–Waterloo, Eglinton–Lawrence as well and everybody else who chimed in.

From Nipissing: I loved his very romantic story that he was telling today. It reminds me of the first time I bought a house with my wife. My first real estate agent—and some people here will remember Kevin Vos. Kevin no longer lives in Quinte region. He lives in Ottawa; we're friends still on Facebook. There wasn't even Facebook when I bought my first house.

The member from London–Fanshawe I thought had a great line: "Support those who support our communities"—those who are real estate agents. I think this is a small bit of legislation that we can pass that would mean a lot to those people who do so much in our communities.

The member from Northumberland–Quinte West: I appreciate his support as well. My good friend from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek—I'm not sure what his next re-

election slogan will look like, but maybe it will be like his slogan on the signs that he had back then.

Of course, my friend from Kitchener–Conestoga—I know that Brad Enns appreciates the fact that he sprinted from his office to get here and was a little bit out of breath while he was doing his presentation as well. Of course, my good friend John Yakabuski from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—whose wife, Vicky, is just a saint, obviously. She’s a pretty good real estate agent, but she’s a saint for putting up with that guy; that’s for sure.

This bill is going to do a lot. As the member from Kitchener–Waterloo mentioned, it’s going to raise the bar in the industry too. I think that’s really important: that there’s the potential for job creation. There’s potential for more job creation, as I think even the stats have shown. There’s an addition to the GDP that I think could be bigger than what we’re expecting as well.

I thank all of those who spoke today. Let’s bring some fairness for realtors.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will vote on this item at the end of private members’ public business.

ONTARIO CRAFT BEER WEEK ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LA SEMAINE DE LA BIÈRE ARTISANALE EN ONTARIO

Mr. Rinaldi moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 107, An Act to proclaim Ontario Craft Beer Week / Projet de loi 107, Loi proclamant la Semaine de la bière artisanale en Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Madam Speaker, I’m delighted to be able to introduce this—I had the opportunity to introduce this private member’s bill a few days ago—and to be able to be here to debate.

First of all, let me say thank you to my staffer Travis Hoover for his work to put the notes and the bill together, with the help of Legislative Assembly staff and a bunch of other folks down here.

As I was preparing to speak about this today, one of the things that’s missing is that I would suggest—I’m not sure if it could happen—that we change our standing orders so that we could have props, and maybe samples, as we talk about some pieces of legislation. But I’m probably not going to live long enough to see that.

I also want to thank the Ontario Craft Brewers association, who have inspired me to do this. It didn’t take long to inspire me to do this, Speaker, and let me tell you why: because it’s an industry that has grown so quickly—I’m going to refer to that in my notes as we move forward. Breweries have sprung up in our communities, and I’m going to talk about a number of them in my riding that, frankly, enhance the quality of life that

we have. Each one of these craft brewers, not just in my riding but across the province, literally add their own natural flavour to their product. So it gives us some better understanding.

As I said, Madam Speaker, the OCB, as I’m going to refer to them from now on—the Ontario Craft Brewers—such as the Church-Key Brewery and William Street Beer Co. in Northumberland–Quinte West, now directly employ some 1,500 people amongst all the members, about 30% of all direct brewing industry jobs in Ontario, along with countless spinoffs in agriculture, manufacturing, packaging and tourism throughout the province.

The OCB is now in its eighth year, I believe, as an organization. The Ontario Craft Brewers already have a week that takes place during the third week of June, ending on Father’s Day. We want to give that recognition.

Ontario Craft Beer Week is a province-wide festival that celebrates the independent, locally based craft beer industry in Ontario and exposes consumers to the premium quality and culture of Ontario craft beer. This bill, if passed, would help officially recognize the incredible growth in the local craft beer industry in the past decade, and it’s well deserved. I would encourage Ontarians to discover local craft beer made by these independent owners of craft breweries right in their own communities.

Locally produced craft beer continues to be the fastest-growing segment within the LCBO beer category and, in part through progressive and supportive Liberal government policy, has become a major player in the Ontario alcohol beverage industry. There are now over 500 unique brands that are currently produced by OCB members and other breweries, such as Wild Card Brewing Company in Quinte West and Northumberland Hills Brewery in Cobourg. Ontario craft beer is handcrafted, made in small batches with lots of attention to care, using locally sourced, all-natural, pure ingredients, with no additives or preservatives, and using the brewmaster’s own authentic special recipes. This is what makes them unique.

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This act is an instrumental way for the province to honour its long-standing partnership with, and support for, the Ontario Craft Brewers and the locally owned craft brewing industry, to showcase and celebrate our province’s thriving, locally based breweries in communities large and small, right across Ontario.

Ontario Craft Beer Week is a province-wide festival that celebrates the independent, locally based craft beer industry in Ontario and exposes consumers to the premium quality and culture of Ontario craft beer.

Organized by the Ontario Craft Brewers—I’m talking about the beer week, Speaker—Ontario Craft Beer Week first launched in 2010, at that time with 25 craft brewers and their licensee partners hosting 110 events across the province. OCB Week 2016 featured over 70 craft brewers producing hundreds of events in communities throughout Ontario.

OCB events are hosted at breweries, pubs, restaurants and event venues across Ontario in cities such as Toronto, Guelph, London and Ottawa, and in communities from Cambridge to Vankleek Hill and Thunder Bay to Niagara.

With special events ranging from intimate to festivals, OCB Week is designed to expose consumers to the craft beer experience through tasting events, brewery tours, “meet the brewmaster” events, casks, cooking demonstrations, food pairings, beer dinners, music nights, brewery collaborations and one-offs, exciting online contests and much more.

OCB Week is organized by a working committee of experienced craft brewery associates. The OCB Week committee is comprised of a talented and committed group of representatives from several OCB member breweries.

I just want to talk about some facts, if I may. OCB is an association of more than 80 locally owned, independent brewers dedicated to making great-tasting, high-quality beer in Ontario, and 2017 will mark the eighth annual Ontario Craft Beer Week, hosted by the OCB.

The local craft beer industry is a huge driver of economic growth in Toronto and in all of rural Ontario. Locally owned craft brewers directly employ well over 1,500 people, with countless spinoff jobs, especially in the agricultural, manufacturing, packaging and tourism sectors. In fact, OCB brewers account for over 30% of all direct brewing industry jobs in Ontario.

OCB brewers are in 110 communities, from the Ottawa Valley to Windsor, Niagara and Muskoka and as far north as Kenora.

OCB brewers have handcrafted over 500 different premium beers—I’ve mentioned them in the past—across a variety of types and seasonal offerings. Craft beer continues to be the fastest-growing segment within the LCBO beer category. OCB’s long-term vision is to have at least one brewery in every city and town in Ontario, and to make it a North American centre of excellence in craft brewing. That is an ambitious goal set by the OCB, but with the results that they’ve received up to today, I know that they’re going to get there.

Across the province, there are now 130 grocery stores authorized to sell beer and cider. Eventually, up to 450 grocery stores, both large chains and independents, will be able to sell beer and cider. This is a new venture for Ontario, and it has been very, very well received. In February, we announced that we are moving forward on our commitment to improving convenience and choice for people across the province by expanding the sale of beer and cider to 80 more grocery stores. We did say we were going to do this in a gradual way, and that’s the direction we’re going in, Madam Speaker.

Craft beer is a rapidly expanding industry in Ontario, as I mentioned before, employing more than 1,500 people in direct jobs and generating more than \$69 million in sales last year through the LCBO. New opportunities for the sale of beer are being created in grocery stores across Ontario. We are working to have beer

available for sale in up to 150 grocery stores by May of this year. Responding to consumer demand, sales in up to 450 stores will be introduced later on.

Currently, there are approximately 140 craft breweries operating across Ontario, approximately 70 of which sell product via the LCBO network. This sector has seen significant year-over-year increases in revenues, up nearly 35% annually from 2015 to 2016. Ontario Craft Brewers is committed to building Ontario as a North American centre of excellence for craft brewing. Growing the craft beer sector supports our government’s agri-food growth challenge to create 120,000 jobs in that sector by 2020. Certainly, this industry is helping us get there.

As my time is winding up, I just again want to reiterate and thank the OCB folks for allowing me the opportunity to introduce this bill, Bill 107, to be able to recognize this fast-growing industry that I think will have an impact in rural and urban Ontario, providing convenience. The most important thing is to be able to create a locally grown product for us all to enjoy.

I hope that we can get support for this through the House to send it to committee as we move down the road, Madam Speaker. I’m going to stop there.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I’m pleased to stand today and speak to the honourable member opposite’s bill, An Act to proclaim Ontario Craft Beer Week.

I was fascinated to read, on the Ontario Craft Brewers website, “From its inception, the foundation of the Ontario economy was built on the supply and demand of a few basic commodities: fur, lumber and beer.” Beer has defined Ontario’s economy for a long time, since the early days of our province here. Now, it’s great to see a resurgence in craft beer, as we see a resurgence in craft beer across not only our province but across North America. I’m pleased to stand in support of this piece of legislation that would recognize the importance of craft breweries.

