



No. 61

N° 61

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 41st Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Deuxième session, 41^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 30 March 2017

Jeudi 30 mars 2017

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Todd Decker

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



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
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111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
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Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 30 March 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 30 mars 2017

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFER SCHOOL ZONES ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ACCRUE
DES ZONES D'ÉCOLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 29, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of speed limits in municipalities and other matters / Projet de loi 65, Loi modifiant le Code de la route relativement aux limites de vitesse dans les municipalités et à d'autres questions.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. How are you today? I'm speaking to bill—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): One moment, please, the member from Niagara Falls.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In that rotation, we're talking about leadoff. So I need a member to stand down their lead.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): They've already stood it down? Oh, it's your lead. My apologies. I just wanted to make sure there was clarity.

The opposition has stood down their lead and now we move to the lead of the third party. The member from Niagara Falls. My apologies.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I was kind of hoping you'd let the clock run for that five minutes. You've got to sit back and relax this morning; I'm doing this for an hour on a bill that's about three pages. It's always interesting when you try to talk to a bill that's only three pages, but I'm going to do the best I can.

I'm going to start by talking about what the Minister of Transportation talked about earlier in his one-hour lead on what the bill is really about. It says that it stressed that through legislation, automatic speed enforcement or photo radar will not be implemented on provincial highways. I noticed the critic from the PCs talked about that extensively, but I think it's pretty clear that it's saying photo radar is not coming back to the province of Ontario. I think it's important to get that out before I get

into it. That's the first part of the bill that I think the minister clarified.

The second element is reducing default speed limits, regarding what municipalities will have the power to deal with. Again, this is empowering municipalities, enabling them to give them the tools to make decisions for themselves and their residents when it comes to default speed limits. I think that's important in the province of Ontario. If you don't see the speed limit, it's usually 50. I found that out myself when I was driving in St. Catharines after an IceDogs game and I went through an area where they said I was going more than 50. I was surprised by that. As a matter of fact, I think they said 72. I tried to argue there was no speed limit, no signs, no nothing, and I found out—this is going back years ago—that it's 50 if it's not posted. So he clarified that.

The third element deals with the red light camera program, a program that existed for some time in the province of Ontario. It provides municipalities—and again, we're talking about municipalities with the opportunity to gain access and entry into the program. It smoothes out that transition or smoothes out its efficiency, making it easier to gain entry into the program.

Many of you may know, or many of you may have heard me talk about it in this chamber, that before I came here as an MPP and got elected in a by-election in my wonderful riding of Niagara Falls, Fort Erie, Ridgeway, Stevensville, Crystal Beach, I was a—

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Great riding.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It is, yes. I see a member from Niagara is here as well. It is a great riding. I encourage all my colleagues to come to Niagara all the time. There's just so much to do down there.

I was a city councillor, and it certainly was an issue that was important to our council around school zones and safety school zones. As I get into my speech, I will talk about that further. I'll really get into the formal part of the speech. I'm probably going to get off and on, where I'm going to go here.

I think it's important to realize that your municipalities right across the province of Ontario realize how important it is for school safety zones. We have had some young people who have been seriously injured and some even killed in school zones.

Last week, I probably saw it first-hand as a Catholic school board was locked out by the board. Those teachers and supporters had a picket line in front of the school in one of the safety school zones, in the school where they were picketing in Niagara, down on Kalar Road. What was interesting to me is how important those safety zones are. Kids were trying to get into school with their parents,

but when you saw the congestion that can occur, we were lucky, quite frankly, that one of the teachers—by the way, I want to state for the record that the lockout has ended. The agreement has been ratified by 99.2%, I think it was, which is extremely high. I've done a lot of bargaining in my day, and I don't recall having a 99.2% ratification. Obviously, that bargaining committee did a good job.

The fear on the teachers' faces in the school safety zone, with the number of cars that were trying to drive through and maybe going faster than they probably should have been—it was really scary. This type of thing is something that we really need. We didn't have any instance on the picket line.

I want to, on the record—and I think I want to say to the Minister of Education, who participated in getting those teachers back to work, and to the teachers themselves—I'm married to a teacher, and I think I've said that before. She became a principal, so she would have been on the other side. I think probably the biggest mistake that was ever made in education was when you took the principals out of the bargaining unit. I think that was the biggest mistake that was ever made, because I think it has caused some real problems in the school system.

But I want to congratulate the teachers. The fear on their faces—they just want to teach the kids. I think we all agree with that. This is another thing: They wanted to come to school; they wanted to be safe. I could see the shock on their faces, from some of the things that the parents were saying to the teachers and some of the hand gestures they were using. It hurt, quite frankly; it hurt the teachers. I'm glad that they're back, because the longer a lockout goes, the more problems it creates. I just want to congratulate the bargaining committee.

I do want to thank the minister for getting involved. I did raise that in the House.

We don't need lockouts in the province of Ontario to get a message across. This one here was just over grievances, and I just think that it was an unnecessary lockout that caused some real concerns around safety for our kids, for our parents and for the teachers. I would encourage all school boards in the future to do everything they can not to lock out teachers.

What happened is, the teachers that were there on Friday, that the parents loved and admired, and who took care of the kids in the classroom, were being sworn at, were given hand gestures that weren't very complimentary, and it hurt. It really hurt the teachers. I can't emphasize that enough. The looks on their faces when they saw that—they were surprised; they were dumbfounded.

But the good news is that that part of a bad history in the province of Ontario is over. They're back; they ratified the agreement. The parents are happy, the kids are happy, and the teachers are happy. So I wanted to congratulate the bargaining committee on that before I get into this.

0910

First of all—I know I'm about seven minutes in, and I'm not sure what I'm going to say here—but at the end

of the day, I want to thank you for allowing me to rise and speak today on Bill 65, the Safer School Zones Act. This issue may not be the first thing that people think about when it comes to laws they'd like to see passed in Ontario, but honestly, it's pretty important. Our children are the most important resource in Ontario. Making sure they are protected is something we should all take very seriously, and I'm happy to be able to speak here today.

I just want to say to our pages who are here today—they are our future. They're being educated in our school system, and the most important thing for all the 107 MPPs who are here today is your safety and making sure you can get to school, and that you can get there safely and go get an education. As us old guys move on, you're the next generation, our future. This bill is very important, and I'm glad the pages are here and they can at least listen to what some of the people are going to say today. So I wanted to say to the pages that this is a bill that's really about them.

Let me begin by discussing a report I read from Safe Kids Canada. In their paper, they reported that, "Child pedestrian injuries are a leading cause"—and this is surprising—"of injury-related deaths for Canadian children aged 14 and younger." At the time the report was written, "On average"—on average—"30 child pedestrians younger than 14 years are killed and 2,412 are injured every year." I found that startling, quite frankly. It's a very, very high number. Just to give you more context, "Children aged 10 to 14 years have the highest risk of pedestrian injuries and deaths"—the highest risk. I want you to think about that stat. I just spoke about the danger that young kids, especially aged 10 to 14—and that's around the age our pages are—are being put in. The second you hear something like that you know we have to act.

Madam Speaker, this report was a little older, but to be honest I wouldn't be shocked if those numbers weren't much different today. There hasn't been a lot of legislation dealing with the issue of protecting young children who are walking to and from school with their friends and with cellphones and all the other stuff that they now have today that I didn't have when I was a kid—I certainly didn't have the resources to have a cellphone or that kind of stuff, but it's distracting them for sure.

I think one of the reasons we're seeing this come from municipalities is because they're seeing this first-hand, quite frankly, and they're terrified. Municipal leaders are terrified of what they're seeing around school zones. Madam Speaker, while speeding is not the only issue here, certainly one of the biggest issues when it comes to children getting hurt when they are walking is the speed of the driver.

To quote that same report, "As the vehicle's speed increases, so does the force of these impacts." That makes sense: If it's going quicker, the impact is going to be a lot harder. "At high speeds, the increased momentum forces the legs to rotate above the head before falling back onto the hood, and at even greater speeds, the child somersaults into the windshield or roof."

That quote is why speeding laws exist in school areas. Just the thought of that happening to a child and reading that description is enough to break your heart, particularly if it's one of your loved ones or a friend of a loved one.

Madam Speaker, when a child is hurt in a school zone it's not just the parents who are hurt—and this may be a little bit more about what I just touched on, but I just spent a week with teachers who were locked out in Niagara. The entire time I walked the picket line with them, it was clear to me that they love their children and just want to be back in the classroom. They want to be back in the classroom, safe. Thanks to the incredible work of their collective bargaining team and the tireless work of their executive, they're back in their school. I've already thanked the minister for getting involved in that particular terrible situation. But one thing that made clear to me, time and time again on those picket lines, was that they love their students. When kids are hurt, the families are hurt and so are the teachers.

I have said this before, but my wife was a principal. She worked in the school system her whole adult life. My two daughters both also work in the Catholic school system, so I'm surrounded by education. I wish they'd taught me how to say the English language a little better. They should have spent more time teaching me instead of other kids.

I can't imagine how much the injury of one of their students would affect them. It's terrible to even think about. Then, of course, there's the community. We're all leaders in our respective communities, and we know how much it hurts a community when a child is hurt or, even worse, when a child is killed.

Just recently, a young teenage girl was killed by a drunk driver in Niagara Falls, a teenage girl who worked at the local Tim Hortons. She had a heart of gold and was doing work in third-world countries building schools and community centres. She had her whole life ahead of her. She was loved by everyone who knew her. Her life was taken from her, and it broke the hearts of the entire community.

I'm just going to say a little bit about her. I never knew her. I went to her place of employment, Tim Hortons, and talked to the owner of the Tim Hortons, a local guy who treats his employees extremely well. He was devastated, to the point that he was crying when he was talking to me.

This is what the young girl did. They went out on a Friday night, which they had done before. They went out with their friends. Do you know what they did? They did what we tell all our kids to do: "Get a cab or ask me or your mom to drive you." So they got a cab, and they went out for a good time, like a lot of our sons and daughters do almost regularly on a Friday or Saturday night. Unfortunately for them, a drunk driver, just before 11 o'clock on a Friday night, went through a stop sign and killed her and injured other people in the car.

That affects the entire community. That's why we've got to talk about safety in schools and talk about drunk

driving. I'll talk a little bit about texting and stuff, as I get into this. But I think it's so important to continue to talk about how this happens in community after community after community in the province of Ontario with drunk driving.

I've told this story before: My wife's life was changed forever because of a drunk driver. Coming home from school—she was working in Fonthill—on the way home on Lundy's Lane, a local street, at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, and a drunk driver hit my wife. It's going on all the time in the province of Ontario. It's why, collectively—and I know everybody here is listening. I know the kids are listening. It's why we have to talk about safety all the time. We have to talk to people to know that they have a responsibility, when they get behind the wheel of a car, not to speed, not to text, and not to drink and drive. If you are going to drink and drive—or if you're going to drink—sorry; I apologize for that. If you are drinking, don't get behind the wheel. Call a friend. Call a cab. Anyway, I had to say that for that young girl who passed away and for her friends and her schoolmates.

We have families, the teachers and the community: three big reasons why this is an issue important for us to talk about and to pass legislation to ensure our children are getting the protection they need and they deserve.

0920

We know that reducing vehicle speed has been proven to save lives, in this case, the lives of children and workers in the school zone. We know we have to get speed limits down in school zones, but we also have to make sure they are enforced.

I know that the Liberal government is intent on closing down as many schools as they can—I just wanted to make sure you guys are listening—but there are still a lot of school zones in Ontario. Municipalities simply cannot afford enough police officers to monitor them all and ensure that no one is speeding. I think every budget, when I was on city council—I know there's a lot of city councillors here. I know there are some that came from being a trustee.

Municipalities are hurting. School budgets are certainly a big part of that. Why someone would speed in a school zone is beyond me. The terrifying fact is that it happens, particularly in an area where a school is on a street where it's a long way where there are no stop signs and there are no lights.

Madam Speaker, I believe that when the minister is setting out to answer, with Bill 65—certainly, over the next hour, I'm going to go over some of the aspects of this bill that I think are helpful and some of the aspects of this bill that I think miss the mark entirely.

As always, I think there is quite a bit of language in here that can be clarified, and I'm hoping that we can get that done in committee. I think there are some serious issues that need to be clarified before the bill is passed. Some of these changes have serious consequences, and it's important that we get the full details on what these plans would look like before we move forward.

Madam Speaker, there are quite a few major details missing from this bill. I will give you an example. Has the government been able to answer why this could be allowed around the clock, or should it only be for times when the school is in session? A question of that nature needs to be answered by this government. It also needs input from the community and surrounding schools. Some of that reason is that there are a lot of kids in the school zones. The school that I was talking about, on the picket line—there are actually four schools within a very small period of time—which means there are a lot of kids in that particular school area, not just there at school time but after school. It's a debate that I think the community should have with the surrounding school.

I would like to see some outreach to those communities to see what they feel, and have those opinions brought to the committee, and hopefully some changes made to the bill.

I have another issue when it comes to enforcement of this. For example, what happens when someone has borrowed someone else's car, or they are the ones that get caught speeding through the school zone? Does the punishment fall on the owner of the car or the actual driver? That can apply to anyone who loans out their car to someone or even to a parent who lends it to their teenage son or daughter. This should be a concern because I have seen another place in the province of Ontario where this is a problem, on the 407. I mean, there's a laundry list of problems I could list on the 407. I would probably be here all day.

The PC members are talking about unpopular decisions, but they are responsible for the granddaddy of all unpopular decisions: selling out the 407 to a private company. The 407—and this is important. This is important: The 407 doesn't care who is driving the car. It just snaps the picture, a shot of your plate, and sends you the bill. I will talk about the plates. We have to fix the plates in the province of Ontario. They're peeling off. We've got lots of problems with the plates. That's a whole other issue. I had somebody tell me, even on the 407, they took a picture of the licence plate, got it wrong because of it peeling off, and sent the bill to a buddy of mine who has never been on the 407. But he had to pay the bill. It's kind of a crazy thing that goes on with the 407.