In my home riding of Niagara West–Glanbrook, we have the Bench Brewing Co., based out of Beamsville, which is in the heart of my riding. Most people know Niagara more for its wines, and now distilleries, which are also spreading out in the region, but we do have some excellent local craft brewers who contribute to our local economy, who hire local craft brewers to help them out and whose spinoffs have contributed greatly to the growth in the Niagara region. I’m pleased to be able to stand and recognize that.

Ontario Craft Beer Week is already an institution that, although not formally recognized, has been celebrated for several years now as a province-wide festival that celebrates the independent, locally based craft brewing industry in Ontario and exposes consumers to the premium quality and culture of Ontario craft beer. Unfortunately, I was unable to be here on Monday, but I know many members of the Legislature had the chance to sample various of the craft brewers from across the province.

This is an industry that we should be celebrating. This is an industry that's growing. I'm pleased to be able to stand in support of the piece of legislation put forward by the member opposite.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

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Ms. Catherine Fife: I wanted to start off by just saying that I wanted to give preliminary congratulations to all of the craft brewers in Ontario who will be celebrating their eighth annual craft beer week during the second week of June this year. I also want to let the House know that of course we would be supporting Bill 107, the Ontario Craft Beer Week Act. There are so many reasons, actually, to be supporting this bill, but it also is worth noting that the craft brewery industry has been celebrating this week for eight years already.

Today, the craft beer industry can be looked at as a business success story, with over 130 breweries in Ontario and 40 or more breweries in the works. There are several breweries in Kitchener–Waterloo region, including five great craft breweries in my region: Innocent Brewing Co.; Lion Brewery; Abe Erb—I've spent a little bit of time there; Waterloo Brewing Co.; and Descendants.

Waterloo Brewing is part of the larger Brick Brewing Co. They've been in business in Kitchener for over 30 years. They employ over 120 people and have invested \$20 million in capital in recent years. However, Waterloo Brewing's growth has been stifled by the rigid small brewer incentive that is currently in place in Ontario. While retail laws have been liberalized—that's the new word, "liberalized"—to allow craft beer into more liquor and grocery stores, breweries that want to grow are limited to a ceiling of only 50,000 hectolitres a year if they want to benefit from the small brewer incentive.

The 50,000-hectolitre limit in Ontario is in stark contrast to the limits set in other provinces. In Quebec, craft breweries can produce 150,000 hectolitres—that's three times as much as Ontario's craft breweries can produce; in Saskatchewan, craft brewers are able to brew up to 200,000 hectolitres; and in Alberta, to qualify as a small brewer you can produce up to 300,000 hectolitres for the province and 400,000 hectolitres for the global market.

Ontario is the largest beer market in the country. I'm not sure what that says about us, but we represent one third of the volume sold across this country. Despite this, Ontario's craft brewers have the lowest ceiling of all major beer markets in the country. For breweries like Waterloo, this ceiling is a clear disincentive for them to grow.

In January, Brick Brewing Co. presented a deputation before the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs as part of the pre-budget consultations. They asked for the province to remove the unnecessarily low ceiling placed on brewers in Ontario. In order for these small businesses to succeed, they need to be able to compete with similarly sized breweries across the country.

This is not rocket science. Brick called for the raising of the ceiling to 400,000 hectolitres, which is in line with the standards set in Alberta. Raising the ceiling to 400,000 hectolitres would allow these small breweries to grow more proportionally to their capacity.

Ontario's craft breweries are strong examples of small business success in our province. They brew great beer and provide Ontarians with good job opportunities. Ontario Craft Beer Week should not only be a celebration of craft breweries but a moment to acknowledge the ways that we can improve incentives for small breweries to grow.

I just want to say, on a personal note, that the craft breweries, the craft distillers and the craft winemakers in this province—when you meet these people, these are individuals who have dreams of creating a product that they can indeed be proud of. They want to be part of the local economy. Many of them have amazing connections with the farmers and the local food producers in their communities. These models of economic growth on a micro level and on a macro level are the way we should be growing our economy in the province of Ontario. Certainly lifting the hectolitre limit would incentivize more job growth, more product growth and truly make this province a leader globally in the craft brewery industry.

We'll be supporting your motion, but we will also be holding your government to account to ensure that we support the craft brewers in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Hon. David Zimmer: Let me start off right away because I think I've got about five minutes—is that right, Mr. Sponsor of the Bill?

I am very happy to support this bill for all of the usual economic reasons that you've heard about—economic development in the communities—but for a whole lot of personal reasons too. Because it has been about 15 years, maybe more, maybe 17, that I have been a consumer—moderately—of craft beers. There's nothing I enjoy more than travelling around the province and, in my capacity as minister of indigenous affairs, I am in the process of visiting—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Indigenous relations.

Hon. David Zimmer:—indigenous relations—visiting communities all across Ontario. Whenever I visit a community, we usually have a lunch or a dinner and we make a point of typically, if we can find one, going to the local microbrew pub. The reason that it's such a pleasure going to one of the microbrew pubs—whether it's in small-town Ontario, a little village, a mid-size town or even a larger city like Toronto, where there are micro-breweries, I always ask the waiter or waitress, "What is your local microbrew?" They will often tell me, "Well, we've got this," and they'll run through three or four brands with me. Then they'll get into—it's almost like a wine-tasting thing. They'll start talking about the flavours of this beer and the flavours of that beer, and if I'm having this kind of food maybe I would like that kind of beer.

What it does is that it leads to a conversation, because the next thing that comes up, I will often ask, “Who’s behind the microbrewery? Where is it made? How did it come to be?” Inevitably, when they tell me that story of how the microbrewery got started—whether it’s in any of the towns or cities or villages in Ontario—there’s the very human story behind the start-up of that microbrewery. It leads to a broader discussion about their community and the role that that microbrewery has played in the community.

I make that point because it does serve to demonstrate the significant local economic impact, local business impact and, indeed, I broaden it out and say the local cultural discussions that have surrounding why that particular microbrewery has done so well.

While I don’t want to name any particular microbrews, often I end up in the same community a couple of times a year and I know the different microbreweries to go to. In fact, in that regard, microbreweries are located in 110 communities in Ontario. There are 180 operating microbreweries. There are another 50 in the planning stage—that just shows you how popular microbreweries are. There are an additional 30 brew pubs, which have a different licence that doesn’t permit them to sell to the home consumer, but you can have that beer at the brew pub.

I can say that of the over 80 Ontario craft brewers that are currently members of the Ontario Craft Brewers association—they’re adding new members at the rate of two a month. So that’s 24 a year, 25 a year. That just tells you how popular the microbreweries are, how much they mean to those local communities and, really importantly, how much the customers who are consuming microbeers or locally brewed beers place on that experience.

Earlier this week—it was Tuesday night, I think—

Interjection: Monday.

Hon. David Zimmer: Monday night, was it? It was the Ontario Craft Brewers reception here at Queen’s Park. I had House duty until about 6 o’clock, so I got there shortly after 6:00. It was on the second floor here, rooms 238 and 230. They combined the two rooms, so it was a large space. I got there shortly after 6:00, and it was shoulder room only—shoulder room only. The microbreweries had stations set up all around the room.

You can tell, in this place, the really popular receptions: when you get all members from all three political parties, all of the staffers from each of the political parties and the legislative staff here at Queen’s Park who show up who want to participate in that activity.

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There was lots of conversation. There were exotic beers, microbrews, that I had never heard of. You’d have a conversation with the brewmaster or his staff, and the conversation would be on what the beer is all about—again, always a discussion about the community from which the beer came. It often ended with an invitation to drop in to the microbrewery if I was in that part of the province. I actually had a little sheet of paper, and I jotted down a couple of beers that I had not tasted before. They

are on my list to drop in to, the next time I hit those communities.

I support this bill. I thank you for bringing it forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It’s a pleasure to join the debate today on the private member’s bill from the member from Northumberland–Quinte West, Bill 107.

I don’t know if he is a great planner or just very, very lucky, but to be tabling this bill in the week of the craft beer reception in Queen’s Park—he couldn’t have done it any better. Every one of us here, as the minister said, had the opportunity to go to that reception the other night, and it was absolutely fantastic. There were so many that you couldn’t possibly have tasted them all in the time that was allotted. I congratulate the winners of that contest.

The other thing that is interesting is the timing of the week. The second Sunday in June has the potential to fall on my birthday, so it couldn’t happen at a better time. If I happen to receive gifts of craft beer on my birthday, I will be eternally grateful and I will not send any of them away. If this passes and it happens to be proclaimed the second Sunday in June, happy birthday, John.