If the bill never arrives or for some reason is lost, suddenly charges start to go higher and higher, and the owner of the car sometimes doesn't find out for years. We've had a lot of cases around that with the 407.

In this case, it's worse than driving on the 407; it's about putting our children's safety at risk. I think the person who puts their safety at risk is the one who should be held liable.

Mr. James J. Bradley: Wayne, here's my bill.

Mr. Wayne Gates: He wasn't kidding. This is his bill. James Bradley's bill: \$46.87.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Anyway, I'm getting stuff from the other member's 407 bill.

To his point—and I don't mind saying this—can you imagine paying \$47 to drive from the start of the 407 to Oshawa? It's absolutely ludicrous. A private company is ripping off everybody who drives on the 407. If it would have been kept in public hands, we wouldn't be going through that today. I agree 100% with that. I spoke on that long before I got this job.

In this case—I think I'm repeating this—there is one who needs to learn what they are doing wrong, and that's the one who has to change their behaviour. That becomes a lot more complicated and isn't touched on in this bill. I'd like to see that issue so we can get a proper response on how we can make sure that the people who commit the crime are the ones who face the punishment and ultimately are the ones who change their habits. That's the key. We can hand out all the fines we want, but we have to find a way for them to change their habits, particularly in school zones.

Madam Speaker, you can look back at my discussions when we were talking about Bill 31 in 2014, 2015, and they won't change today. I believe you always have to put safety first. I did that in my work life, long before I came here. Worker safety was important to me, as well.

I know the minister will say that Ontario's roads are among the safest in North America. I've heard that a lot, by the way. He answers a lot of those questions that way. But that's not good enough. We can always do better. I believe, as members of this Legislature, we have the responsibility to do better. We can sit here and brag about safety standards, or we can pledge to keep trying to do even better. I think that's fair, I think that's reasonable, and I believe that's our obligation.

When it comes to issues of safety, I'm always glad to work with my fellow members to make sure our children are safe here in Ontario and whenever they are on or near a road or a highway.

I wish this bill talked about safety beyond just school zones. Since I've been here and certainly since I've been transportation critic, we've worked very hard to make Ontario roads safer. These decisions are a good way to protect kids in school zones. But my dream for Ontario is one where kids are protected anytime they're near a road, not just in school zones. It makes no sense to me that kids can be safe at school and then they can get in a car and be at risk of being injured by something like a truck that hasn't been properly inspected.

Madam Speaker, a little off the subject—it's not in my notes here: Just last week, they did a blitz on inspecting trucks in the province of Ontario. They grabbed 20 trucks. Can anybody guess how many they pulled off the road? What would be fair and reasonable to think? Hopefully, none? Maybe one or two? Out of the 20 trucks they inspected last week, 13 were pulled off the road for not being safe.

I know the minister is not here today. I know he's very busy, and I understand that. We can't be here all the time. That's just the way it works in this place.

That was startling to me when I heard it on the radio last week: 13 out of 20 trucks were unsafe and pulled off

the road. So I hope the minister goes to Hansard tomorrow and maybe gets involved and takes a look at that.

There have been lots of discussions around this before, and I believe there are ways to expand these discussions. I believe that if the Liberal government is serious about road safety, they can include some of those discussions in this bill; in particular, the example I just gave you.

0930

During the Minister of Transportation's lead on this bill, he also discussed Bill 31 and linked the two together. I think that's fair as these are both bills that fall under the ministry and deal with issues like speeding. I know that Bill 31 also dealt with issues like distracted drivers. I think one of the major concerns about Bill 65—yes, the bill has provisions in place to catch those who speed in school zones, but I'm worried that it doesn't properly touch on distracted driving in school zones and right across Ontario.

I've said it before, and I'm going to say it again: Distracted driving is one of the most dangerous things occurring on our roads today—the most dangerous. I told the story about drunk driving; this is even more dangerous. As far as is I know, the stats still prove that to be the case. It's terrible what's occurring out there. What's scary is that it's mostly affecting our young people, our future. Young people see the light flashing on their phones and think that they'll just take a look for a second to read the message and it won't do any harm. A lot of the time, they manage to get away with it. When they don't, things go very bad, and very bad quickly. When it comes to issues around school zones, you might actually be able to fool the camera. You could be driving through a school zone at the speed limit, but if someone is reading their phone at that exact same time, there is a risk of hurting a child, and traffic cameras may not be designed to catch them. So we need to address that in a way that cameras can't.

I know that, during the debate on Bill 31, we ultimately ended up raising the fines for those caught driving while distracted. I believe that was important and will help reduce distracted driving on our roads, but it can't end that conversation. If we truly want to make roads safe for our children, we have to continue that conversation and remove distracted driving from our roadways.

I believe one of the best ways to do this, quite frankly, is through education. I've used examples before, but I think a good example, and one that's worth returning to, is the example of seat belts. I think we can all remember that. I think we've all gone through that seat belt age. Parents and grandparents from my generation understand this. Back in the 1970s and 1980s, seat belts were not as popular then as they are today. Back then, you used to see people travelling without seat belts all the time. Yes, they were told how much safer they were with seat belts on, but it wasn't the norm. We didn't wear them.

Well, you see what an education campaign can do. If you get in your car with your kids today, the same kids going to those schools who we're trying to protect, the first thing they do is put a seat belt on. It's a habit for

them; it's like second nature. I'm going to use an example of this. I've said this before in the House. I have five wonderful grandchildren—Prescila, Parker, Tatum, Tanner and Charlotte—and they all help each other put their seat belts on. I watch when they get in the car, and they will say to me, "Grandpa, my seat belt is not on right now. Don't move yet until my seat belt is on." The kids, do you know how old they are? They're 10, 11, eight and six. So think about that. That generation knows that the minute they get in the car, they have got to put seat belts on. And how did they get there? People in this room, when we were that age, didn't wear seat belts. We didn't want to wear our seat belts. We thought the government was telling us what to do. We didn't believe the safety facts. But we got educated. It was proven to us that seat belts save lives, and we passed that on to the next generation.

The next fight for seat belts is never going to happen. We're never going to have to fight about telling our kids to put seat belts on. I don't even know if this is legal. Ask the pages. Do you guys all wear your seat belts? Put your hands up. Yeah, see? All our pages wear their seat belts. I think that's important: Because of the education, they know they are safer when they get in a car and they do it without parents telling them. It's second nature. Education works.

I believe we have an opportunity and a responsibility to do that when it comes to distracted driving. When we discuss a bill like Bill 65, I would like to see us discussing education around distracted driving. Madam Speaker, we know that more people are getting injured in Ontario today from distracted driving than from drunk driving. I've already told you that—it's not fair to say I told you, but I certainly raised it. It can happen at any time of the day with any sort of driving in any place.

We must protect school zones. We must protect our roads and our highways. Right now, the best way to protect all of those things is to wage a war against distracted driving and try to eliminate it from our roads. I think that is an obligation that all of us who are elected, all 107 of us, have around this thing, and we should do it, collectively, together.

I understand that people are busy or they have messages that they must read, but we have to convince them to pull over. If we can talk about an education program that helps us defeat distracted driving, then we could make roads safer for every resident of Ontario, including our children and our grandchildren.

That's what I want to say on that bit right there, but I think there are other comments that the minister made that we can draw on. I know many members of this House have put forward bills that make sense and make our roads safer, but the minister doesn't seem to want to enact those bills. One of the first examples that comes to mind is a left-hand turn bill I put forward in the last session.

Madam Speaker, I would like you to listen to this, especially the next few paragraphs. I had the chance to speak to BRO this weekend. That's the Bikers Rights Organization; that's where the name "BRO" comes from.

We had a good discussion about road safety and ways to make our roads safer in Ontario.

I know that it might catch some people by surprise that bikers would be willing to sit down and have a discussion about road safety, but you should give them more credit, quite frankly. I worked with some of the BRO members in the General Motors plant, like my good friend Brian. Yes, they wear their jackets, they have long hair, but they care about road safety. We had an excellent conversation on Saturday morning about the need for them to drive down the HOV lanes as a single rider on a motorcycle. I know that's an issue for another day, but it's worth getting out there because it's a good idea, and it's one I support to keep bikers safe on our roads, but also to cut down on accidents.

Gerry Rhodes, who has reached out to our office many times, has been a big advocate of a bill we worked on to amend the Highway Traffic Act when it comes to harm caused by people making illegal left turns. This was shocking to me when I got involved with it.

I don't think those who are part of a certain motorcycle club don't think about children's safety. They are constantly raising money for good organizations that help out in their community. Last year, that club raised \$200,000 for charities, and we all know that charities all need help. It doesn't matter where it is. Lions Club, Boys and Girls Club—it doesn't matter what club it is; they all need help, and they were out there doing that.

0940

Madam Speaker, if the minister was serious about keeping our roads safe, why do we not support my bill to update the Highway Traffic Act? Right now, in the province of Ontario—and I don't know how many people are here on a Thursday afternoon. Actually, Thursday afternoon is probably one of the times that I really enjoy my job. It really is a good time to listen to everybody on bringing forward bills. Right now, in the province of Ontario, people are being killed when a driver isn't paying attention and he makes an illegal left turn. He's violating the Highway Traffic Act. Because of an oversight in the Highway Traffic Act—listen to this, Madam Speaker, because I was shocked at this—the maximum charge for killing a person or a family because of this—think about this—is \$500. On Bill 31, we spoke about the need to make sure that the penalty fits the crime, and raised the rates on distracted driving to deter people from doing it. Yet the government did not support doing this same thing when it came to this oversight on left-hand turns.

During the minister's lead, he talked about making our roads safer. Bill 65 can be part of other steps the minister could take to keep people safe.

Addressing the left-turn issue is important. I'm going to tell another story from my riding. Last Friday, I had a meeting with a young girl: 21 years old, goes to Niagara College, and works in the restaurant there to help put herself through school. Her mom was driving down the street in Niagara Falls, down by a place called Lococo's, a very popular place to go get groceries. A car came over

the bridge, her mom came over the bridge, and somebody made an illegal left turn and killed her mom.

She came in to see me, to see if there is anything she can do. She did a statement in court on the effects that it had on her. Her mom was 42 years old, by the way. Like that, she was never going to be able to see her mom again; never going to be able to say to her mom, "I love you." Her mom is never going to say that. This was a young girl who came and saw me, and she's hurting. Do you know what she wanted to do? She wanted to do something for her mom so that it doesn't happen to any other mom in the province of Ontario.

I'm going to work with her, just like I'm working with BRO and I'm working with this government. I talked to one of the members yesterday—who lost her husband, by the way. An OPP officer, the same thing: on a motorcycle and got killed on a left turn. She brought a bill forward. That bill has to get passed.

Nobody should be able to kill anybody in the province of Ontario by breaking the law, and get a fine of \$500. I know that's off the bill, but it's all about road safety. That left turn, by the way, could happen right in front of a school. And if it happened and killed one of our kids—a \$500 fine. We've got to fix that. We've got an obligation collectively, all three parties here, to work on that bill and get it passed while we're sitting here, in the next year. It's a real thing that's happening in our communities, and a real issue that we can address today to help protect drivers on our roads.

Madam Speaker, as you may realize, this bill is not lengthy, but it does change a few things. I've seen that part of this bill does change the Highway Traffic Act to allow municipalities to set default speed limits in designated areas, instead of being forced to use the province's 50-kilometre speed limit.

As many of you know, I served as a city councillor before I came here. It was a council that functioned very well and one that I was proud to serve. So I understand the reasoning behind this bill. If I understand the reason behind this bill, it's to say that local towns and cities know their roads better than we do, and I agree with that. They understand that one size doesn't fit all and that when it comes to road safety, there can be local solutions they offer that are better than the ones legislated at the provincial level.

Madam Speaker, whether it's above or below the provincial speed limit of 50 kilometres, we depend on the local municipality and its elected members. I think that's very important. Local decisions must be listened to. Local government is the level of government that is most connected to its residents and on the front lines, so to speak. When they feel that an area of their town or their city maybe falls under the 50 kilometres, they should be able to decide what they want to do with that. So that's part—if I understand it properly, I can certainly get behind that. I think the minister is right on this one.

We have been debating Bill 65 for a number of hours now; I think we're at six or seven hours, whatever it is. There's been a lot said on the bill. There have been a lot

of things, like the need to increase road safety and putting children first, that I absolutely agree with.

There have also been some comments that have raised some eyebrows or that left out certain details. I'm glad my colleague from the PCs is here. I found the hour lead presented by my colleague in the PC Party to be very interesting. He spent a good portion of it attacking the NDP and attacking the minister's plan in this to introduce photo radar abilities in certain areas of the municipality. He neglected to mention that the entire reason we're having this debate is because the mayor of Toronto has personally asked the Premier for permission to use cameras in school zones. In case the member forgot, he actually ran in the 2007 election for the Progressive Conservative Party when that same mayor was leader of the Ontario PC Party. I believe—and I may be wrong, unless he's changed their name—he was leader of the Ontario PC Party, that member's party.

Even today, the current leader of the PC Party doesn't seem to have an issue with the use of these cameras, despite whatever name the minister is giving them. So it's a little unclear, because he says it's a cash grab, and that any party that has ever toyed with the idea of using those cameras is looking at nothing but a cash grab. Does he believe that applies to both his former party leader and his current leader?

The member spent a considerable amount of time going over the history of the legislation around this topic, and the portion that was missing. So I thought it would be fair—I wanted to make sure the whole story was told. I think that's fair. I wanted to make sure he knew this was an ask coming from the same man who was the leader of his party and who ran in the 2007 election, and that's the mayor of Toronto, John Tory, who is extremely popular, quite frankly, in Toronto.

This starts to get to one of the core issues that I believe was unveiled during this debate, and that is the question of why municipalities feel they need to go down this route. I sat at city council. I listened to the debate around school safety zones and why we have them in Niagara Falls—by the way, at the very school where the lockout occurred last week, where I said there are four schools in a very small area. We have that today. We passed that while I was sitting on city council, long before I got here. Well, not “long” before I got here. I haven't been here that long; I've only been here four years, but before that.