The other thing I wanted to briefly mention, but most importantly, is the craft brewing industry as a whole and then one in my riding. I want to thank the member for Kitchener–Waterloo for talking about the hectolitre limits and the challenges they pose to craft breweries in Ontario. If we’re going to support craft brewers by proclaiming this week, then we also have to take it a step further and give them all a better chance at success by raising those hectolitre limits from the current 50,000, which is far too low and is not in keeping with the limits in other jurisdictions.

I want to talk about the Whitewater Brewing Co. in my riding. I met with the owners last month. It’s co-owned by two gentlemen, one by the name of Chris Thompson and the other by the name of Chris Thompson. It’s quite unique. It’s a unique beer, a unique brewery, and the two co-owners actually have the same first names and surnames. One, I believe, is Christopher N. and one is Christopher D. I might have that wrong, but I’m relying on memory here.

Anyway, I had a great opportunity to speak to them. That evening as well, my wife and I went to their establishment and had dinner. They’ve also opened up a new brewery in Cobden, Ontario—as I said, my old friend Harold Dobson would always say, “The centre of the universe—Cobden, Ontario.” They opened up a new brewery—it just opened up last year, in 2016—and they’ve also opened up a restaurant.

We had dinner there that night, Vicky and I. Man, it was so good—unbelievable food. I tasted every beer they had to offer, every one of their wares, including the seasonal ones. There was one that was kind of a minty beer that they were just doing for the winter season, but it was absolutely fantastic. They were all excellent.

Then I’m talking to my son the next week, and I mention Christopher Thompson, and he says, “Oh, yeah,

I play basketball”—Luke is our youngest boy, and our oldest is Zachary. There’s short Chris Thompson and there’s tall Chris Thompson. They play basketball with tall Chris Thompson on a regular basis in Pembroke. In fact, Lucas is coming home this weekend to play in a tournament in Pembroke. That’s how small the world can be, sometimes.

I am certainly eager to support this bill proclaiming Ontario Craft Beer Week. We are so fortunate to have entrepreneurs like Chris Thompson and Chris Thompson in our riding. The Whitewater Brewing Co. is doing a fantastic job of producing great products. Let’s get them in more places all around Ontario by allowing craft brewers to flourish.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: Today I’m pleased to rise on behalf of my constituents of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek to speak to Bill 107, An Act to proclaim Ontario Craft Beer Week, brought forward by the member from Northumberland–Quinte West. I know that the member has spoken before to commend the craft beverage industry in Northumberland county. All of us here should be proud of our thriving craft breweries, wineries and distilleries in this province. You can probably find at least one in the majority of our ridings.

This bill proclaims the week commencing the second Sunday in June each year as Ontario Craft Beer Week. That makes sense, because it aligns with the annual Ontario Craft Beer Week, which is one of the biggest concentrations of beer festivals and events in the calendar year.

There are over 70 craft breweries in Ontario today, and the number is growing rapidly. Each one began as a small business, and some of the more successful ones have scaled up to medium-sized companies. They are Ontario owned and operated, founded by Ontario entrepreneurs and supporting thousands of Ontario jobs.

As I’m sure everyone in this building can testify to, the people in the Ontario craft beer industry truly love what they do. They have a real passion for crafting unique local products with a sense of place and attachment to their home community. This Legislature has a proud history of promoting Ontario craft beer, as it does Ontario wine. I’m very pleased to say that our publicly owned LCBO has been a strong promoter of Ontario craft beers.

There are new craft breweries in the Hamilton area, and I’d like to recognize the excellent work they’re doing. Collective Arts Brewing is quite widely known, as you can find their products on the shelves of many LCBOs. Nickel Brook Brewing is also widely distributed in the Beer Store and the LCBO and has been around for about 12 years now. They share a brewing facility with Collective Arts at the old Lakeport brewery site on Burlington Street East in Hamilton’s north end. The brewery even has a summer beer garden that’s open for people to visit.

The Hamilton Brewery brews on contract in St. Thomas but can be found in dozens of our city’s bars and

restaurants. The Shawn and Ed Brewing Co. is a very new brewery located right in the heart of downtown Dundas, in the 150-year-old former Dundas curling and skating rink.

One of the great things about the craft beer scene is the hometown pride. These people in the craft beer industry love their communities, and their communities love to support them. Ontario is starting to hearken back to the heydays of German and British brewing, when almost every town had its own brewery. I think that’s a wonderful thing, Speaker.

We have come to appreciate the value of locally grown and produced food, and the same holds true for our beverages. It’s a really remarkable transformation that’s going on. Historically, beer was a small-scale farmhouse product. We’ve almost come full circle over the last two centuries to the craft beer revolution today.

Many of our Ontario breweries are now exporting their products to the United States. You can find Ontario beer throughout the Great Lakes region and the Midwest. It’s really interesting that we’re seeing this bloom of small craft breweries at the same time as we’re seeing waves of mergers and consolidations worldwide in the big beer corporations. We have to remember that thousands of Ontarians work for the big breweries and that there is still a very high demand for their products. It’s a great thing that we’re creating so much choice and, along with that choice, more jobs for Ontarians.

People have different tastes. Some love the more traditional products from the larger breweries; some are fans of the porters, the India pale ales, the red ales and so on. Craft beers tend to—not always, but tend to—have a higher alcohol content than we’ve become accustomed to. You have to watch yourself when you drink some of these beers, and certainly don’t get behind the wheel. They are often treated like wine, where you have one or two and you try to pair it with a meal, and it’s so good you might have a couple more. I had never realized before that beer could be as successfully paired with food as wine can, and that it’s often a much better fit. It depends on your taste. It makes sense when you think about it, as beer comes from grain, just as bread does.

It’s really important to recognize the tourism component to this, because it spills over into the local food industry, music and beer festivals. Supercrawl in Hamilton, which has become famous, for example, is a great local music festival event where you can easily sample Hamilton’s craft beers and many other food products and specialties of the Hamilton area.

Having a thriving local food and drink scene is a boon for tourism, especially in small-town and rural Ontario. It’s an encouragement and invitation to passers-by to take a detour off their highway travels. They play the same role as local restaurants and help to support one another.

Craft breweries are becoming a major neighbourhood attraction in our cities too, often in old industrial areas, but you can find small breweries hidden down laneways in residential neighbourhoods too.

Thank you to the member for Northumberland–Quinte West for bringing this bill forward, and thank you to the

thousands of people in Ontario's craft brew industry for the passion, skill and entrepreneurship you bring to your work every day.

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The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Arthur Potts: What a great pleasure it is for me to stand once again in the House and talk about great alcohol. I think I'm getting a bit of a complex here, whether it's speaking to the Free My Rye Act or to co-sponsor the bill we did with the member from Caledon on craft ciders. I'm here once again to speak to this excellent bill from my seatmate, the member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

Hon. David Zimmer: What do you serve at the Pilot?

Mr. Arthur Potts: We'll get there.

I am so pleased that we are joined in the House today by two very passionate beer makers. I want to take a moment to recognize in the House the only craft beer producer in my riding of Beaches—East York, Jeff Manol. Jeff is the proprietor of Muddy York brewery, and I've got to tell you: I went to visit him there, and he makes an incredible number of different beers. They're served in kegs to lots of the little local restaurants in my community, whether it's Relish or the Grover, and I can get to sample his product on a regular basis.

I went to see Jeff one day up at his shop. It was a fascinating experience because, at the time, he was transitioning into making beer. He had a metal fabricating shop—and, I believe, still has a metal fabricating shop—up in the East York section above O'Connor, where he was slowly taking over bits of his metal fabricating to add tank upon tank upon tank to brew great ales. I've sampled his porter, I've sampled his stout and I've sampled his great English bitter. I'm just delighted to see you here and to congratulate you for what you do.

I also want to recognize Mark Murphy. Mark operates a brewery with his wife, Mandie, called Left Field Brewery. Left Field is not in my riding; it's just a little bit to the west, in the member for Toronto—Danforth's riding. He makes a number of extraordinary beers. One of my favourites is his brown ale, the Eephus brown ale. We are so thrilled to have him here, because they do represent the kind of entrepreneurial spirit of the new foodie generation. What they're doing is bringing an opportunity to have better beers in our community that are made here and enjoyed here.

Last night, I got down to an event with the local city councillor, Mary-Margaret McMahon. She held it at a new brewery pub, Rorschach Brewing Co.—you remember the Rorschach ink blots. Their theory in calling themselves that is about the fact that everyone enjoys their beer differently. It means, a little bit different to everybody. The various taste opportunities we have in new beers is extraordinary.

Also last night, I happened to be at an event celebrating the Neighbourhood Group, which is a community agency in my neighbourhood, at a volunteer fundraiser,

where another friend of mine, Nicole from the Auld Spot—they have a company called Sweetgrass. They had donated the beer to this community group.

This reflects another avenue I want to highlight: When you have local products from local community members, the opportunities to support local gatherings is immense. I know that both of these gentlemen are very active in supporting community groups in their neighbourhood, and I'm delighted to be part of that.