This starts to get to the core issue that I believe was unveiled during this debate on why municipalities should do this. I truly believe the first and foremost reason is safety in school zones. I will repeat that: I believe that municipal politicians who are pushing for this are truly putting the safety of children first, right across the province of Ontario.

We are not the only ones who care about our communities. Elected leaders, city councillors and mayors care deeply about their communities, but I can tell you, they care deeply about the kids in their communities as well. That's a notion I can get behind and I absolutely support.

I think it's ridiculous that anyone in the province of Ontario would ever need to worry about their children's

safety when they're going back and forth to school. If this is an effort to make sure parents know their children are safe, then I absolutely support that.

But there is a second part to the debate that comes up, and that's the funds for municipalities. Make no mistake about it, Madam Speaker: When drivers get these tickets, that's funding that will go to the municipality in one way or another. That part's true. I wish that didn't have to be the issue, but honestly, that's very important to cities and towns across the province.

0950

Madam Speaker, we saw this issue in a great toll debate in Toronto just in the last little while. A city needed funding, and they turned to traffic to see what ways they could use to get this funding. In this case, municipalities cannot afford to hire police officers to be at every school zone with a radar gun, so instead they opt to do this.

But the debate about municipal funding leaks into Bill 65 because towns and cities are struggling to find money to pay for their services. I think we can all agree to that. You hear it all the time; you read it in the paper all the time. So I found it interesting that the PC Party calls photo radar a cash grab, and then doesn't ask why municipalities may need cash to begin with.

I think this is important to this debate. Perhaps they can look at all the funding they slashed to our towns and cities, funding cuts that hollowed out our health care and ended services like mental health—services which our communities desperately need now. I spoke to this this week on another bill; I did.

The PC legacy—they left communities—this is true. I sat at council; I know. They can debate it all they want, they can say whatever they want; they did it. They left communities scrambling to find resources and trying to find ways to raise revenue. The sad part is, my colleagues of the Liberal Party did the same thing. People who need services like health care and access to mental health, good roads and sidewalks, can't have those things anymore. Why? Because we have governments that could offer tax breaks to the richest corporations operating in Ontario. They gave up on people suffering with mental health issues to pad the pockets of their friends and donors.

I think that's wrong. I'm sorry, I think it's wrong. I think we should take care of our communities. I think we should take care of our mental health. I met with a mental health group this week here at Queen's Park. One in five have mental health issues, and we are not putting the resources in to help them.

Here's what's sad. We're talking about school safety today. We're talking about our kids. I think it's fair, in my humble opinion, to raise mental health issues around our young people—our young people who need help, who need more guidance counsellors in their schools.

The fastest growing area of mental health issues in the province of Ontario is young people aged 14 to 21. Do you know what young people are doing today? I think it's important to say it here: They are committing suicide.

We are not getting to them because we don't have the resources to get to them early enough, to help them. They're crying out for help and they can't get it. The only end result is they commit suicide.

I talked to the teachers yesterday. They were talking to me about abuse in the school system and what they're facing every day, but then they talked about the kids, because teachers love those kids. It tears that entire community and that whole entire school when one kid commits suicide because of mental health issues.

Quite frankly, we've got to do more. We've got an obligation to do more. I know every one of my colleagues here, 107 in here, want to do more, and we have to do more on mental health. It was raised to me by the teachers this week. We're talking about kids; that's another one.

When you're discussing Bill 65 and you're hammering towns and cities that explored these operations as people just looking for a cash grab, maybe you should ask yourself why they need to raise funds—though I mentioned I absolutely do not believe this was a priority of this bill or the first thought. I truly believe they are trying to look out for our kids, and I thank them for that. I still have a lot of grandkids who go to school.

My Jacqueline—I'd better mention her name. I have mentioned her name. Jacqueline is at Brock University, a great university down in Niagara. She's in second year taking health science. She's finished in about a month. I will say I'm extremely happy. She's been living in downtown St. Catharines while she went to school to get that experience. I know what experience she's talking about, but she's downtown. The thing is, she's coming home at the end of April and she'll be with us. She's not going to go back; she's going to stay with us for the next three or four years as she goes to Brock. I'm thrilled to death that my daughter Jacqueline is going to be back home. I'll get to see her a lot more, so I'm pleased about that.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Hear, hear.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you very much. I'm excited, just like any other parent would be.

There's another issue at stake when the opposition calls this a cash grab, and it has to do with the tools that municipalities have available. They simply can't do anything if their tax base is shrinking instead of growing. You don't want cameras; you want to hire more police officers to monitor these areas. That's fine, but make sure the cities and towns can afford to do that. They simply can't hire officers if they don't have the money.

I'm going to use an example. I used it earlier this week, and I think it's important that I do it. Down in Niagara, we're fighting right now and discussing with the Liberal government about how to protect 1,400 jobs at the casino in Niagara Falls. I know that the Minister of Finance has heard me loud and clear on this issue and I know that my colleague from St. Catharines, Mr. Bradley, has heard me. But it goes to the heart of what I'm talking about: funding for municipalities. That's 1,400 families—good people who work hard to make a living. When you look at that—because I came out of the auto

sector, as everybody knows. The auto sector says that when you have an auto job, it's another seven, eight or nine—you can argue what it is—spin-off jobs. Well, the casino is the same way. If 1,400 people are losing their jobs—the spin-off to that is probably four jobs, so now we're looking at a total of about 6,500 families that could be affected down in Niagara. Trust me: Working at a casino isn't easy work, but they do it, and they do it extremely well.

We need to protect those jobs because that's part of the tax base. That's why municipalities are coming to us for help. We need policies that bring more jobs into our ridings because it protects the tax base that they use to hire police officers. So you see the connection: jobs, taxes, municipalities and how they are able to spend their money. The more job losses, the less municipalities and regions have, which means they are going to need more cameras to try to do the work. We all know the work isn't the same and that a camera can never replace a police officer.

I want to say to our police officers, who do an incredible job every single day risking their lives on our behalf—I want to say thank you to them and thank you to their partners that support them to have that role in life. It's not easy knowing that your husband may not come home that day when he's going to perform his job. So, to the police officers in the province of Ontario, I want to say, "Thank you for the role that you play in Ontario."

Municipalities feel they have no choice. So when we are here defending jobs like the 1,400 casino workers or the 1,000 jobs at the Fort Erie Race Track, that's why it's important for municipalities. Discussions like these are the result of people being out of work. Think about it: They're out of work; they can't own a home or they can't pay taxes, so the city loses that tax revenue. Then they come up with strategies to replace services like police officers and firefighters when they can't afford them. We should never, ever be cutting back on police officers and, certainly never, ever cutting back on firefighters. So they come up with other ideas to help pay for these services. The camera idea is one, and they're using it here to make sure our kids are safe. That's how the cycle works, and that's why fighting for jobs is important.

I think it's important to remember that these requests came from the municipalities themselves. Municipalities like Niagara Falls, like my good mayor Jim Diodati and his council, came to the province of Ontario and said, "We need help. We're having people getting injured. We're having young people, young kids, getting injured in school zones." We did what we could. When I was on council, I told you, we already made a safe school zone. Fifty kilometres was the speed limit that was in the school zone. But they were still having accidents, still having young people get hurt, so they came to the province of Ontario and put a bill together to support municipalities. We have to support our municipalities.

To be honest, the kind of support that the former leader of the PC party is now asking for, the ability to use cameras, would help raise funds because his municipality

in Toronto needs more funding from the province—the same funding that they cut when they were in power. Remember, we had the 50-50 split. I remember this like it was yesterday. We had a 50-50 split, and he took it away. They downloaded it back onto municipalities, who didn't have the resources at the time. Then we ended up having a crisis in long-term care. We had a crisis in affordable housing. We had all these things that came from the 50-50 split.

I understand why Mayor Tory is asking for help from the province. I actually think the guy does a pretty good job in Toronto. I've heard him on TV. I've listened to him. He's fighting for who he should be fighting for. He's fighting for his municipality and Toronto, so I understand that. He's the one who's asking for this. I don't understand why some people are saying what they're saying when they get a chance to stand up here and talk. He was a leader of their party.

1000

With that said, they put forward some very strong arguments as to why this is necessary and why this can help. In the end, we have to ask ourselves that question: Does this help the residents of Ontario, and does this help our children be safer when they go to school? The most important thing we have in our lives is our kids.

The same report I cited earlier had this to say about speed cameras, "Research has demonstrated that using a combination"—

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like them to listen to this, if they can. I know people like to talk in the morning, but I think this is a very important fact for all of us to hear because it was done by research.

"Research has demonstrated that using a combination of speed cameras and fines can enforce speed limits in residential areas and school zones. One study illustrated that the proportion of vehicles travelling more than 10 kilometres over the speed limit actually"—listen to this—"dropped by 70%."

Seventy per cent: Imagine the importance of that in a school zone for the safety of our kids. Regardless of your position on the issue, I think that statement is important, and it was worth reading it out as slowly as I did—70%. Regardless of your position on this issue, I think that statement is important to read out. It's important to remember that those are real kids whose lives we're protecting.

No matter what the minister calls them—speed cameras, photo radar—the question needs to be the same: Does a municipality have this power to save—who? Anybody know? Anybody listening? Save our kids. Is a municipality going to use it responsibly and present it as a compelling case to be able to use them? Once you answer those questions, then you can decide for yourself if you think photo radar cameras should be appearing in our school zones.

There are some other issues of school safety that I feel are not addressed in the bill. I'd like to talk about school buses and bus drivers. I can't believe the hour flew by.

But that's an issue we have to talk about. We have to talk about our school bus drivers, and I hope to get to do that again very shortly.

I know I've only got 10 seconds left. I appreciate my colleagues listening to me for an hour. I appreciate the Speaker listening intently. I noticed that you were and I thank you for that, and thanks for giving me the opportunity to speak this morning.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Question and comments? I recognize the member from Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and good morning to you. I'm very pleased to offer some comments following the one-hour leadoff this morning by the member for Niagara Falls, who spoke very eloquently on Bill 65, the Safer School Zones Act.

He spoke about some tragic cases involving car accidents. I just want to say first off that our thoughts are with the family and friends of the three youth who were killed last night in a tragic car accident in the Caledonia area. This really underscores our need to get this bill passed to make our roads safer.

Here we are, we're into our ninth hour of debate on this bill and before we wrap up, I think we need to stress some facts. We need to dispel some misinformation. The member for Niagara Falls rightly pointed out that the member for Kitchener-Conestoga has warned this House of photo radar returning to our provincial highways. This is misinformation; it is incorrect. It is misleading, and it's alarmist. For any member of the PC Party who is unsure, let me repeat that automated speed enforcement, or photo radar, if that's what you want to call it, is not going to be on provincial highways. It's only going to be on local roads in community safety zones, as decided by local governments. It is municipal governments and chiefs of police across Ontario who have asked for this measure to slow down speeders and save lives.

Now, the NDP has said that they're going to be supporting Bill 65 because it makes sense, but for the members of the Conservative caucus who are going to be voting against it, I would ask them what that conversation is going to be like with your municipal leaders and your chiefs of police. They're going to ask you why you voted against it, why you don't want to see safer roads.

I want to commend the member for Niagara Falls for his speech this morning, for speaking well. I'm disappointed the PCs don't seem to agree with safer roads. We look forward to passing this bill.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: I appreciate listening to the member for Niagara Falls's comments on this.

I would really hope that the government would take an opportunity to clarify to this Legislature and to Ontarians what in fact a community safety zone is. We have said that we are absolutely supportive of anything to keep our kids safe in school zones. Of course, in typical Liberal fashion, they go one step further by including this ambiguous clause that would allow municipalities to in fact

put photo radar on major highways in the province of Ontario.

I'll give examples of a few, perhaps in the member for Niagara Falls's own riding: Stevensville Road, Thompson Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Four Mile Creek Road, the Niagara Parkway, Thorold Stone Road and, of course—we all know this one—Lundy's Lane.

These are major roads that the Liberals are allowing photo radar on, without any actual criteria for what a community safety zone is. It's a blanket tool to allow municipalities to put this on major highways. Just look at the Hamilton city councillor who asked to put photo radar on the Red Hill parkway or the Lincoln Alexander.

This is no longer about protecting kids in school zones; this is about a cash grab that the Liberals are allowing. Again, it's a slippery slope, we say. Had they stuck with actual school safety zones, yes, we would likely be there with them. But they didn't. They've gone now to major highways in Ontario like the ones I have referenced, including Lundy's Lane, Red Hill parkway and the Lincoln Alexander. Photo radar is going to be on these major routes.

I would ask the government members how they're going to explain to their citizens why a bill that is supposed to be meant to keep kids safe has now approached major highways in the province of Ontario. I think they need to explain this, because it's not about keeping kids safe. It's about a cash grab. It's a cash grab, and we won't support it.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is a pleasure for me to rise and congratulate my colleague the member for Niagara Falls on his leadoff remarks with regard to Bill 65, the Safer School Zones Act.

This bill demonstrates the respect for municipalities that we should constantly keep in mind as we are designing legislation in this place. Municipalities understand their communities. They should have more authority over setting their own speed limits and speed enforcement and ensuring the safety of residents.

I want to give a shout-out to Councillor Virginia Ridley from my community. She was elected to city council in 2014 and immediately began advocating for a lowering of speed limits in school zones in London. Because of her advocating on this issue, the city passed a policy last spring to lower speed limits in school zones from 50 kilometres an hour to 40 kilometres an hour.

One of the compelling pieces of data that they used when they were making that decision is around the chance of pedestrian fatality at various speed limits. Lowering the speed limit 10 kilometres, from 50 to 40, means that there was a 70% chance of pedestrian fatality at 50 kilometres but only a 28% chance at 40 kilometres. This is an important initiative to ensure that children are safe when they walk to and from school.

One of the issues that my colleague raised, however, was around the cost to the municipality. The city of London is looking at \$1.3 million when you include both the signage that is needed plus the solar-powered flashing

beacons. This is a cost that is very expensive, and municipalities are being forced to pay the price.

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

Mr. James J. Bradley: I want to commend the member on an excellent speech that he delivered today, particularly with the personal examples that he used, with the experience that his wife went through, which was a dreadful experience to have to go through, and his meetings with others who have gone through this experience; and his recognition of the importance of this legislation, though he would obviously have other ideas as well how safety on the roads can be assisted.

1010

I am also very pleased that he made reference to the history of downloading in the province of Ontario and how it affected Niagara Falls, St. Catharines and the Niagara region—the downloading of economic decisions from the province of Ontario onto municipalities and the consequences for those municipalities.

I also want to say that there has been considerable support. I know the chief of police and the mayor of Niagara Falls have both expressed support for trying to reduce the speeds in those particular zones and using what this particular bill allows to happen for that purpose.

Also, he made reference to the recent lockout that took place in Niagara with the Catholic school board. I was pleased to be working alongside him. He was able to do so publicly and I was able to do so with my discussions with the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Education, to bring about a local resolution. As a labour leader, he has always noted that the best solutions possible are those which are reached locally, but sometimes that requires some considerable work on them and pressure from other venues to be able to get that solved. We're both delighted that that situation has been resolved at this point in time.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Niagara Falls to wrap up.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Well, thank you very much. I appreciate that. I want to say, to all my colleagues who commented: Thank you very much.

I did touch very quickly on bus drivers. I want to say to the minister—I know he's not here—that's an issue that we have to have a discussion on. We have to raise—the bus drivers are taking our kids to school, in these school safety zones by the way, when they have 30 or 40 kids on it, and we need to have that dialogue. I didn't get to it in my speech. The hour went too quick. Maybe we can give an hour and a half to the critics next time. It might help me a bit. I don't know.

I will address the PC Party member from Kitchener—Conestoga. This is my opinion of this, quite frankly. I sat around that table as a city councillor. He mentioned a number of streets in my riding, and that's fair by the way. I have no problem with him raising my riding. But what isn't fair is—I'm going to do something a little different that maybe he wouldn't do. I'm going to listen to the mayor of Niagara Falls and what's in the best interest of

his community. He's telling me this is what he needs. I'm going to listen to the Lord Mayor—because he mentioned Niagara-on-the-Lake—I'm going to listen to the Lord Mayor. I'm going to say, "Patty"—that's what I call him. I call him Patty. I know it's not as professional, but that's how we operate down there. They call me Gatesy, so we have little nicknames for one another. We're all friends.

I go to Patty and I say, "Do you need this? Do you need this in your community? Do you need this in Niagara-on-the-Lake?" Do you know what he said? "We asked the province for it." And then I went to my good friend down in Fort Erie, Mayor Redekop, and he mentioned those streets too.

It's good to see he's got a map of my riding. I think that's important for the PCs. But at the end of the day, I went to Mayor Redekop and I said, "Mayor Redekop, I know you care about school safety. I know you care about the kids in Fort Erie," just like Pat does and just like Jim does and just like every one of those councillors. I said, "Do you need this in your riding?" Do you know what they said, all those mayors? "Yes."

So what I'm going to do is, I'm not going to listen to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga. I'm going to listen to the mayors and the councils that have come to me and said, "Gatesy, will you please support this?" That's who I'm going to listen to.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing as it's almost 10:15, we will recess the House until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome the guests of page captain Coleton Benham today. They're back: parents Jenny and Jeff Benham and, of course, brother Lucas. I'm sure, Lucas, we'll see you here, just like your older brother. Welcome, guys, to the Legislature again.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I would like to welcome three young women who I just met in the Legislature today. They're here to observe question period: Amy Choi, Lauren White and Anushka Kikrian. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to extend a warm welcome to Michele Farrugia, who presented at committee this morning. Welcome.

Mr. Michael Harris: I would like to welcome Al Kroetsch and Meagan Martin, father and girlfriend of our Eric Kroetsch, who worked in policy and is now heading to be a Waterloo region police officer. Congratulations to him.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I have a couple of introductions this morning. First, we have the mother of page Rajeev Danam. Her name is Esther Kothapally. She's going to be in the public gallery. We're having lunch today with her and Rajeev.

Also coming in shortly are students from St. Brendan Catholic School. They're in the Scarborough part of my

riding. I just met with them and had a great photo. They'll be in shortly. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Mike Colle: I have with me two of my constituents and good friends: Rabbi Lazer Weinman and his son, Yehuda Weinman. They're here to wish everybody a happy Passover and chag sameach.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my great pleasure to welcome my constituents Paul, Carla, Vanessa and Vianna Peios visiting the House today. Please join me in welcoming them.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd also like to introduce my good friend Michele Farrugia, who's here with us in the gallery today.

Mr. Michael Harris: I made a mistake. Meagan Mitchell is the partner of Eric Kroetsch, who's headed to be a police officer. Meagan Mitchell, welcome to Queen's Park. My mistake.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members do have the right to correct their own record, which is kind of cool.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I'm delighted to welcome to Queen's Park today the chairman of the Canada Games Council, Tom Quinn, joining us in the member's gallery. Today we're announcing the successful host of the 2021 Canada Summer Games, this afternoon at U of T. I want to welcome Tom to Queen's Park and thank him for his work. Welcome.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I very rarely get visitors coming to Queen's Park from my constituency, let alone coming to Toronto. I'm very pleased to introduce local Norfolk county farm boy Wes Downing.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure to make a couple of introductions here this morning. I will have students from St. John Bosco Catholic School from my riding of Davenport visiting me here this afternoon. I wanted to pre-empt and welcome them here to Queen's Park.

Visiting us here today in the west gallery is Melissa Hyland, visiting today from St. Brendan school with her grade 5 class. Welcome, Melissa.

Mr. Jim Wilson: On behalf of the PC caucus and all members of the House, I just want to wish best wishes to Eric Kroetsch as he leaves us tomorrow to join the Waterloo regional police force. Eric has served here as a researcher, a top-notch professional and a very, very bright young person in our PC caucus research since my time as interim leader. Eric assures me that the PC member from Kitchener–Conestoga will never get a parking ticket or a speeding ticket. For that, we're very grateful.

Eric, all the best in your police life and in your career, and thank you. Thank you very much, from the bottom of our hearts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sure his chief will allow him to do that.

Further introductions?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd like to welcome students from Diefenbaker school in my riding, and parents and teachers. Welcome.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm pleased to welcome Professor Yossi Shain, who is here today, from Tel Aviv University. He's a professor of political science at Tel Aviv University, as well as a full professor of comparative government and diaspora politics at Georgetown University and a founding director of the program for Jewish civilization.

I want to wish chag sameach. Passover's starting. There are two Seder dinners this year, and I want to say that it's the first time in Toronto, in the history of me living here for almost 30 years, that I haven't had to do a Seder. Both my sisters have stepped up to the plate. Chag sameach.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We're getting close to borderline statements.

The member from Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I would like to welcome to the Legislature a very special constituent of mine, Colin Farr. He's joined by his mom, Barbra Farr. Please welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I just realized that Michele is here. He just spoke so wonderfully to our committee. Thank you so much for staying for question period.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services on a point of order.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I believe that you'll find we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear ribbons in recognition of World Autism Awareness Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services is seeking unanimous consent to wear the ribbons for World Autism Awareness Day. Do we agree? Agreed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Deputy Premier. My question for the Deputy Premier is, should the CEO of Hydro One have been paid \$4.5 million last year?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm happy to have the opportunity to talk about executive compensation. This is something we take very seriously on this side of the House.

As the member well knows, or should know, compensation disclosure is no longer required at Hydro One because they are now a company that discloses information through the stock exchange requirements. The reason you know is because it is disclosed not through the sunshine list but through other disclosures to shareholders.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: That's the whole point: The sunshine list doesn't include Hydro One employees anymore

and the only reason we know about the massive increase to the Hydro One CEO's salary is because of the salary disclosures for the securities commission that are required there.

The disrespect that has been shown when it comes to huge raises for executive salaries is typical of what the Deputy Premier said last night on the radio. She said, "So be it." There's no respect for taxpayers' dollars, according to the Deputy Premier. So be it; whatever will be will be; live and let live was her approach last night on Newstalk 1010. But that's the whole point: You can't live and let live in the Liberals' Ontario because it's too expensive to heat your home. People are choosing between heating and eating now.

Can the Deputy Premier justify the outrageous increased salary for the CEO of Hydro One? Can she do that?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We acknowledge that these salaries are far, far higher than other Ontarians'—we get that. We also get that electricity prices have become too high for people to afford. That's exactly why we're bringing down the price of hydro by an average of 25%, and more for people who live in rural, remote areas, and for people with low incomes.

My question, though, is—we have a plan; we're implementing our plan—where is your plan?

1040

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

Mr. Todd Smith: Step one—and we've talked about it over and over again: Stop the sale of Hydro One, but stop the exorbitant salary increases that we're seeing with the executives at Hydro One. Six times the salary of the previous CEO—I don't know how the Deputy Premier can justify that when we are seeing tens of thousands of Hydro One customers disconnected last year; hundreds of thousands are behind on their electricity bills. They're in arrears because of the exorbitant cost of electricity created by the malfeasance and disrespect of this government. Yet, the Hydro One CEO made \$4.5 million last year. That is an unbelievable amount.

So, Speaker, my question to the Deputy Premier is, will she rein in executive compensation at Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, it has been 29 days since the Leader of the Opposition told us that his plan to reduce hydro prices was only days away. On March 2, the leader said his party would announce their plan in the coming weeks. The next day, he told the Barrie Examiner that his hydro announcement would be coming very shortly. And then, on March 9, Brown told reporters he'd outline his plan in the near future.

Speaker, I thought yesterday would be the big reveal. Yesterday, at the speech at the Cambridge Club, I thought the Leader of the Opposition would outline his plan to reduce hydro prices—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister knows better.

Wrap-up sentence, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: And the member from Prince Edward–Hastings, I thought, would use his—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you; that'll do.

As soon as I sat down, the member from Leeds–Grenville decided to start. He is now told to come to order.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thanks.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Without the editorial.

New question?

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Todd Smith: Back to the Deputy Premier: Here are a couple of numbers for you. The CEO of BC Hydro was paid \$490,000; the CEO of SaskPower made \$454,000; Manitoba Hydro's top dog, just shy of \$500,000; the CEO of Hydro-Québec, \$480,000; the CEO of Hydro One here in Ontario, \$4.5 million. Why? My question is, why? Why is this salary so out of touch compared to the rest of the provinces in Canada?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It sounds to me like the opposition has a one-point plan to bring down hydro prices, and that is a focus on executive compensation.

I think the real issue is, Speaker, that hydro rates are too high. We are implementing a plan that responds to the issues that have been brought to this Legislature.

It has been 29 days. We're waiting for your plan to bring down hydro prices. We're moving forward on ours; we sure would like to see yours.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: The plan of the Liberals is nothing but a shell game and does not address the underlying problems that they've created in the electricity sector. They're the reason why people are falling behind on their electricity bills. They're the reason why businesses are leaving for other low-cost energy jurisdictions.

Back to the issue of the day: This just exemplifies the disrespect for the taxpayers of Ontario—\$4.5 million is out of control. Look at the people who run life-saving hospitals: the president of Sunnybrook, \$700,000; the CEO of St. Joseph's Healthcare, about the same. And this government hands out \$4.5 million to Hydro One. Speaker, it doesn't make any sense.

Will the Liberals slash these out-of-control salary increases at Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite is making my point. They are really good at criticizing us. They are really, really good at criticizing, but they have no plan. We're waiting for the plan. All they can do—

Interjections.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I am hopeful—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am hopeful that today in Milton the Leader of the Opposition will be unveiling the PC plan to bring down hydro rates. I am looking for-

ward—we're waiting, Speaker. Maybe this afternoon we'll get the answer.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Stormont.

Mr. Todd Smith: Back to the Deputy Premier: This just shows the flippant attitude, the disrespectful attitude, of this government when it comes to executive compensation. They clearly don't get it.

When we brought up Hydro One compensation back in 2015, the Minister of Energy at the time had this to say: "When we look at comparable Toronto Stock Exchange companies, the pay will actually be set at the medium-to-low range ... with some incentives." Speaker, is \$4.5 million "medium to low range" to this Liberal government, which has driven the cost of electricity out of control? Is \$4.5 million for the CEO at Hydro One in the medium-to-low range? If it is, we've got a bigger problem than we thought.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think that slowly but surely the opposition party is revealing their plan to bring down hydro prices. We have the first point; the first point is executive compensation. That's not going to get us to where we need to go. I hate to break it to you. Again, it has been 29 days. We've had lots and lots of criticism. We have had now one idea: compensation. And that will, as the opposition knows, have virtually no impact whatsoever on hydro rates for the people of this province.

We are taking real action. The member opposite is saying, "So be it." He knows politics, Speaker. What they don't know is how to bring down hydro prices. We do, and we're doing it.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. The current Hydro One CEO is being paid over 500% more than his predecessor. His predecessor ran Hydro One when it was under public control. Now that it's in private hands, the salary is quite a bit steeper. Can the Acting Premier tell us: Is it simply a coincidence that this ridiculous pay increase occurred at the same time as the Liberal government turned Hydro One over to the private sector?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: At least the NDP has released a plan. It's not a very good plan, but at least they have released a plan.

Speaker, we are implementing a significant reduction in hydro prices. We are making it more affordable for businesses, for individuals and for farms. We are making it significantly more affordable for people who live in rural and remote parts of the province. We're making it significantly more affordable for people who are of low income. We have \$200 million available for people who want to make investments that will reduce their electricity prices. We have a solid, well-thought-out plan that we are implementing, and that's what the people of this province expect us to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Liberal government has put its stamp of approval on a 500% increase for the Hydro One CEO. Ontarians are understandably frustrated by the fact that the CEO is making almost \$4.5 million while entire communities are struggling to pay their hydro bills.

Even worse, though, is the fact that the Premier has allowed a 500% salary increase for the Hydro One CEO at the same time as she and her party have allowed a 300% increase in hydro rates for the people of this province since they formed government.