I have this unique pleasure, as the member for Beaches—East York, to represent an area that housed the very first brew pub in Ontario: The Feathers, on Kingston Road. It was almost 40 years ago, Speaker—I hate to admit it, but almost 40 years ago—that I spent almost a year in England, where I got to really enjoy good old English ales. When I came back to Canada, I've got to tell you, Canadian beer just didn't quite do it for me anymore. So I joined a group called Campaign for Real Ale, and at the time we went out and we changed the rules on microbrewing in Ontario almost 40 years ago. Now, to see where that has taken us, to the 150-or-so breweries in every single riding in the province of Ontario, is fantastic.

I remember that one of the first microbreweries that started at that time was a company called Conners. Conners made their beer in the Eglinton and Victoria Park area, not far from where I represent—in fact, they may have actually been in my riding, but very close—and they made it in these two-litre and half-litre plastic jugs. It was a very unique way of marketing beer.

They called themselves Conners because a conner was a tax-collecting agent in the early days in England. The conner would go into a pub that was making its own beer and would test the fullness of its fermentation by wearing leather chaps, pouring the beer on the wooden seat, and sitting down and finishing the rest of the beer. If the conner stood up and his pants were sticking, it meant the beer hadn't been fully fermented. That's what Conners beer comes from; it's conner. When he stood up and it didn't stick, he would raise his pint and say, "The brew is true." That's the history of where we started almost 40 years ago, and now we're seeing the opportunity we have in grocery stores, where we're selling craft beers.

We required 20% of craft beers to promote them in the marketplace, but some stores have taken on the challenge, saying, "No, we're going to stock up to 50% on our shelves, of craft beer." Speaker, I can tell you, it has been so incredibly successful that now over 80% of the sales in the Metro in my neighbourhood are going to craft beers, and I'm absolutely delighted to hear about that.

I stand in support of this bill, which coincidentally will be held in the same week that I'm proposing Men's Health Awareness Week: the week preceding Father's Day. I think it's great that during that week, when we have Men's Health Awareness Week and we're looking after our health, we can toast a good beer to it.

Thanks for being here, gentlemen.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 107, the Ontario Craft Beer Week Act, 2017, and definitely add my support.

My riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound enjoys a healthy craft brewery culture. It's home to three craft breweries: Kilannan, MacLean's and Neustadt Springs.

Kilannan Brewing Co. in Rockford was started in 2012. The owner and brewmaster is just 25 years old and among the youngest brewery owners in Canada. Spencer Wareham learned the trade at brewing schools in Chicago and Germany. The brewery is located just outside of Owen Sound, in the Rockford Plaza in the municipality of Meaford, and features a retail store where customers can sample and purchase beer.

Maclean's Ales Inc. in Hanover: Charles MacLean started brewing in 1978 in England and has since paired up with Michael D'Agnillo and Curtis Schmalz to run MacLean's Ales. Last year, the trio picked up three awards at the Canadian Brewing Awards and Ontario Brewing Awards. Their Armchair Scotch Ale won gold in a national awards and a silver medal at the provincial awards, while the Luck and Charm Oatmeal Stout took home a bronze medal at the Canadian Brewing Awards. My favourite is Farmhouse Blonde. It was a big win indeed, considering MacLean's was up against more than 170 brewers in Ontario and 500 across Canada, including big players such as Labatt and Molson Coors.

Neustadt Springs Brewery is similar to MacLean's. The owners, Andrew and Val Stimpson, have been brewing since 1978, but it wasn't till they moved to Canada in 1995 that they set up the Neustadt Springs microbrewery in the abandoned Crystal Springs Brewery in Neustadt.

We also have Tobermory Brewing Co. and Grill. The owner there is Morag Kloeze. I haven't tried that, but I will get to Tobermory soon to do that.

Just east of us in my colleague Jim Wilson's Simcoe riding we have Creemore, the Collingwood Brewery, Side Launch Brewing Co., and Northwinds Brewhouse, all in Collingwood.

Next door to me on the other side in Huron–Bruce, my colleague Lisa Thompson has Cowbell, Outlaw, Stone House Brewing, Square Brew, Half Hours on Earth and Bad Apple Brewhouse. All of them are part of a craft brewers family that has grown to 80 members over the last 14 years.

My riding is a great location for brewers because it connects them to the best water resources, farms, crops, and essential ingredients like hops. The spin-off for small and rural communities is positive for local economies and employment, and our craft breweries directly employ over 1,500 Ontarians, with good local jobs in over 110 communities.

Sadly, all of these craft breweries currently face barriers to further growth due to the current tax structure imposed by the Liberal government, and we're hoping to be able to change that.

The Ontario PC caucus supports the creation of an economic environment that supports growth and pros-

perity for small and medium-sized businesses, including craft breweries. We want our craft brewery industry to be a great success story for this province. Cheers.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It wouldn't be a talk about craft beer unless I gave a shout-out to the best craft beer producers anywhere. I just have to say it. I can't hold back; you know it's me. High Park Brewery, Duggan's, and Indie Ale House in Parkdale–High Park—all of them, and here's why. High Park Brewery, a locally handcrafted beer, is sold in over 80 bars. In 2016, it was their beer—no other—Against the Grain that was voted as the craft lager choice by MPPs and staffers right here at the Speaker's craft beer testing. That same year, they won with their English special ale, Across the Pond.

Indie Ale House, to give a shout-out there to Jason—a good friend—was the first Canadian brewery to go to Sierra Nevada Beer Camp and was the first-ever Canadian beer at the legendary US craft brewery Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. Who knew?

Just an incredible amount of work by some amazing local entrepreneurs—a shout-out to Jason, a shout-out to Mike, and a shout-out to John, Dan, Ted and Jeff. Thank you for all you do. Thank you for making Parkdale–High Park a more vibrant place. Thank you for bringing business to our riding, and thank you, finally, for just some phenomenal products.

1510

Here's to all craft brewers. I want to second the emotion of my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo: Yes, and please, dear government, allow them to produce more.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to talk to this bill, brought forward by my colleague from Northumberland–Quinte West, the neighbouring riding, where we're seeing more and more craft brewers popping up all over the place.

When I was first elected here—of course, I represent Prince Edward county, which is a burgeoning wine region—I wanted to get better access to the market for the local wineries in Prince Edward county. But as I started to research the Raise a Glass to Ontario Act, I started to realize that the craft brewers were facing difficulties accessing the market, and the cider companies and the craft distillers were also finding it difficult to get access because the LCBO controls everything.

I worked with John Hay very early on. John Hay is with the Ontario Craft Brewers association. I went on a province-wide tour. If you're going on a province-wide tour on something and do some investigation, craft breweries are the best place to go. I have been to so many craft breweries across this province. In Sudbury, I was at Stack. In Ottawa, I was at Beau's. Here in Toronto I was at Mill Street and Steam Whistle, Amsterdam and Spearhead. Over in St. Thomas, I was at Railway City—I popped in there. In Kenora, Ontario, I went to Lake of

the Woods. I actually bought a Lake of the Woods T-shirt. On the back it says, "It might be the beer talking but I really like beer." What a great brewery it is up there.

We're seeing all of these breweries popping up all over the place, in spite of the fact that it is difficult for them to get their product to market. So while the government has implemented some of the aspects that I brought forward in the Raise a Glass to Ontario Act, back in 2013 or 2014, whenever it was, there's still far more that we can do to provide access for them. They're starting to get into the grocery stores, which is great. They want the ability to cross-sell, which means that if you're Amsterdam Brewery, you could sell other craft beers in your location. If you're Muskoka, up in the Muskoka region, you could sell Spearhead up there; you could sell Amsterdam. You would have like a mini craft beer store. I think that's what they're saying. The Beer Store is such a giant monopoly that they would like to have a similar opportunity to create this extra retail space at their breweries. I think that's a great idea, and I know it's something that the craft beer association is still interested in doing.

While I've been to all of these breweries, I find it really exciting in my region, where Barley Days Brewery was the first—Chris and Nora Rogers—down in Prince Edward county. That's now been purchased by Joe Pulla, who's a great, great entrepreneur here in Ontario. We're seeing the Chrétien family now with Lake on the Mountain, which is a great craft brewery. We're seeing Parsons, County Road Beer, Wild Card in my colleague's riding in Trenton. There are so many exciting things happening. Signal is going to be opening soon in Belleville, if they can get through the red tape. It's not provincial red tape; it's municipal red tape that they're having a problem with there. But they need to get open because this is a fast-growing industry.

I commend the member for bringing this week forward. I say, why not make it a month? Craft beer month in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I will return to the member from Northumberland—Quinte West to wrap up.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I want to thank all the speakers—way too many to mention. I started by being selfish and mentioning some of the names of the craft breweries in my riding, and all of a sudden it became a free-for-all, which is good, with everybody trying to promote their regions. I think it's fantastic.

I think, based on the debate this afternoon, that week that they're celebrating—and we're going to honour it—I think it's started. We're not waiting until June, just by the reaction this afternoon here in this House. We're so proud of this new industry, how well it's done in such a really, really short time, and how it's growing.