When will the Acting Premier and the Liberal government take the hydro crisis that they have helped create seriously and stop their wrong-headed sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know that these salaries are unimaginable for virtually everyone in this province. We get that, Speaker. Our focus is on bringing down hydro rates.

1050

The third party has offered a plan, as I have acknowledged, but part of their plan is to spend \$4 billion to buy back shares in Hydro One. That's \$4 billion that has to come from somewhere, most likely from health and from education, because that's where the bulk of spending is.

We are moving forward. We are reducing hydro rates, because we heard loud and clear in this House and in our communities that electricity rates had risen too fast, too high, and that's why we're bringing those rates down. We have a credible plan, we're implementing that plan, and that is what's expected of people in government.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it is no coincidence that the executive compensation of Hydro One jumped by over 500% while the Liberals started selling it off. This ludicrous pay increase is an insult to the many thousands of Ontario families and businesses who are struggling just to keep up with their hydro bills.

When will the Acting Premier realize that the people of this province are fed up, frustrated and thirsty for some real action on the part of the Liberal government to reduce hydro waits and do what the people want? Over 80% of the people of this province want you to stop selling off Hydro One. When are you going to do that?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. And to the Chair, please.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are taking action. We are reducing the price of hydro in this province. People have already seen an 8% reduction in their bills, and come this summer, they will see an additional 17% on average. It will be significantly more than that for those who are having the hardest time paying their bills.

We have moved forward with a plan that actually is working. We've made fundamental changes to the hydro pricing so that we can bring down those prices, because

we know that hydro costs have been too expensive. They have been unaffordable. We take that responsibility very seriously, and that's why we are acting.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Acting Premier as well. The University Health Network in Toronto has seen its hydro bills increase by \$6 million in the past few years. That \$6 million could have gone to hiring 60 additional nurses instead. Does the Acting Premier think that paying for soaring hydro bills is a better use of \$6 million than hiring 60 more nurses to help people who need care at UHN?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Health.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I look forward to having this exchange with the leader of the third party for perhaps the third time. With University Health Network, we've provided them with an increase to their operating budget last year of just under \$10 million, in new dollars in addition to the existing operating funding.

But I have to say, whether it's Sault Ste. Marie, or comments about Hamilton Health Sciences, or the Windsor hospital—

Interjection: St. Joe's.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Or St. Joe's in Hamilton—it has come to the point where one by one these hospital administrators and CEOs feel compelled to come out publicly, following her declarations, to refute them and to point not only to the fact that they are able to sustain the highest quality of care despite electricity costs being about 1% of that total budget, but that they've made incredible innovations to help sustain the electricity costs, as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: No matter what this health minister says, every single person in this province realizes that every extra dollar that's being spent on hydro bills that are soaring at hospitals is a dollar that is not being spent on health care for the people of Ontario. It is simple logic.

The hydro bill at London Health Sciences Centre has gone up nearly \$2 million under the Liberal government. Will the Acting Premier agree that 20 more nurses would have been a better way for the hospital to use its already shrinking budget than paying skyrocketing hydro bills?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm happy to report that the London Health Sciences Centre budget is doing anything but what the member opposite alleges. In fact, their operating budget increased by 2.4% last year, by almost \$18 million.

One by one, the member opposite continues to make these allegations—no doubt London Health Sciences will be next—and one by one, these hospital officials, administrators and CEOs come out, as they did in Peterborough, as they did in Sault Ste. Marie, to indicate that the member opposite, the leader of the third party, is incorrect and that they are able to sustain the high quality of care, recognizing—and it is an important component.

But it's approximately 1% of the overall operating budget of a hospital that goes towards electricity costs.

I spoke about hospitals like Markham Stouffville that have done incredible innovations, or Health Sciences North in Sudbury saving half a million dollars a year on electricity because of—

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

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This Liberal government froze hospital budgets for four years and also provided less-than-inflationary increases after that. They have been starving the hospital system for years.

The Liberal government is still planning to continue the sell-off of Hydro One, a disastrous idea, a disastrous plan. They're defending the ludicrously high salary of the new CEO at Hydro One, and they refuse to admit what is plainly obvious: that hospitals could be using money that they are forced to spend on rising hydro bills to improve patient care.

When will this Acting Premier admit the obvious fact, that her party has made a mistake with their hydro sell-off, and put an end to it before it's too late?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The president of the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions, OCHU, which is part of CUPE, just yesterday said that it's unfair of Ontario opposition MPPs to blame significant care and staffing cuts at our hospitals on high hydro rates. According to the president, "To suggest that the root of our community hospitals' yearly budget deficits and the staff, bed and care cuts that follow, is high hydro costs is to mislead the public."

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You may continue.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: So the president went on to say, "Communities know where the Liberals stand on hospital funding, but where do the PCs and the NDP stand? It would appear from their public comments that hospitals could expect relief in their relatively small hydro budgets and no relief on their larger underfunding problem"; that was the president.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the President of the Treasury Board. Last night in an interview on Newstalk 1010's The Rush, I heard the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please continue.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Last night, in an interview on Newstalk 1010's The Rush, I heard the height of Liberal arrogance. When asked if the clearly partisan hydro ads made the Liberals look good, the Deputy Premier responded, "So be it."

"So be it," Mr. Speaker: That's what the Deputy Premier of this province had to say about using taxpayer dollars to run Liberal vanity ads. Mr. Speaker, through you, how can the President of the Treasury Board allow

these tax-dollar-funded ads to continue, or does she just think, "So be it"?"

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd like to remind everyone, Speaker, that Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada that actually has a Government Advertising Act, and the ads in question, just like any other ads we run, comply with that Government Advertising Act. You, yourself, have ruled that they are not an offence to the Legislature.

So we're actually very proud that we are able to tell the people of Ontario that we will have 25% off. We think that people need to know that, that it is useful information for the public of Ontario to understand, just like we think it's useful information for the public to know about flu vaccines, useful information for the public to know about sex education and what's really in the curriculum, as opposed to a bunch of rumours—

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

Supplementary?

1100

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: During a revolution, a queen once uttered, "Let them eat cake." Now our modern-day Marie Antoinette, the Deputy Premier of this province, tells the people of Ontario, "So be it." Well, you can't just say "so be it" to those people who are struggling to pay their bills. You can't just say "so be it" to people, particularly seniors, struggling between heating and eating.

Will the President of the Treasury Board stand in her place and apologize on behalf of the Deputy Premier, who's wasting—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

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

President of the Treasury Board?

Hon. Liz Sandals: What I was going to say is that what we wanted to say to the people of Ontario was, "Who will you help?" When we ran—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Nepean–Carleton will come to order.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Our message to the people of Ontario, when we ran our advertising campaign about sexual violence, sexual assault and sexual harassment, was: "Who will you help?" Not only did people in Ontario see it; 85 million people all over the world looked at that advertising, and it changed public opinion in a way that we are very proud of. Within six months, 55% strongly agreed that they had an obligation to intervene when witnessing sexual harassment; 92% agreed that they had an obligation to intervene when witnessing sexual violence; 83% understood that if they witness—

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

MOTHERISK POSTER

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Acting Premier. Children were removed from their families

based on the results of faulty testing done by Motherisk going back to 2005. It's not difficult to understand how deeply emotional it is to be taken from your family in the first place. Yet the ministry recently ordered insensitive posters to be distributed widely in schools, suggesting to children that their removal from their family may have been unjustified, leading to panic and embarrassment for families.

The Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth has said, "On 100 levels," these posters are "potentially damaging" to vulnerable children.

Can the Acting Premier tell us if she thinks that this is appropriate and explain how in the world this was allowed to happen?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for asking a very important question. Our government is very much committed to protecting young people and doing what's best for them. We recently became aware of the Motherisk Commission's posters. We understand the concerns that have been raised by young people in schools and by the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. As a result, my understanding is that the Ministry of Education is advising school principals and staff to have the posters and materials removed from schools immediately.

We understand that some students may have been negatively affected by these posters and may require additional support. It is also my understanding that the Ministry of Education has asked school boards to alert their mental health leads and guidance staff to be available to support students.

If any students in our schools have concerns about the Motherisk Commission's poster, we encourage them to speak with their school staff for support.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Back to the Acting Premier: The flawed Motherisk program has caused unbelievable damage to children and families across Ontario and beyond. These inappropriate posters placed in schools across the province have only served to incite fear and panic, and make things worse for vulnerable kids.

One mother described the impact on her adopted children as "a punch in the stomach." She talked about children being scared that they would be asked questions by their peers and their teachers. The Adoption Council of Ontario is asking where the consultation was with adoptive families before these damaging posters were put up.

Will the Acting Premier explain why the government distributed these damaging posters and requested them to be put into schools?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Minister of Education.

Hon. Mitzi Hunter: I'm committed to ensuring the safety and the well-being of all students in this province. I understand the concerns that were raised by students, parents, the community and the provincial advocate for children. I've been in touch with him, and we have requested that schools remove the materials from schools.

We regret that the distribution of the Motherisk posters has caused concerns for students. We have provided direction to school boards to ensure that mental health leads are aware of this situation and that any student who needs additional supports will receive that additional support.

It's important that if people have concerns, I want to ensure that they have the supports in place to assist at this time.

RÉDUCTION DE LA PAUVRETÉ POVERTY REDUCTION

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Monsieur le Président, ma question est pour le ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté.

Une de nos ressources les plus précieuses est notre jeunesse.

All societies must honour the potential of their youth. It is our duty to ensure that they can become the persons they want to be and should be. Our future depends on ensuring that the talents of all the young people of Ontario are allowed to flourish.

However, there are often obstacles on this path to success. One of them is poverty. I'm very proud that we have targets to reduce child poverty. This commitment is to reduce child poverty by 25% in five years. This would make a huge difference in the lives of many children.

Would the minister inform the House about Ontario's progress in meeting this target?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you to the member from Ottawa-Vanier for that question, which is so close to my own heart.

Last week, the province released its annual Poverty Reduction Strategy report highlighting the progress made in 2016. Here are a few highlights: We're increasing the monthly income of almost 19,000 families by fully exempting child support payments from social assistance benefit calculations. We're providing healthy meals and snacks every year to more than 896,000 children and youth during the course of the school year. We're delivering child-centred learning to 260,000 four- and five-year-olds through full-day kindergarten. We're helping over 115,000 households that are at risk of homelessness to remain housed.

Ontario has now reduced child poverty by over 20%, lifting over 100,000 children out of poverty across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: C'est très encourageant de voir que nous avons fait du progrès dans ce dossier.

There's also another issue that concerns me. According to the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, 38,500 Ottawa residents, including 15,000 children, visit food banks each month. For these individuals and families, the inability to access sufficient, affordable, nutritious food is a core symptom of poverty. In the early years of a child's life, insufficient nutrition can impact their ability to learn and grow.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain how Ontario plans to tackle the growing problem of food insecurity?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thanks again to the member for Ottawa–Vanier for her question.

When I was appointed minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy, a key item in my mandate was to develop a food security strategy. As a father of three, I certainly know the importance of nutritious food and the role it plays in helping to grow strong and healthy children. I can only imagine the worry that parents who have a tight food budget face in making sure their children grow up healthy and strong.

It's for these Ontarians that we're working to create Ontario's very first food security strategy, building on our work to reduce poverty across the province. Our aim is to ensure every Ontarian has sufficient physical and economic access to affordable, nutritious food, including in remote First Nation communities.

This is important work, and I look forward to reporting back to the House on our progress.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is to the Deputy Premier. The last year Hydro One employees appeared on the sunshine list, there were over 4,200 names. Their compensation had grown by over 14% from the previous year. This year, we only get to see five names, and the CEO's salary is up almost 600% from the last sunshine list appearance.

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The government is still the majority shareholder, so my question is, why won't the government disclose all eligible Hydro One salaries on the sunshine list?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we're seeing some really interesting bobbing, weaving and deflecting over on the other side. They have no plan when it comes to reducing—

Interjections.

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

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: They have no plan to bring down hydro prices, and that's why they're talking about other elements. "We have no plan"—29 days and counting.

They're diverting news in things like—they actually totally misquoted me. I did not say what they said I said in the interview; I've just had another review of it, Speaker. They're making it up. They're making it up, because they have no plan to bring down hydro rates—29 days. We're waiting; the people of Ontario are waiting.

If this party pretends to be a government in waiting, they need to step up, stop criticizing—

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Deputy Premier: You know, Speaker, people in Ontario don't appreciate this

kind of dodging of the questions. Only in Liberal Ontario would cutting off 60,000 customers earn you a 600% raise.

The government is still the majority shareholder. The Liberals get a say in compensation pay. Will the government put Hydro One back on the sunshine list? Or do they think the Hydro One millionaires' club should get a free pass in a year when they cut back 60,000 people, who had to go home to a dark house?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. I'm sure that we all share with the well-being of the rate-payers and the people of Ontario. It is one of the reasons why we took the step to make a more productive, more efficient organization to deliver those services, and they're outperforming, Mr. Speaker.

It was very clearly stated in the prospectus what the executives would be paid and that it would be made public. That has been done.

Of course, the executives are being paid based on their bonuses and their ability to deliver for the people of Ontario, and that is happening. It is why we are reducing rates by 25%. It is why we have taken the extraordinary opportunity to further help those in rural communities. That is helping. It is why the company is being more responsive to consumers, to ensure that they don't get cut off, especially when there are alternate means to support them. It is why they are communicating to the people of Ontario and to the ratepayers, which the opposition hasn't been doing, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue—

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

New question.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Acting Premier. During a town hall meeting that I held this week in my riding, I met a couple who told me they were living on a senior's pension of \$1,400 a month. Their rent is \$1,000 a month. They're terrified that their landlord will seek an above-guideline rent increase that will make it impossible for them to live in their unit or make it impossible for them to buy food.

They were told they would have to wait 10 to 15 years for an affordable housing unit. It's not clear that they're going to live another 10 to 15 years.

After 14 years of Liberal government, why do seniors still live in fear that they may lose their homes because of an unfair, unreasonable, unaffordable rent increase?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Housing.

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you for that important question. It certainly is top of mind for many of us living in Ontario.

I can say, Speaker, that it's absolutely unacceptable that so many Ontarians are faced with housing costs that are rising so dramatically. There is real anxiety within that market. Families on tight budgets, such as seniors, really are feeling the pinch of a rental market that is struggling to keep up with demand.

As I've said before in this House, we are developing a number of plans to address both the anxiety in the rental market and housing affordability as well, Mr. Speaker. We're working with our municipal partners to make secondary suites more readily available. We've passed inclusionary zoning. We have frozen the municipal property tax. In short, we understand the anxiety. We understand the problem.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Back to the Acting Premier: The NDP brought in real rent control when it was in government. The PC government killed it. It has stayed killed under the Liberal government. Before the 2003 election, Liberals described the loss of rent control as "a betrayal of tenants." They promised real rent protection for tenants. But after winning the election, the Liberals decided to keep betraying tenants for another 14 years. Why should struggling tenants in Ontario believe that the Premier or this government will protect them from unfair, unreasonable, unaffordable rent increases?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Again, thank you to the member of the third party for the question. As I have said before, I appreciate the focus that NDP have brought to this issue, and we certainly welcome them joining in the focus.

What we have said on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, is that we will be looking at expanding rent controls. We will be bringing in a suite of legislation that addresses more than rent controls. We've been studying this issue. We've been working on this issue. We have been travelling across the province talking about the RTA to a wide variety of stakeholders, so that we can get it right, so that we can bring legislation forward that deals with rent control, that deals with expanding rent control, and a whole host of other issues around that fact. Mr. Speaker, we get it. We're working on it.

TREE PLANTING

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Speaker, there's no denying the positive impact that trees have on our province. When more trees are planted, it helps promote clean air and fights climate change, which explains why I've heard members from my riding of Northumberland–Quinte West asking me what they can do to get more involved in the greening of our province.

I understand the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry has committed to planting three million trees across Ontario in 2017 as part of the 50 Million Tree Program. However, my constituents and I believe there's always more work to be done. Speaker, could the minister please explain to me how my community can get more involved with the government's initiative to plant 50 million trees?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I'd like to thank the member from Northumberland–Quinte West for his question. One of our government's priorities is combating climate change and promoting clean air, and the 50 Million Tree Program is part of Ontario's efforts to improve air quality across the province by planting millions of trees each

year. These trees will remove approximately 6.6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere by 2050, the equivalent of taking 1.1 million cars off the road for an entire year.

As part of this initiative, I'm pleased to announce that earlier this week, our government launched the Green Leaf Challenge. Ontario's Green Leaf Challenge calls on the public to get involved in making the province a cleaner, greener place to live by planting a tree and reporting it on our website. Each year, Ontario plants approximately three million trees under its 50 Million Tree Program, and my government is now challenging the public to match—

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm pleased to see that our government's priorities are aligned with my constituents'. Minister, in a similar partnership with Forests Ontario and the Highway of Heroes Tribute, one tree is being planted along Highway 401 between Trenton and Toronto for every soldier who has fallen serving Canada since Confederation: a total of 170,000 trees. I had the opportunity to help plant some of those trees.

I'm happy to hear that the Green Leaf Challenge will help people to connect with the resources they need to help our environment. Speaker, could the minister please go into more details about the Green Leaf Challenge work?

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Hon. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you to the member for his question. His community's leadership and enthusiasm are inspiring.

Individuals, organizations and businesses can participate in the Green Leaf Challenge by planting a tree, participating in a community tree-planting event, or making a donation to have a tree planted on their behalf.

Afterwards, people can track their progress at the website greenleafchallenge.ca. This allows people to register their trees on an interactive map, access tree-planting resources, and find events in their communities. This initiative is supported by Forests Ontario and the province, and honours Ontario's 150th anniversary.

I'd like to thank Forests Ontario for being a champion of this cause and the member from Wellington–Halton Hills for his continued efforts to support his residents to get involved in local tree-planting efforts through the county of Wellington's Green Legacy program.

We're proud of our green initiatives on this side of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now, see? Everything did come out without the heckling. It got done.

Mr. Steve Clark: I think you should call a late show.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think you should stop.

New question.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Deputy Premier. In 2015, the Liberal government decided to

remove the powers of the Auditor General and instead turn her office into a rubber stamp for partisan government advertising. Since then, this government has spent millions of dollars on partisan ads which the AG would never have approved.

It's never too late to do the right thing. Will the Deputy Premier restore Auditor General oversight of government advertising by supporting Bill 112 this afternoon?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I stand here as a proud member of this government, which introduced some of the most strict and stringent legislation on government advertisement. Under our legislation, a government ad can't include the name, voice or image of a member of the executive council or a member of the assembly, include the name or logo of a party, or directly identify and criticize a recognized party or member of the assembly.

When it came to voting for that bill in 2004, you would think, by listening to the opposition today, that they must have wholeheartedly endorsed that bill, but, Speaker, they did not. In fact, in 2004 the official opposition voted against that bill; members like the member from Simcoe–Grey and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, York–Simcoe, Parry Sound–Muskoka, Haldimand–Norfolk, Oxford, Wellington–Halton Hills—who are members today—voted against the bill in 2004.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: The minister seems to enjoy history, so let's go back to history when you removed the oversight of the Auditor General. We did not support that change. We want to restore the Auditor General's oversight. That's what Bill 112 would do. Ontarians expect their government to respect tax dollars, not spend millions on partisan ads.

There was a time when the Deputy Premier believed this as well. Back in 2004, she said, "It's just outrageous to me that governments spend money on what are, in essence, political pieces."

What has changed? Why does this government think it's okay to spend tax dollars to prop up the Premier's failing polling numbers?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, the opposition loves the 2004 bill so much that they voted against it. They did not support it even then. In fact, they pined for the old Mike-Harris-style ads where he used to stroll up on the screen and justify closing hospitals; where he used to justify closing schools; where he actually stood there and flicked the lights off on Ontario's public services and Ontario's electricity system, which we're still rebuilding in this province. Now they stand up and they say that that was a great piece of legislation.

Speaker, this is nothing but distraction. It has been 29 days since we put forward our plan to cut hydro rates by 25%, and we still have not heard from the opposition as to what their plan is going to be because they have no plan to help Ontarians—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister will come to order.

New question.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Acting Premier. This is the third time I have risen in this House to urge this Liberal government to sign off on a project to address London's ongoing mental health crisis, which would allow ambulances to take non-acute mental health patients directly to the crisis centre rather than the hospital's constantly overcrowded ER.

On Monday, the health minister said that he is looking at the project. I'm sorry, Speaker, but that's not good enough. This Liberal government has been looking at the project for almost two years. What my community wants to know is not whether, but when this project will go ahead.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Health.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I know that this is the third time that I've had the opportunity to address this. This is a request coming out of London from a great organization. I think all of us know the Canadian Mental Health Association. They have built and are operating a crisis centre that we are funding. We provided \$1.2 million of funding for them to operate a crisis centre.

Interjection: It's a great new model.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It's great new model, a crisis centre for youth and adults aged 16 and up—not just for London but for Middlesex county as well. They're doing great work. They're very busy because of the fantastic supports and resources that they provide.

They have made a request for something which does not occur in this province, which is to enable ambulances to—instead of dropping off patients at hospitals, to allow those patients to be taken directly to the crisis centre. The type of structure and governance that exists does not allow that in this province, but we're looking at this proposal nonetheless.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: People in London cannot wait any longer. The mental health patients who are lined up on hallway stretchers need action from this Liberal government, not more excuses. This project alone will not solve the crisis, but it will help. It is desperately needed and it needs to happen now. The Minister of Health is using the Ambulance Act as an excuse for inaction when it actually has nothing to do with the proposed project.

I have another suggestion for the minister. Will he use his ministerial authority to immediately recognize London's crisis centre as a designated health facility under regulation 552 of the Health Insurance Act so that the ambulance transfer of patients can be funded?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: These are all interesting suggestions. I would suggest that my ministry—as I've referenced, I'm not prepared to go against the law in Ontario, which is the Ambulance Act that has the requirement that

paramedics and EMS drop patients off at hospital environments. I'm not sure if she's suggesting that we redesignate the crisis centre as a hospital. She knows we've had discussions about this. We are looking at their proposal.

To my knowledge, there is no other situation in this province similar to that which she is requesting. We have suggested that should that crisis centre come under the auspices of the hospital, the London Health Sciences Centre themselves, that would enable that dispatch and drop-off to take place. But it's a complicated issue. Regrettably, it's not something that I can sign off on, on a whim, notwithstanding how important this is. We have to do the work required.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour la ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs, the Honourable Tracy MacCharles.

Speaker, for many Ontarians, as you will know, buying a house is the largest single investment they will make in their entire lives. And a house, of course, is more than an investment. It's a home, sanctuary, home base for family, children, career and community.

Of course, your home should be the place where you feel the most secure. But for some, including those in my own riding of Etobicoke North, dreams unfortunately have turned into nightmares. I'm concerned when I hear some of those constituents have been left in distress with nowhere, really, to turn.

Tarion provides warranty coverage and other protections to new homes in Ontario, but its all-encompassing mandate and multiple roles create the potential for a conflict of interest. Speaker, could the minister explain how our government is improving consumer protection for new homebuyers and what our government is doing to change Tarion's structural challenges, created by the Conservative government of the time?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Etobicoke North for responding to his constituents on this important issue. I'm pleased to speak about the great work our government is doing for buyers of new homes in Ontario.

As the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, I am committed to improving the lives of Ontarians by strengthening consumer protection. I've heard from consumers and industry leaders about the warranty and dispute resolution process in the new-home-building sector.

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While I recognize that the building industry in Ontario produces high-quality housing and most are pleased to call their new place their home, I know there are ways that Tarion can be improved. That's why we appointed the Honourable John Douglas Cunningham to conduct a public and independent review of Tarion and our new home warranty legislation.

This week, I publicly released that report and communicated an action plan, which I'm happy to expand on in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: My constituents and I of Etobicoke North appreciate movement on this file.

The benchmarks for modern governance—transparency, accountability and oversight—have of course evolved over the past 40 years. More specifically, the size and complexity of the building industry has changed dramatically since Tarion was conceived in 1976. Since its creation, Tarion's governing statute has remained virtually unchanged, and it's somewhat out of step with the times. Giving Tarion the responsibility to set the terms and administer the new home warranty plans and regulate builders and vendors while also adjudicating disputes between homeowners and builders—of course it is impossible to avoid the potential perception of, or the existence of, conflicts of interest.

My question, therefore, is this—again to Minister MacCharles: What is our government doing with the report's recommendations and how are we changing Tarion's structure to better protect Ontario consumers?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Following the report's recommendation, I've asked Tarion to bring in new deposit protection measures to better reflect today's home prices and deposit requirements. Also, we're changing the structure of Tarion by giving government responsibility to make rules and set standards to improve accountability and transparency. Further, we are giving the new-home-building sector the stand-alone regulator it deserves by separating the provider of the new home warranty program from the new-home-builders regulator. Finally, we're making the dispute resolution process easier and fairer for homeowners to understand.

I also want to stress the actions that we are taking will not increase the price that Ontarians pay for a new home.

I would like to thank the Honourable Justice Cunningham for his report, and I look forward to the changes we're making to increase consumer protection in Ontario.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Deputy Premier. Conroy Schelhaas owns the Forest Motel and Woodland Retreat outside of Stratford. Conroy has a problem. His hydro bills are out of control and his costs keep going up and up. Last year, he paid over \$21,000 for hydro. That's despite investing over \$90,000 in energy-efficient upgrades, including almost \$12,000 on the LED light bulb retrofit program.

My question to the Deputy Premier is, why is the government paying small businesses to conserve energy, only to push their bills even higher?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm sure this constituent will be very happy when he learns about the steps we're taking to take down those electricity costs, because we do know that people across this province are welcoming the changes that we are making—the 25% reduction.

Just to recap: We reduced bills by 8%. We cut delivery charges to the most rural customers by 20% starting January 1. Our new agreement with Quebec will reduce electricity system costs for consumers by about \$70 million from previous forecasts. We've introduced programs like the Ontario Electricity Support Program and the Rural or Remote Rate Protection Program. We've suspended the second round of the large renewable procurement process. That saves us up to \$3.8 billion in costs. We reduced feed-in tariff prices through annual price reviews, and that's saving ratepayers a minimum of \$1.9 billion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Conroy isn't alone in paying more for using less hydro. In November, I asked the Premier about Mike Carter, owner of Milverton Food Town. He's paying more than double for the hydro delivery charge because he isn't using enough hydro.

It's the same story with Conroy, whose hydro bill has seen a double-digit increase over the last four years while his energy consumption has dropped 9%. That's a 9% energy savings and a double-digit increase in hydro costs.

We're still waiting for an answer to the question I asked in November: How can this government justify something so stupid?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: If you think a 25% reduction is stupid, I simply beg to disagree, Speaker. I think we are taking the important steps to reduce those hydro prices. People across this province are benefiting from that and will continue to benefit from that.

Speaker, I guess my question to the member opposite is—we are still waiting for your plan. We are still waiting to hear what you would do, what your best advice is. We hear lots of criticism, but 29 days ago, your leader said that the plan was only days away. I don't know how many days he was talking about, but 29 days and we're still counting.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Catherine Fife: Skyrocketing hydro prices continue to negatively impact the lives of Ontarians and businesses.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Who's this for?

Ms. Catherine Fife: This is to the Acting Premier.

The Peterborough Examiner is reporting that a popular restaurant, Roland's, will close in April after a half century in business—closing after 50 years. Peter Brugger, the owner, cited rising hydro costs as part of the reason behind the decision: "The hydro bill has more than doubled in the last two to three years, even with (energy) consumption going down." Monthly bills went from \$2,500 a month to \$7,000 a month.