I just want to say to all the members who participated in the debate: Thank you so much for supporting this. It sounds like we're going to move it to the next step and hopefully make this a reality, way before Craft Beer

Week, to help them to celebrate in true honour. We as politicians have the opportunity to do that. I think this is the time to do it, and I would say cheers to everyone.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

GASOLINE TAX FAIRNESS FOR ALL ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ POUR TOUS À L'ÉGARD DE LA TAXE SUR L'ESSENCE

Mr. Yakabuski moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 93, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act with respect to matching rebates of gasoline tax that the Minister provides to municipalities / Projet de loi 93, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun à l'égard des remboursements de la taxe sur l'essence similaires consentis aux municipalités par le ministre.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to say thanks for the opportunity to bring this to the attention of the Legislature once again. But quite frankly, I had hoped that I would never have to bring it to the Legislature again, because I've done it on many occasions. I wasn't sure that I was going to bring this bill forward this time, but the Premier left me no choice.

Why are we here today? It's my gasoline tax fairness act once again, because, you see, when I had it here the last time, in 2014, the government members argued, "Well, we can't give a share of the rebate of the gas tax to all municipalities, Mr. Yakabuski, because then we'd have to take it away from the municipalities that are receiving it for public transportation." Well, that was a bogus argument then, and it's a bogus argument in even a bigger sense today.

You see, in 2014—it's an allocation issue. But the Premier—I don't want to say this unparliamentarily, but she proved that she wasn't being frank with the people of Ontario because last summer, she and John Tory had this little—

Mr. Ted Arnott: Understanding.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —understanding that they were going to—John Tory wanted tolls in the city of Toronto on the Don Valley Parkway and on the Gardiner Expressway. The Premier played footsie with him and basically said, "Nod, nod, wink, wink. Don't worry. We won't stand in the way." In fact, I'm sure she said to John Tory, "You'll get them."

Then in the Legislature here, when it actually became public that the city of Toronto wanted them, she stood in her place, right across from me over here, and said, "We're not going to stand in the way of the city of Toronto if they want tolls on the Gardiner and the DVP."

Then reality set in for the Premier. Patrick Brown, the leader of the PCs, says, “No way” to tolls in the city of Toronto. The people—yes, the people—said, “No. No, you’re not putting tolls on those two pieces of concrete and asphalt.” And the Premier backed down.

But immediately, when she said there would be no tolls and she would not allow the city to put tolls on the Gardiner and the DVP, she also said, “But don’t worry. Don’t worry, Toronto and all you places out there that have a bus somewhere, parked in a garage. I’m going to double”—double—“the gas tax rebate to communities that have a public transportation system.” So my question—

Applause.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I see the minister clapping. I’m sure she’s not clapping for me. I see the minister clapping over there, and I have to ask myself this: If you couldn’t do anything more with the gas tax rebate, because it was all accounted for in 2014, how are you able to double it now to those municipalities that have a rapid or a public transit system? It is not possible. The rebates—the gas tax is not increasing by that amount.

But do you know what is happening? It’s the frustration—the frustration in rural communities when now they see that on an issue of fundamental fairness, the Premier of Ontario—because she got caught. She went too far down the road with John Tory and found out that people were going to throw her out of office. That would just be one of the reasons, but that would be another one of the reasons they were going to throw her out of office. She realized that tolls were going to be a bad idea, so she sweetened the pot for the urban municipalities.

But rural people have been asking for fairness for some time. How can you say that you can give a gas tax rebate to one but not to another? I say to my colleagues on the other side, who may not live in rural Ontario, that our roads and streets, back roads, side roads, county roads, and main streets in our villages and towns are our public transportation system.

1520

My colleague from Scarborough here, my good friend Raymond Cho, told the Premier and the Minister of Transportation today how important it is to get a subway to Scarborough, and he’s right; he’s a champion for that. But there will never be a subway to Barry’s Bay. There will never be a subway in Palmer Rapids or Westmeath. We know that. But every day, hard-working rural people have to get up to go to work in those communities as well, and they have to drive miles on public roads—our public transportation system.

The federal government realized, correctly so, that a gas tax rebate should be shared by all communities. So the federal government instituted rules that would ensure that the gas tax was shared across this beautiful country—the greatest country in the world, our country, Canada—on a per capita basis, so nobody is cheated. The city of Toronto and the GTA and their five million people or whatever it is all around here—it’s a lot of people—get their gas tax rebate. Mississauga gets their

gas tax rebate. Peel region, Brampton, Peterborough, Ottawa, London, Hamilton—

Mr. Bill Walker: Wiarton?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I don’t know about Wiarton—yes, yes, we’re talking about federal; they all get their gas tax rebate. Wiarton does too, and Renfrew county. Thank you very much to my friend Bill Walker. I got so caught up in the cities I forgot about the towns.

But yes, in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, all the communities get a share of the federal gas tax. In fact, the numbers for Ontario are staggering. In 2017-18, Ontario will receive—Ontario communities, not Ontario; they would never send the money to this government, to this treasury. Can you imagine what they would do with it? My goodness gracious, it would be put to the worst use possible. But they send that money directly to the communities all across Ontario, to the tune, I say, Speaker, of \$782,196,000. Next year that will go up to over \$819 million for Ontario out of the federal gas tax.

If the federal government, in their wisdom, realizes that communities need to be treated fairly, why is it that the Ontario government can’t see it the same way? Are they so much against the rural people in this province that they can’t share that gas tax with them as well?

I’ve seen what happened with the OMPF grants. I’m just going to name a few communities in my riding. Yes, some of them have gone up marginally, but look at the ones that have gone down in the last several years and think where they could be if they were getting sustained, allocated, dependable funding from the gas tax to allow them to put that money towards the projects that are most important to them—not projects that are dictated by the provincial government; the projects that are determined to be the most important, decided by the people of that municipality through their council. We’ll just compare 2014 to 2017. I think we still have a bit of inflation in costs, so these municipalities are still rising.

The township of North Algona Wilberforce saw their OMPF funding drop from \$552,000 to \$524,800—significant; the town of Arnprior, \$1,147,300 to \$1,115,000—a slight drop but definitely a drop; the town of Deep River, \$642,200 down to \$374,000; the town of Petawawa, from \$954,400 to \$559,400. These drops are significant. The township of Admaston/Bromley saw a drop of over 20%; the township of Head, Clara and Maria, a drop of about 33%; and the township of Laurentian Valley, a drop of about 10%.

These municipalities have their backs to the wall when it comes to trying to fund the projects that are needed in their communities. They’ve been asking for years. In resolutions at AMO and through ROMA, they have been asking for some gas tax fairness.

Thankfully, I can say that our party has supported this in the past. In fact, it was a policy of our party in two provincial elections that gas tax rebates should be shared by all Ontarians.

Would we think of cheating one community over another on health care funding? Would we cheat in one

community or another over educational funding? Would we say, "One student can get money and another one can't"? How can we do that? I understand the rural school issue. I understand that, and that's another battle for another day. But can you pick one student over another and say, "We're going to fund you and not you. Your education is important, but yours is not because you live in rural Ontario," or "Your ability to get to work is not as important as that of someone who lives in the city"?

It is an absolute issue of fundamental fairness. I have no illusions on what the government is going to do with this bill, but the fact that they are doubling that money to communities with a public transportation system is not only unfair, but it is salt in the wound of rural people. When you have gone from not giving them anything at all at one time to now not giving them anything at all but doubling it to the others, that is doubly insulting.

It is something that I would hope that, at some point in this government's life, in its mandate, they'd actually understand: that the people in rural Ontario are just as important as everybody else. It's about time they figured it out.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: This is interesting. This is obviously the eighth time that the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has introduced this bill. In 2005, he actually tried twice to do this. No one can say that he is not resilient and a strong supporter of his community. No one in this House would ever say that about the member.

But I do want to say that the proposed formula that is contained within—and it has been slightly changed in this model. This formula that's contained within Bill 93 has become even more complicated than it was in previous pieces of legislation, and it makes it hard for us to support it.

I do want to make it very clear, though, that New Democrats share the concern of the member and feel very strongly that there are better ways to invest in infrastructure and transit going forward, and that there is an inherent unfairness in the way that our northern and rural communities are funded for infrastructure. We hear this every year at AMO and ROMA. I want to be clear that we understand that the challenges are real.

We also were quite taken aback by the Premier's doubling down on the gas tax in that whole political exchange and tension, if you will, between the provincial level of government and the city of Toronto.

But I just want to take a step back and remind us where we are right now. Two cents from every litre of gas go into a provincial pot of gas tax money—not to be confused with the federal gas tax—and that is distributed by the Ministry of Transportation to 99 of the 444 eligible municipalities. It's roughly \$300 million a year and obviously, somehow, it's going to be doubled. Municipalities are eligible for this type of funding if they have a public transportation system. That is, I think, the main point of contention that the member has already

raised. What the bill says is that it's unfair to exclude the other 345 municipalities from receiving funding, because people in rural Ontario have no choice but to drive. This is a point that has been made by our northern and our rural members as well.