Speaker, my question is to the Acting Premier. Why did your government sit back for four years, according to your own polling, and watch high hydro costs negatively impact businesses and jobs across this great province, and do nothing?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Once again, we have an example of a business in this province that would benefit

from reduced hydro prices. Businesses across this province, farms, residential owners and people across this province are already benefiting and will benefit even more from our plan to reduce prices. Our plan provides for fast relief, substantial relief and widespread, long-lasting relief.

Unfortunately, the NDP plan just doesn't pass the test. It is riddled with gaps. It is riddled with ambiguity. The biggest ideas don't do one thing to take one cent off one bill in this province, Speaker. They want to spend \$4 billion—

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: We haven't seen this Premier's plan, a plan that they haven't had the decency to introduce in legislation and bring to the people of this province. This Premier's scheme won't save Roland's or any of the other businesses that we heard about when the Ontario Chamber of Commerce was here on Monday. It's too late. Your government did nothing for too long. The owner of Roland's pointed out that he cooks with natural gas, so the high hydro costs were a turning point in his decision to close after 50 years.

Speaker, what does this government say to the businesses that can't afford their hydro bills, or to the employees who are going to be losing their jobs in this province?

Interjections.

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

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we're saying very, very clearly that hydro rates are coming down in Ontario. They've already come down by 8%. They're coming down to bring the total to an average of 25%—more for people in rural and remote areas, and more for people with low incomes. We are making substantial changes to the electricity pricing system to provide relief for exactly the kind of people we hear about in this Legislature.

But the NDP, Speaker, their biggest idea is to spend \$4 billion. That's \$4 billion taken away from schools and hospitals to buy Hydro One shares on the market. That would not take one cent off anyone's bill. Speaker, the Toronto Star said on March 1, "There's no evidence that keeping it public would make this particular problem any better."

Under the NDP proposal, low-income Ontarians are being asked to wait and see. We're providing real relief now.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Nepean–Carleton has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the President of the Treasury Board concerning government advertising. This matter will be debated Tuesday at 6 p.m.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm standing.

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

The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ARMED FORCES BANDS

Mr. Jim McDonell: Military heritage is more than just battles and medals. Written by local resident Wendy MacDonald and edited by author and historian Kimberley Baldwin McInnes, *A Funny Thing Happened at the War* is a new book that shines a light on an overlooked aspect of successful, motivated armies: the bands.

Wendy's uncle Lawrence Hinchliffe Tanner enlisted in 1940 and was deployed in the UK, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands. He served in the 2nd Canadian Infantry and the Royal Canadian Artillery bands. He drafted memoirs that are only now seeing the light of day, 17 years after his passing, retelling stories of motivating troops, playing for liberated villages and carrying out soldiers' duties and first aid, when called upon.

Let me read to you from the book's dedication:

"This project is dedicated to all those men and women who so proudly laid their lives on the line, and so selflessly set their musical talents on a stage the likes of which this world will never experience again.

"Also, to all of you who, when you read this, will say with pride, 'That was my mother, father, aunt, uncle etc.,' may you recall their stories with pride and forever let their stars shine on.

Congratulations, Wendy and Kimberley, and thank you for Hinchliffe's memories. I look forward to getting my own signed copy. Congratulations.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I want to share a story. In my driveway the other night, I was approached by an engaging door-to-door salesman with questions about my energy consumption. He wondered if I knew that Ontario was going green, and if I wanted to as well.

Speaker, this company was asking me to give them money. They would then use it to "go green" on my behalf—and somehow I've bought my way out of my carbon emissions. It would be easy. Like other companies, it would just go on my Enbridge gas bill.

I understood, and I did not invite this stranger into my house to sign a binding and expensive scam contract. But others do. Our vulnerable neighbours, seniors and new Canadians are signing these contracts every day. Mr. O'Boyle in Oshawa had his heat cut off because he couldn't pay the over \$300 a month tacked on his gas bill because of these contracts—costs above and beyond his actual heating costs.

Our office works with families regularly, trying to untangle these predatory schemes. Companies like this

prey on vulnerable neighbours. They look for people who don't know what they're getting into.

The company that came to my door has quite a track record. They have been fined by the OEB, and it doesn't take more than a Google search to see the litany of complaints that they leave in their wake. They look for vulnerable populations who don't understand their rights or obligations, their responsibilities as tenants, renters or homeowners. They prey on people who don't understand.

I want to warn my neighbours. I also want my community to let my office know if they have been taken advantage of by these companies.

No business in Ontario should be allowed to build their bottom line by preying on vulnerable people.

SAINT JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: On April 2, on the 11th anniversary of his passing, Ontarians across the province will be celebrating the 12th anniversary of Saint John Paul II.

As a Polish Canadian and somebody whose family hails from Wadowice, Poland, the birthplace of Karol Józef Wojtyła, I'm especially proud that Ontario became the first jurisdiction in Canada to honour the legacy of one of our generation's greatest spiritual leaders.

John Paul II was a universally known figure whose lasting legacy is marked by a strong commitment to peace, equality, human rights and multi-faith dialogue and understanding.

From his days living as a young man in Poland, Saint John Paul II lived in a world divided by politics and religion. He dedicated his life and pontificate to piecing it back together.

As a spiritual leader, he was dedicated to giving voice to those in need and advocating on behalf of the oppressed. He inspired Catholics and non-Catholics alike. He served as a beacon for hope, especially for millions of youth who were encouraged by his message of faith and activism. He visited Ontario twice as Pope, the last visit to Toronto being for World Youth Day, a special pilgrimage he established in 1985. That was truly an amazing event.

St. John Paul II was instrumental in Communism's downfall, most notably in Poland, where his leadership helped provide Poles with hope, courage and resilience in the struggle against Communist oppression. No other Pope of the modern era has had a greater spiritual or political impact.

DEMENTIA

Mr. Lorne Coe: My statement is on the need for a dementia strategy.

Older Ontarians have helped to build our country and our province, and remain a vital part of our communities. They represent our grandparents, parents, brothers and sisters, our neighbours and friends. They continuously help shape our communities by sharing their experiences and knowledge as leaders, mentors and volunteers.

While older Ontarians are living longer and with less chronic illness or disability, the vast majority of older adults have at least one chronic disease or condition.

Unfortunately, 14 years of Liberal waste and mismanagement have meant cuts to the health care services we depend on.

The incidence of Alzheimer's and dementia continues to increase and I call on the government to stop funding the unnecessary growth of bureaucracy in our health care system and shift the funds to a patient-centred approach for programs such as a dementia strategy to address the slow-motion crisis of dementia in our province of Ontario.

EARLTON LIONS CLUB

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm sure we all have great service clubs in all parts of this province, and today I would like to focus on one that's in my riding. The Earlton Lions Club has 26 members and it's from a small town, in Earlton. They do amazing things. For the last 29 years, they have held a truck and trailer draw. Now it's a motorhome, for the last three years. Every year, they travel throughout northern Ontario to sell tickets for these trucks and for this motorhome. That's just one of the things they do.

With the money they raise—because they travel throughout the north to bring this money forward, they redistribute that money throughout the north. From the little town of Earlton, from 26 members, they give money to hospitals—the Timmins hospital, the North Bay hospital, the Sudbury hospital, Kirkland Lake, Matheson, Iroquois Falls, Cochrane and Temiskaming Shores, each and every year. This year there's a special fundraiser going on for the Temiskaming Shores hospital. The little lions, the Earlton Lions Club, gave an extra \$50,000 to the Temiskaming Hospital.

As one last example, the army cadets in Timmins were raising money to go to Vimy Ridge for a special celebration. They were \$3,000 short. Who came to their rescue? The Earlton Lions Club.

I would like to, on all of our behalf, thank them and all the other service clubs in this great province of ours.

WILLIAM WARD

Mr. Han Dong: In my wonderful riding of Trinity–Spadina, Ward's Island is at the eastern end of Centre Island and one of many small islands just south of Toronto's mainland. It's a community of roughly 300 homes and 600 residents, and has seen a steady increase in visitors from Toronto and tourists around the world.

What many may not know is how Ward's Island got its name. William Ward was born on Toronto Island in 1847. He was a renowned oarsman, and at one point, he was the single skiff champion of America. But it was his act of bravery and dedication to saving lives that has made this man a true legend to island residents and Ontarians throughout the province. He is attributed with

saving over 160 lives from the Toronto Harbour, and was a captain of the Dominion Lifesaving crew and a Royal Humane Society silver medal recipient.

As we all celebrate Ontario's and Canada's 150th birthday this year, I encourage all members of this House to share the remarkable story of William Ward, a true hero to Ontario.

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CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to rise today, on behalf of Dufferin–Caledon, to share a good-news story.

Earlier this month, a carbon monoxide leak forced the evacuation of the Grand Valley and District Community Centre. During a pickup game of hockey, people started to feel weak and dizzy, and it wasn't because of the game. Thankfully, an off-duty Dufferin county paramedic, Jason Dzikowski, was at the arena and knew what to do. Jason's training and experience kicked in. He recognized the symptoms as possible carbon monoxide poisoning and called a fellow Dufferin county paramedic to get a portable carbon monoxide detector. Sure enough, the carbon monoxide detector went off, and the community centre was evacuated.

Each year, carbon monoxide poisoning in Ontario homes results in thousands of people requiring medical treatment.

This incident is an important reminder that we all need to be aware of the signs of carbon monoxide poisoning. Symptoms to look for include headache, nausea, burning eyes, fainting, confusion and drowsiness. Continued exposure to carbon monoxide at higher levels may result in unconsciousness, brain damage and even death. Carbon monoxide poisoning can come from burning a variety of different fuels.

I want to thank Jason Dzikowski and all the emergency responders who helped keep our community safe on March 19.

LARRY JACULA

Mr. Joe Dickson: I was saddened this morning when my staff contacted me here in the Legislature to make me aware of the passing of a good personal friend and one of Oshawa and Durham region's leading citizens and an active Oshawa resident. Mr. Larry Jacula passed away last night, sadly, leaving his wife, Linda, and their two children.

Larry had been a teacher and a guidance counsellor for more than 32 years. He had been a Durham and Oshawa public school board trustee and chair of the Durham board for over eight years. I would—and sometimes my wife, Donna, would be with me—join them at a public education event, when both Larry and Linda were there. We were good friends.

His boisterous voice enabled Larry to be the voice of the Oshawa Generals Junior A hockey team for some 24 years.

Larry's wife, Linda, whose maiden name was Barrett, was a neighbour of mine and we grew up together—she and her brother Rowe Barrett. When we were teenagers, we spent a lot of time together.

I'm terribly sad to learn about this. May God be with you, Larry.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention a couple of more things about Larry. He served as chair of the board of Centennial Albert United Church, as a past volunteer with our Boy Scouts and our city committees in Oshawa, and on the Oshawa Sports Hall of Fame selection committee. Larry and his wife, Linda, had been married for some 48 years.

We will certainly miss Larry.

MENNO S. MARTIN CONTRACTOR LTD.

Mr. Michael Harris: I stand to recognize St. Jacobs' own Menno S. Martin Contractor Ltd., as they celebrate 75 years of being known for their genuine commitment to providing superior service and quality to their customers—75 years of putting people first.

Of course, Menno S. Martin launched the Building Great Communities campaign that encourages residents of Waterloo region to celebrate all the good that is going on in the lives and businesses around them. By using the hashtag #puttingpeoplefirst, the award-winning home builders are hoping to facilitate a discussion that highlights the helpful, nice ways people are showing kindness and love each and every day for each other.

Instead of shining the spotlight on themselves, Menno S. Martin has chosen to spotlight others, engage with their community, facilitate conversations and recognize others, whether individuals or businesses. They are encouraging us to look around our community and see the good already happening. They are continuing to do what they do best: Putting people first.

I want to also recognize their most recent project in the town of Elmira, 7 Memorial Avenue, a former brown-field site where they are now building a 25-unit, three-storey affordable apartment building that in fact is the only accessible, affordable housing complex in our region—with an elevator; I want to make that known. We congratulate them on a great project.

Of course, in the spirit of putting people first, I would encourage people in our community to join in their effort and take a moment to recognize and thank the many individuals, businesses and organizations that make our world a better place to be, including our very own Menno S. Martin.

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

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This would be the normal time that I continue, but I'm going to do a point of order myself.

We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a wonderful delegation from the Provincial Assembly of Sindh in Pakistan. Deputy Speaker Mrs. Syeda Shehla Raza is joined by her spouse, Ghulam Qadir, and other guests. Welcome to the Deputy Speaker.

A small editorial comment: Ontario and the province in Pakistan have signed a friendship agreement. We are now partners that will be looking for exchanges in the future, and we thank the Deputy Speaker for that kind offer. She herself was a freedom fighter and was in prison for her political beliefs, and has fought that through and become the Deputy Speaker. So congratulations, and thank you so much.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PUBLIC SECTOR SALARY DISCLOSURE AMENDMENT ACT (HYDRO ONE INC.), 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA DIVULGATION DES TRAITEMENTS DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC EN CE QUI CONCERNE HYDRO ONE INC.

Mr. Smith moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 115, An Act to amend the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996 with respect to Hydro One Inc. /
Projet de loi 115, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur la divulgation des traitements dans le secteur public en ce qui concerne Hydro One Inc.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: The bill amends the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996, and requires Hydro One Inc. and all of its subsidiaries to disclose salary and benefits under section 3 of the act.

LIQUOR STATUTE AMENDMENT ACT (SALE OF SPIRITS MANUFACTURED FOR BRAND OWNERS), 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT DES LOIS CONCERNANT L'ALCOOL (VENTE DE SPIRITUEUX FABRIQUÉS POUR DES PROPRIÉTAIRES DE MARQUE)

Mr. Hatfield moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 116, An Act to amend the Liquor Control Act and the Alcohol and Gaming Regulation and Public Protection Act, 1996 with respect to authorizations for brand owners to sell spirits manufactured for them in Ontario /
Projet de loi 116, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les

alcools et la Loi de 1996 sur la réglementation des alcools et des jeux et la protection du public en ce qui concerne les autorisations permettant aux propriétaires de marque de vendre des spiritueux fabriqués pour eux en Ontario.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: At the root of this bill is the Canadian Club heritage brand centre in Windsor. Years ago, Hiram Walker sold the rights to another distiller to produce Canadian Club whiskey. Because CC is manufactured now by someone else, the product can't be sold at the historic brand centre. This bill will correct that, and we hope, convince the foreign owners of the brand to keep the centre open. It's an important piece of our history, and it attracts 15,000 visitors a year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not quite the explanatory note, but I'll let it go. Thank you.