1530

Ultimately, though, the formula that's associated with Bill 93 makes the pot of money smaller for everyone. The member has said that this is an allocation issue; we believe that is true. It is an allocation issue. There is no debating that rural communities need better funding for transit, but taking away funding from other municipalities is not the way to do that. Municipalities who receive this funding have come to rely on it year over year. They are desperate for this funding, and we have heard this time and time again. Taking away a steady stream of funding from municipalities who already don't have much isn't the answer. We see this piece of legislation as not being the solution to what we have as a shared problem in the province of Ontario with regard to infrastructure funding. Taking money away from those municipalities who receive a small pittance of money—some of them—to redistribute it through a convoluted formula isn't the answer.

I was going to talk a little bit about this formula because it is problematic, and it's a bit strange, actually. The government, somehow, will identify a first municipality, which is one of each of the 99 municipalities that currently receives gas tax funding for transit; the bill doesn't say which one. The government then expresses the population of a second municipality that doesn't receive gas tax money as a fraction of the population of the first. The government also expresses the length of highways in the second municipality as a fraction of the length of highways in the first. And then the total gas tax funding for the second municipality is equal to the gas tax funding flowing to the first municipality, times the population factor, times the highway-length factor. This is almost like the federal government putting up a formula for electoral reform. It's an awkward formula. It is awkward. It is not straightforward.

Quite honestly, for us, it doesn't solve the problem of rural and northern municipalities being unfairly underfunded around infrastructure. I think that we do share the concerns of this member. Since the formula introduces this new variable, which has to do with highway length, which is missing from the current municipal gas tax funding formula, and since the government has 99 different first municipalities to choose from, I have no idea how much any second municipality would actually receive under this formula. So while I do appreciate the fact that this member has consistently brought a sense of fairness around the gas tax to the floor of the Legislature, unfortunately, the way that this private member's bill is crafted does not allow us to support it at this time.

But we do want to make it very clear that what really is needed is a reliable and equitable transit and infrastructure funding stream so that all municipalities have access to infrastructure funding. This has been a

consistent ask of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. It comes up consistently, with some passion and some anger, I may add, at ROMA. So we are more than willing to work, on a go-forward perspective, towards a solution, but it does not appear that this government is very interested in listening to that, because the current system is inherently unfair to rural and northern communities.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'm truly delighted to speak to this issue and address some of the concerns that were raised by the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke started off by saying that he wished he did not have to introduce this bill. So I'm here to help you, sir, because I actually have three reasons, three really good reasons—actually, more than three, but I'll stick to three—why you don't need this bill.

The first one is that northern and rural municipalities are already getting funding for roads and bridges. Not only are they already getting funding for roads and bridges, but they're about to get more. We have the Minister of Transportation here, who I'm sure will speak more to that.

The whole issue of whether there is fairness for northern and rural municipalities in Ontario: I'm going to say, "Absolutely," because we currently have what we call the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund, which is for municipal roads and bridges. It stands at \$100 million, but it's going to triple to \$300 million in 2018-19—sorry, it's already at \$200 million and it's going to grow to \$300 million in 2018-19.

Second, we have something called the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund—\$500 million—and guess what, Madam Speaker? The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke should pay attention to this because 90% of the \$500 million goes to northern and rural municipalities, so his first argument that somehow there is unfairness is not true, because clearly there is specific funding for roads and bridges.

The second issue is more interesting: How would you extend this funding? Would you reduce gas tax funding for existing municipalities? Is that what would you would do, or would you raise the gas tax? What would the choice be from the member opposite?

Here's the interesting thing: Every time I turn around in Mississauga now I find his colleagues. Recently, I was with the MPP from Dufferin–Caledon, before that the MPP from Leeds–Grenville, the MPP from Oxford—even the MPP from Huron–Bruce has graced Mississauga with her presence. My question is, would your colleagues come to Mississauga and say, "We're going to take away your gas tax?" The other option is to increase taxes, right? To increase the gas tax.

Here we go. I guess we have the tax-and-spend Tories. The Tories talk about not wanting to tax people, but the reality is that when you look at the thrust of this bill, this

is really a tax that the member opposite obviously loves and wants more of. It's really a case of there not being a tax that this group of Tories doesn't like.

Finally, there is a very simple way for all municipalities and all communities in Ontario to actually access the gas tax, and that is by having public transit. But here's the thing: that public transit can be something as simple as a community bus.

That's three really strong reasons as to why—

Interjection.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: You know, I'm actually solving your problem and answering your question and answering the issue, which is that you wished you didn't have to do this. I'm saying, sir, that it is true that you don't have to do this, because I think you have a mistaken understanding of what is going on.

Finally, I have to agree with the member from Kitchener Centre.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Kitchener–Waterloo.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Kitchener–Waterloo—my apologies. When I look at that funding formula, I have to say to the MPP from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke: How would you even begin to decide what that first municipality is and then what is the second referenced municipality? It just wasn't clear to me. It was a very complex, very complicated formula without a very rational understanding of how he came up with that formula.

Setting aside the issue of the formula, the point is that, yes, northern and rural Ontario need to be treated fairly. That is why we do have funding that is dedicated for roads and bridges. Furthermore, we are actually increasing this funding.

Second is the real question: Would you then advocate that we either take away from a certain community, or would you raise taxes?

I do want to say that I will not be supporting this bill. I hope I've persuaded the MPP, as well, that there is no need for this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I want to remind members: There will be no more shouting out. It's never too late for warnings.

I want to recognize the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Thank you, Speaker. It's quite interesting to hear the minister of seniors talk about her perception of rural Ontario. I guess maybe it's obvious that it's time to leave Mississauga and drive around the countryside. The majority of this great province—we're looking at the majority of this province that has been taxed to death, with very few benefits.

1540

They have taken over the number one industry of this province, agriculture. The agri-food industry, thankfully, has saved this province from bankruptcy. It's unfortunate that I can't really give them all the credit, because this

government actually chased away the manufacturing industry in this province. We see them leaving. When they took over, we were the number one automotive jurisdiction in North America, and those, unfortunately, are days of history.

Rural Ontario has been asked and required throughout this great history of ours to feed this nation, and they've done more than that. They're not only feeding the nation, but they're feeding a good part of the world. They're just asking for some help, because every time they turn around, they are impacted by this government, whether it's windmills and solar farms being shoved down their throats without any input, or the highest hydro rates in this province. I mean, our province's are already the highest on this continent, but theirs are the highest in the province. And yet, that's where the power is being generated. We're being charged huge rates for transmission, but we're transmitting the power from rural Ontario to urban Ontario, and then they're being penalized by being charged twice for it, with the highest transmission rates.

I know that they're finally looking at trying to do something, but in a lot of ways, it's almost getting too late. You've lost the confidence of rural Ontario, because every time they've turned around, they've been kicked in the face by this government.

I sat in municipal politics, where we saw promise after promise come out of this government. In 2006, when I was warden of the counties, the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus took on the government to force them to cancel the cuts to rural Ontario. I sat there, and we asked question after question at a bear-pit session until they finally got embarrassed enough that they cancelled the cuts that year.

But do you know what their answer was? They changed the rules so that it couldn't happen again—that's the activity of this government—so that the next year, you could only ask a question once. Of course, we saw the results of that over the last four years. They've cut the OMPF funding by \$100 million. That's not a little bit; that's a lot.

What did they get for it? We're seeing no help for transit. The gas tax—unfortunately, in rural Ontario, we don't have transit, and there's a good reason for that. You're expecting us to grow food for the planet, so we don't want to see a lot of concrete. But now you're penalizing us by making sure that it's very costly to travel. You're closing down our schools, so we have to travel further. You're closing down our corner stores. And now you're telling us you won't give us any help.

I had one municipality this year close three bridges; they're condemned. They haven't got the money to replace them. Do you know how much money they got last year in infrastructure funding, like every other one of my townships in SD&G? Zero. They got zero. And don't say that they're not in trouble, because their bridges are being condemned. That's the state of rural Ontario. So they're just asked to drive a little further, to drive around the bridges, because we probably don't need them anyway.

You've got to start looking at benefits. We don't have high-speed Internet to the great extent that they have in the urban areas. We don't have cell service. This government has got to wake up; we need these services for technology in agriculture. We need some of these services that are lacking today.

I wish I had more time to speak, but I know there are other people talking.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a pleasure for me to rise today, on behalf of the people I represent in London West, to speak to this private member's bill, the Gasoline Tax Fairness for All Act, which was introduced by the highly respected member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

I want to thank the member for allowing us this opportunity to talk about this vital issue that is so important to the communities that we represent and to the people of this province, and that is public transit.