1320

PETER KORMOS MEMORIAL ACT
(TRILLIUM GIFT OF LIFE NETWORK
AMENDMENT), 2017

LOI DE 2017 COMMÉMORANT
PETER KORMOS (MODIFICATION
DE LA LOI SUR LE RÉSEAU TRILLIUM
POUR LE DON DE VIE)

Mme Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 117, An Act to amend the Trillium Gift of Life Network Act / Projet de loi 117, Loi visant à modifier la Loi sur le Réseau Trillium pour le don de vie.

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.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, as you well know, today is the fourth anniversary of the passing of Peter Kormos. Peter Kormos served in this Legislature for 23 years. He was a gifted MPP who served his constituents in Welland very well. This is in his memory.

Currently, the Trillium Gift of Life Network requires that consent be obtained before tissue can be removed from a human body. Under the proposed amendment, consent would no longer be required; we would use presumed consent. But a person may object to the removal of the tissue prior to his or her death, or a substitute may object on his or her behalf after the death has occurred. If an objection is made, no tissue shall be removed from the body.

In honour of Peter.

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT
ACT (STRIKE AND LOCK-OUT
INFORMATION), 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL
(RENSEIGNEMENTS SUR LES GRÈVES
ET LES LOCKOUTS)

Mme Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 118, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 with respect to information relating to strikes and lock-outs / Projet de loi 118, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail en ce qui concerne les renseignements sur les grèves et les lockouts.

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.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, as you know, Peter Kormos—this is the fourth anniversary of his death—always had an anti-scab bill on the docket. He was a defender of workers—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Explanatory note, please.

M^{me} France Gélinas: In his memory, I would like to read that the Labour Relations Amendment Act would amend the Labour Relations Act to require employers to provide information regarding strikes and lockouts and their use of replacement workers to the minister. The minister is required to publish that information that he or she receives.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Laura Albanese: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

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

Minister.

Hon. Laura Albanese: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(b), Mr. MacLaren and Mr. Oosterhoff exchange places such that Mr. MacLaren assumes ballot item number 76 and Mr. Oosterhoff assumes ballot item number 48; and

That, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notices for ballot items 47, 48, 49 and 50 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. Albanese moves that, notwithstanding standing order 98(b), Mr. MacLaren and Mr. Oosterhoff exchange places such that Mr. MacLaren—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense.
Do we agree? Carried.
Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY JOURNÉE MONDIALE DE SENSIBILISATION À L'AUTISME

Hon. Michael Coteau: I rise today to recognize World Autism Awareness Day, which falls this weekend, on Sunday, April 2. As the Minister of Children and Youth Services, I'm committed, and this government is committed, to supporting children and families living with autism spectrum disorder.

I'd like to begin by recognizing the incredible network of parents, family members, service providers, advocates and researchers, who work so hard and with great care to support those with autism.

To the dedicated parents, many of whom have given all of their time to ensure their children have a voice, I want to say thank you. This government recognizes and shares your unwavering commitment to your children and to the autism community.

Last year, our government announced changes to autism services and supports and introduced the new Ontario Autism Program. This commitment was supported with a new investment of \$500 million over five years.

Many of you have reached out to me in recent weeks with questions about the Ontario Autism Program. Many of you have asked questions and brought forward concerns about the transition of this new program and what it means to your families. I want you to know that I'm listening. This government and my ministry are listening.

I want you to know how much we value the amount of commitment and time you put into helping children with autism and helping your community. I recognize your fears, and I assure you that we are working to ensure the best possible outcomes for you and your children. I want to assure you that we will support you and your children as we transition to the new Ontario Autism Program. We want to go above and beyond to help every child receive what they need.

I will be corresponding with you directly in the next few weeks to ensure that your transition to the new OAP can be done with confidence and smoothness.

Mr. Speaker, we have kept the door open, consulting and working together with families, service providers, partners and experts to best address the many complex challenges faced by those living with autism so they can have the opportunities they need to grow up and to reach their full potential. I'm committed to ongoing engagement and conversations with families across the province.

Earlier this week I visited one of our autism spectrum disorder diagnostic hubs, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, and met with families and leaders across the province. I saw first-hand the amazing work they're doing with children with autism in Ontario. I was grateful to hear from parents about their perspectives on the new hubs, and to see the quality of care and attention given to our province's children with autism. It was a great opportunity to reflect on the progress we've made so far on this journey.

Since announcing the new autism program last year, we've been listening to parents and focusing our efforts on improving access to support and services. I'm pleased to provide our community with the following updates.

In 2016-17 the ministry added 64 new IBI spaces, and over 2,000 families have received direct funding to purchase services and support. Our investments are also expected to serve almost 3,000 more children in ABA this year. These investments have reduced the average wait time by 23% for IBI and 4% for ABA.

I have heard from families how important it is to have choices. Therefore, a direct funding option will be available in the new OAP for all families who want it. A smooth transition into a new OAP for families is our priority. I want to assure families that when June is here, current direct funding will continue to be offered through the transition period until a spot becomes available in the new program.

As of January, five new diagnostic hubs are improving the availability of more timely ASD diagnostic assessment so children can start accessing services as quickly as possible.

As of February, parents have access to four new play-based early-intervention pilots for young children showing early signs of ASD. These early-intervention sites in four communities will help children under the age of three meet individual goals in the areas of communication and play.

These are important new initiatives, but we have so much more work to do. We're going to continue to move forward.

1330

I want to thank the clinical expert committee, which has been out there consulting with parents, stakeholders and families. I also want to thank the OAP advisory committee for their dedication throughout this process. I am waiting for their recommendations, which will inform the design and implementation of the new program.

Over the next year, we will continue to work together on the design of the new OAP. The advice of the committees, families and service providers will help us reach our overall goal to create improved access to services, more supports for families and more treatment spaces for children and youth with autism, across all ages and needs. Together, we're creating a comprehensive program that responds directly and effectively to the needs of children and youth with autism.

Supporting children, youth and adults with autism requires a whole-of-government approach. That's why

we're working with our partners, like the Ministry of Education, to strengthen in-school supports to help students to transition into full-time school. We're also supporting education and employment opportunities for young people and adults with autism as we take additional steps to implement the new program.

This government, and my ministry, are committed to working together with families every step of the way.

In closing, as our government marks a decade of supporting World Autism Awareness Day, I pledge this government's continued commitment to work together with families, service providers and across ministries to ensure everyone with autism in Ontario has the support and services they need to realize their dreams and reach their full potential.

I want to again thank parents for their advocacy efforts and patience. I look forward to ongoing conversations on the design and implementation of this new program.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: Of course, today, we're trying to shine a light on World Autism Awareness Day, which the United Nations first developed in 2007. I believe this is this ninth year, and we have a theme this year. The theme is "Toward Autonomy and Self-Determination." What does that mean exactly? That means that we want to ensure that every child, every youth, every adult has the ability to reach their fullest potential and have the best quality of life in Ontario. I don't think that's too much to expect in a fantastic province in the fantastic country such as we're in.

The minister just spoke about a decade of supporting families of children with autism, and I wish that were the case. I look forward to decades in the future of absolute support. I think when he says he's listening, I believe him. I believe he is listening. But we need to have action.

I'm just coming from hearings on Bill 89, which is to redevelop the whole child welfare system in Ontario, to bring it forward. What we're hearing from the youth who were consulted is that they want to have the voice of children and youth heard. They know what is in their own best interests, and they want to have a say in where they're going to live, where they're going to school and what kind of treatment they need. I think the same can be said for families with youth and children with autism—that not just the families want to be consulted, but that we talk to children who went through therapy, who now can tell us what they experienced and how best to go about it.

There are some fantastic organizations in my community that serve not just children with autism, but children with all types of learning disabilities and physical challenges, and I just want to mention and thank them for all the fantastic work they do. There's DANI, Developing and Nurturing Independence, with that real focus, which is the theme this year of World Autism Awareness Day, of inclusion and integration and self-sufficiency.

I just toured with our leader, Patrick Brown, of the PC caucus Aptus Treatment Centre for Complex Disabilities.

It supports over 200 children, teens and adults with a dual diagnosis of developmental disabilities and mental health disorders. Mr. Speaker, the wait for a residency spot at Aptus is 25 years. I want to give a bit of a shout-out to Ze'ev who took us around, gave us a fantastic tour and introduced us to all his friends and colleagues there.

There's also Reena. Bryan Keshen is somebody I actually went to summer camp with. He's at the helm of Reena, with a fantastic team. Their mission statement states very clearly that they want to promote dignity, individuality, independence, personal growth and community inclusion. Again, they have day programs and residency programs, and they're expanding yet again in my riding of Thornhill.

We need to focus on what kind of therapy is available. We've heard talk from this government about creating hubs in our schools to keep schools open. We're hearing of schools that have low student enrolment. So why not develop autism centres within some of our schools where there's room not just to serve that school population, but other school populations as well? Imagine how much more beneficial it would be for the children who need help if there was a centre that was right in their school and they could get the help they need.

There are people who are advocating for better therapy for the children of families who are struggling. I think that we really should be consulting. Again, I want to mention Bruce McIntosh and his wife, Laura Kirby-McIntosh, from my riding of Thornhill, who are doing such great advocacy work and really trying to get the government, and the opposition parties as well, to understand the challenges and what's needed. It's not just about moving people around on wait-lists, Mr. Speaker. It's about ensuring that the most up-to-date, comprehensive treatment plans are available so that the students can get the help that they need.

I just want to say, en français, que la Journée mondiale de sensibilisation à l'autisme, c'est le 2 avril cette année. Elle nous donne l'occasion de souligner les contributions du personnel de première ligne, des intervenants, des chercheurs, des parents et des proches qui travaillent tous sans relâche et avec grand soin pour soutenir les personnes atteintes d'autisme. Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Président.

Miss Monique Taylor: This Sunday, we will celebrate World Autism Awareness Day, and it is my honour and my pleasure to recognize that in the Legislature today.

Over the past number of years, and particularly the last 18 months, it has been my privilege to get to know many, many families and individuals living with autism. I want to pay tribute to them for their tenacity, their dedication, their intelligence and their incredible resilience. On this day, it is particularly important to recognize the job that they have done in raising autism awareness.

One of the most important things that I've learned is that every person with autism is unique—there is no one-size-fits-all—and that each person, child or adult, with autism has their own specific needs. They might share some common characteristics, but they don't have the

same wants, abilities, strengths, lifestyles and goals. What they all need, more than anything else, is to be understood and to be accepted for who they are, and that doesn't seem too much to ask for. But the fact is, Speaker, that we are still a long way from achieving that. The only way that we can get there is through education. That's what we hope to achieve through days like today.

I speak to mothers and fathers who know that when they go shopping, if their child acts out, they will be on the receiving end of disapproving looks. They know their child will be judged on a set of standards that has no consideration for the extraordinary challenges that they face. Sometimes those looks become comments—hurtful, hateful comments that have absolutely no place in our society.

I hear from adults on the spectrum who take pride in their identity as a person with autism and who want us to understand the diversity within the autism community. Often they had a difficult childhood because they were misunderstood, but as they matured they got to know themselves, were able to understand what made them tick, and have flourished as a result.

We owe that to everyone with autism—to live their life to their full potential. But we are falling short.

The new Ontario Autism Program will be in place within the next few months, but families continue to be unsure of what the future holds, and really, who can blame them? Despite a commitment that autism doesn't end at five, transition to the new program varies based on a whether a child is five or older.

Many families still do not get the funding to pay for the intervention that is needed. They still have to hold fundraisers or go into crippling debt.

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Just a couple of weeks ago, I met with four moms in my constituency office who shared stories of the circus involved in accessing their \$10,000 allotments. They included invoices being wrongly recorded by the service provider, causing problems in reconciliation. It included extensive delays in getting payment, delays which meant that they received late payment fees, which the ministry would not reimburse, even though they caused the delay in payment.

Yes, when I called the minister, he intervened, and those particular cases appeared to be getting corrected. But I just heard this morning that at least one of those parents is still having the same problems.

We have to understand what a situation like that does to a family. These are families who live under incredible stress, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year.

When I speak with them, they show an unbelievable strength of character. Sometimes they make light of their own situation, and then, with little warning, they can break down into tears, triggered by what can be the slightest shift in their mind's focus.

They're living their life on the edge of a knife, and the last things they need are bureaucratic arguments and delays over the money that they're being told they're entitled to.

Speaker, today we strive to improve our understanding of autism, and that includes an appreciation of the diversity of what autism is. But it also requires us to recognize, and not add to, the frustrations and fears that those families feel who are simply trying to do the right thing by their children.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, I just want to take a moment to introduce Andrew Green and Lori Sarkisian, who are two of the best staff in the entire province, who run my constituency office.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. That will get you brownie points.

PETITIONS

SCHOOL CLOSURES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ELEVATOR MAINTENANCE

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: “A petition 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 Ontario.”

I affix my signature to this petition and hand it to page Joshua.

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 petition, will affix my signature, and provide it to page Taylor.

PERSONS WITH COMMUNICATION DISABILITIES

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

“Whereas all government offices and organizations must be obligated to assist and accommodate persons with communication disabilities;

“Whereas a public system should be established to assist persons with communication disabilities, so that they can access public services, private businesses, and government organizations;

“Whereas legal aid should cover human rights and civil matters. Persons with communication disabilities are more vulnerable, more likely to experience discrimination, and more likely to live in poverty and require legal assistance;

“Whereas private businesses cannot make victims of anyone, particularly those with communication disabilities. Presently there is no protection for them, and they are continually taken advantage of;

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

“A public system must be established to assist persons with communication disabilities through legislation. The legislation must be written