The member has pointed out the fact that there are many communities across this province that don't get funding for public transportation systems and that need a way to fund the transportation networks that they have in place, much of which relies on automobiles, because they don't have any other options. So he has proposed a formula to help fund that infrastructure that is needed to provide a more coherent transportation network for rural communities in this province.

The formula he has proposed is to divide up that approximately \$300 million that is generated in gas tax funding every year—to divide that up even further to more municipalities across the province. While we certainly support the intent of this bill—we certainly support appropriate, adequate transportation infrastructure in this province—we do have concerns about diluting that funding that is currently available to communities, to municipalities, to fund public transit systems.

I want to talk about my own community of London. London is an urban centre, but it is surrounded by many, many smaller rural communities, all of which do not have public transit systems. So I can sympathize with the member's concerns. However, within southwestern Ontario there has been an emerging realization that inter-city transportation, inter-community bus service, a regional transportation network, is what is needed. The mayors of southwestern Ontario are not advocating for a bigger share of the gas tax in order to fund that—no. They are calling on the government to show leadership in developing an integrated, multi-modal public transportation master plan for southwestern Ontario, in partnership with the government of Canada, with all southwestern Ontario municipalities and with public transportation service providers: VIA, Metrolinx and the Ontario Motor Coach Association that serve the region.

Within southwestern Ontario, we used to have bus service that linked all of these communities, that linked small communities like Thorndale, Lucan, Exeter, Parkhill and Dorchester. All of these small communities

were able to access bus service to come into the city of London to access the services that they needed. However, those bus services became no longer profitable for the operators, and as a result, we have hundreds of what are called ghost routes. Greyhound owns the licences for those ghost routes but is not running buses on those routes because it's simply not profitable.

The Mayors of Southwest Ontario, the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus, many of our municipalities—the city of Oxford and certainly the city of London—have been calling on the government of Ontario to show some leadership in trying to get those ghost routes back into service, to provide that transportation network that is so vitally needed in southwestern Ontario. Not just in my region, of course—every region in this province should benefit from a highly linked, integrated public transportation system.

We certainly support, as I said, the intent of this bill to help fund some of that transportation infrastructure, but the proposed solution that is brought forward in this bill is simply not the answer. We don't want to dilute that \$300 million that's available any further. We need to add to the budget that is available for transportation systems in this province.

The other thing that the southwestern Ontario mayors are advocating for is a mechanism to enable cities to pool their funds together to develop a regional approach. This is something that we have not seen from this government. I know that they've spoken to the Minister of Transportation about the need for this. Municipalities want to work together. They want to have a network transportation system, but at this point, we have not seen the leadership that is necessary from the province to allow that regional transportation structure to be developed and implemented in communities across this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to rise in this House and speak to the bill proposed by the honourable member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Bill 93, the Gasoline Tax Fairness for All Act.

1550

Our government is fully committed to supporting municipalities across the province of Ontario through many programs, including municipal roads and LRTs, etc. Since the year 2004, our government has committed \$3.8 billion in gas tax funding to our municipalities, and for the 2016-17 financial year, we will be providing over \$334 million in gas taxes to 99 municipalities, covering 134 communities across the province of Ontario. Those municipalities are the ones that have a transit system and, in fact, many of them are serving other municipalities, the neighbouring municipalities, as well. These communities, these municipalities, represent more than 90% of the population of the province of Ontario.

We know that those smaller municipalities, which will not be getting the funds through this program, receive funding through similar programs and other programs for their local priorities to be addressed—for example, roads

and bridges and other priorities which each municipality may have.

This gas tax program has been very successful over the years. Just last year, for example, in 2015, in fact, the ridership on public transit within the municipalities increased by 217 million passengers. I think this is a great success of the program. The intention is to persuade people to use public transit as much as they can, and this gas tax policy shows that this is a successful program.

This year, as we all know, this government, under the leadership of Premier Wynne, increased the gas tax transfer from two cents to four cents. So basically, we have doubled the gas tax transfer to our municipalities. This is, in fact, in addition to billions of dollars that we have uploaded to municipalities over the past years since this party was in government. For that reason, I am not in a position to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Madam Speaker, thank you very much for recognizing me. I'm pleased to have this chance to speak in support of Bill 93, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act with respect to matching rebates of gasoline tax that the minister provides to municipalities, which has been moved again by our colleague, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who is nothing if he is not persistent, and he continues to bring this forward in the Legislature—I think eight times now. He's absolutely right to continue to raise this issue.

I remember when it was first brought up, I think around 2003-04. I expected and anticipated that the government would vote against it initially, because their campaign platform in 2003 had been to commit to share gas tax revenues with municipalities with transit systems, and that was their principal argument against the member's bill at the outset. They said, "Well, we didn't promise to share gas tax revenue with the small communities, so we're not going to do it," which was a frivolous argument at the time, but that was their position.

But he continued to raise it, and he's absolutely right to continue to do so. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is certainly, in our caucus, one of our strongest voices, one of our most eloquent, powerful and persuasive speakers. He is smart, dedicated and experienced, and he's one of our caucus leadership team; he's part of the caucus leadership team as chief government whip. I commend his bill to the House and would encourage the government members to listen to him. He's been here for 14 years, Madam Speaker.

I know that we have in our riding a number of infrastructure needs, but I want to highlight one in particular that has been a long-standing issue. In the town of Erin, they need support from the provincial government to create a communal sewer system. They've been working for years on something called the SSMP, the servicing and settlement master plan.

The town of Erin is perhaps the largest southern Ontario community without a communal wastewater system currently. It impacts the town's ability to attract com-

mercial and industrial investment and it is forcing rate-payers to pay increasingly higher taxes. The town simply cannot afford to build the sewer system that it needs without the support of the provincial government.

The town of Erin has an approximate population of about 11,000 people presently; 4,500 people live in the hamlet of Hillsburgh in the former village of Erin. According to reports, the potential capital cost to provide sewer treatment and sanitary services for both Erin and Hillsburgh are estimated to be as high as \$65 million, with annual operating costs close to a million dollars a year.

If the government would adopt Bill 93 as government policy, or pass it at second reading, send it to committee and pass it at third reading, we would see communities like Erin have a predictable and stable revenue stream—

Interjection: They already have.

Mr. Ted Arnott: No, they don't. They don't have enough to fund their infrastructure projects, their basic infrastructure that's needed, like the sewer system that the town of Erin needs, and that's just one example.

I would agree completely with the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke that this is indeed a matter of fundamental fairness, and that the roads and streets are the public transportation system of all the communities in rural Ontario. We need the government to listen to this issue and to respond, and ideally to pass this bill at second reading; allow it to go to committee for further discussion, allow the rural municipalities to come into the Legislature and explain to the government—they need to hear the explanation—the infrastructure needs that exist in rural communities.

Obviously we need to get the government to support this in principle and move it forward. I would hope that the government will finally listen to the voice of rural Ontario and the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, and pass this bill at second reading today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to rise today to speak on Bill 93, because this is a bill that resonates throughout rural Ontario. As the member from Huron–Bruce and on behalf of my 14 rural municipalities, I would like to thank the good member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, because the fact of the matter is that he leads by example for people who stand up for rural Ontario.

Time and time again, it gets so tiring when we have a government that seemingly goes to war against rural Ontario. The list just goes on and on. We could talk about the industrial wind turbines that were forced upon unwilling host communities. We could talk about the closure of rural schools. We could talk about the skyrocketing hydro rates throughout the province that hit rural people particularly hard. We could talk about when we heard a minister toy with the idea of phasing out natural gas for home heating.

Then we could talk about the unfairness that we're focused on today with regard to how this Liberal government seemingly thinks it's okay for people throughout

this province to pay a gas tax, but only 100 municipalities—to be exact, 100 urban municipalities—can benefit from this particular gas tax rebate.

I can tell you: In my riding, the 14 municipalities, which are all rural and do not have any source of public transportation or transit, are up against it very tough. They are realizing the stress associated with the decrease in OMPF funding. They are realizing the stress of a government that is whittling away and eroding the funding that they need to make ends meet in a rural municipality.

The fact of the matter is that they're having enough. They said, "Do you know what? We are done with this tired old Liberal government. We need a fresh start." They need a government in Ontario that they can trust will be a faithful working partner, because I can tell you, I have municipalities in my riding that are saying, "How are we going to do this? How are we going to find the money to repair the bridge we need?" And guess what? Their only option is to close the road, because at the end of the day, they don't have the money because of all the cuts that we're seeing from this Liberal government.

Do you know what's worse, Speaker? I was actually taken aback and very disappointed when, moments ago, a member opposite—when my colleague mentioned that the gas rebate is doubling to municipalities with urban transit, she clapped. She cheered. She applauded, saying, "That's great: double the money coming back to my municipality." Well, Speaker, that is an absolute slap in the face to not only the rural municipalities in my riding, but to every single rural riding in Ontario. That is not acceptable in this House.

We are the party in Ontario that actually gets it. We can appreciate the needs and how we need to grow in urban centres, and we very much appreciate how we need to be moving forward in tandem. Rural Ontario needs to be at the table along with urban Ontario. Otherwise, this province is never going to grow.

1600

So let's get started, Speaker. Let's get started by doing the right thing and support Bill 93 and see all 444 municipalities benefit from the gas tax.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm very happy to have an opportunity this afternoon to speak a little bit about this bill, Bill 93, brought forward by the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

I've had the opportunity for most of the discussion this afternoon to listen very closely, in particular to members of the official opposition. I remember we were here in debate last year on a completely different piece of legislation, and I was listening at that point to members of the NDP caucus speak. At that point, when I spoke, I talked a little bit about their sort of convenient mythology around a particular issue that they were discussing at that time. Listening very closely to members from the PC caucus, I see that that sickness, that disease, that had afflicted members of the third party has now migrated to the official opposition caucus.

In every single community that I visit in this province—as much as I respect the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke because I know he’s an advocate for his community, particularly around issues like four-laning of certain highways, and I had a great meeting with him in his community on this issue—in every community that I visit or every community that I meet with as Minister of Transportation, I am told repeatedly, and have been for nearly three years, that the single most cataclysmic event that was brought to bear against those communities in rural and northern Ontario was the decision of the then-Conservative government to massively download the exact same infrastructure that this member purports to want to support with an expansion of the gas tax program. So I have to say it’s unfortunate that none of the members on that side of the House seem to recall exactly how debilitating that one short-sighted decision was for the communities that they claim they are proud to represent.

A couple of other things I should point out about the gas tax program—and this is really important. The day the Premier and I announced that we would be doubling the gas tax money, I said in my remarks that communities from across Ontario today, 99 communities, from Wawa to Windsor—and then I went on from there. We have communities like Blind River. We have communities like Wawa. We have a bunch of other communities that are similar in size. I think the smallest community, by population, that currently receives gas tax support from the province has a population of less than 3,000 people. The good news about the provincial gas tax program is that there’s no bar to entry based on population size. It simply means that a municipality has to make an investment on its own in what qualifies as public transit. We don’t limit that. The fact that we have 99 communities today that qualify is the single-largest number of eligible communities in the program’s history. That tells me that more and more communities, including in northern and rural Ontario, are actually investing—in some cases in smaller ways, because that’s the capacity they have—in what is deemed to be public transit so that they can get that support. In the case of those even smaller communities, their support from our provincial gas tax program will grow over the next four years.

The other part that I know members on the government side try our best to remind members in the PC caucus in particular about is that it’s not telling the whole story to suggest that, over the last 13 or 14 years, municipalities in rural and northern Ontario have not benefited greatly. Every member on this side of the House knows that since 2003, we have uploaded nearly \$4 billion in costs from communities that were hard hit by a lot of the decisions that were made prior to 2003.

In addition to that, I’ve had the privilege of visiting communities all over the east, the southwest and the north, and we continue to invest in the critical transportation infrastructure they need through programs like the OCIF, which has grown, and not just grown in the total amount that’s provided, but grown in the amount that is provided by formula.

So with all of that, I won’t be supporting this particular legislation, but I look forward—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you.

I will return to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to wrap up.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I won’t name all of the members because there’s so many—I don’t want to take too much time—but thank you to all of the members for responding to me today. I will respond to a couple.

To the minister, I will say this: That community of 3,000 that is receiving some gas tax is so small that—I guarantee you this—the amount of gas tax that is paid out of that community by the gas that they use in order to get to work would dwarf the amount that is being received by them for the public transportation system a hundred times over—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: But they get OCIF.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They get it because they have a small system, but the reality is that only 99 communities in the province get it. If you believe that the gas tax is available to everybody, then give some suggestions as to how they’re going to put a public transportation system in communities of less than 3,000 people.

I say to the minister of seniors, when she talks about this being fair: Are you suggesting that the federal government is entirely wrong to share it with all municipalities? Let’s be clear: The people in rural Ontario pay a vastly disproportionate share of the gas tax that you collect to hand out to other communities. All we’re asking for today—and I say to my friends in the NDP that the formula is not complicated; insert the numbers for population and mileage of roads, and you’ll come up with the number. But let’s be clear: They pay a far greater share of the gas tax; it is only fair that they get some back.

I have no illusions. That’s why I was concerned about introducing the bill. I know where the government stands on this. When they have a chance to stand with rural Ontario or against them, every time that I’ve been here for 13 years—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I need to remind the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke: When I stand, you sit, okay?

The time allocated for private members’ public business has expired.

TAX FAIRNESS
FOR REALTORS ACT, 2017
LOI DE 2017 SUR L’ÉQUITÉ FISCALE
POUR LES COURTIERS
EN VALEURS IMMOBILIÈRES

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will first deal with ballot item number 40, standing in the name of Mr. Smith.

Mr. Smith has moved second reading of Bill 104, An Act to amend the Business Corporations Act and the Real

Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 with respect to personal real estate corporations.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear “carried.”

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I’m going to turn to the member to identify which committee.

Mr. Todd Smith: I’m very pleased to send this bill to general government.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member has asked that the bill go to general government. Agreed? Agreed. Okay. Congratulations.

ONTARIO CRAFT BEER WEEK ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LA SEMAINE DE LA BIÈRE ARTISANALE EN ONTARIO

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Rinaldi has moved second reading of Bill 107, An Act to proclaim Ontario Craft Beer Week.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear “carried.”

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I’ll need to turn to the member to identify which committee.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Speaker, the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills. Agreed? Agreed. I hear “agreed.”

GASOLINE TAX FAIRNESS FOR ALL ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ POUR TOUS À L'ÉGARD DE LA TAXE SUR L'ESSENCE

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Yakabuski has moved second reading of Bill 93, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act with respect to matching rebates of gasoline tax that the Minister provides to municipalities.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed to the motion, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1608 to 1613.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Members, please take your seats.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael	Oosterhoff, Sam
Bailey, Robert	Martow, Gila	Smith, Todd
Barrett, Toby	McDonell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Coe, Lorne	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Fedeli, Victor	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Fife, Catherine	Miller, Paul
Baker, Yvan	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza
Ballard, Chris	Fraser, John	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	French, Jennifer K.	Naidoo-Harris, Indra
Chan, Michael	Hatfield, Percy	Potts, Arthur
Colle, Mike	Hoggarth, Ann	Qaadri, Shafiq
Coteau, Michael	Hoskins, Eric	Rinaldi, Lou
Damerla, Dipika	Hunter, Mitzie	Sattler, Peggy
Del Duca, Steven	Kiwala, Sophie	Tabuns, Peter
Delaney, Bob	Malhi, Harinder	Taylor, Monique
Dhillon, Vic	Mangat, Amrit	Vernie, Daiene
Dickson, Joe	Martins, Cristina	Zimmer, David
Dong, Han	McMahon, Eleanor	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 18; the nays are 41.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negated.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Orders of the day.

Hon. Laura Albanese: I move adjournment of the House.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The motion is already on the floor. I’m sorry.

The minister has moved a motion to adjourn the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The House is adjourned until Monday, March 27, 2017, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1617.

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
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Valerie Quioic Lim, William Short
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

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 Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle 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 of Seniors Affairs / Ministre des Affaires des personnes âgées
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
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	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
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 Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels 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 Minister Responsible for Small Business / Ministre responsable des Petites Entreprises
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Minister Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité
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	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton–Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences
Munro, Julia (PC) Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	York–Simcoe Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	Halton	Minister of the Status of Women / Ministre de la condition féminine Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care / Ministre responsable de la Petite enfance et de la Garde d'enfants
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Attorney General / Procureur général Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP) Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Essex Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
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	
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	Sault Ste. Marie	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Michael Mantha
Bob Delaney, Cheri DiNovo
Joe Dickson, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Michael Mantha
Peter Z. Milczyn, Arthur Potts
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Ann Hoggarth
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Han Dong, Victor Fedeli
Ann Hoggarth, Harinder Malhi
Cristina Martins, Peter Z. Milczyn
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Granville Anderson
Granville Anderson, Yvan Baker
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Nathalie Des Rosiers, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Julia Munro
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Cristina Martins
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
Granville Anderson, James J. Bradley
Wayne Gates, Amrit Mangat
Cristina Martins, Sam Oosterhoff
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
Nathalie Des Rosiers, Jim McDonell
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Monique Taylor, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Robert Bailey, James J. Bradley
Joe Dickson, Sophie Kiwala
Harinder Malhi, Michael Mantha
Monte McNaughton, Laurie Scott
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bob Delaney, Vic Dhillon
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Randy Hillier, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch.

**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: Lou Rinaldi
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Grant Crack
Jennifer K. French, Jack MacLaren
Ted McMeekin, Lou Rinaldi
Mario Sergio, 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
Lorne Coe, Vic Dhillon
John Fraser, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Ted McMeekin
Lou Rinaldi, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch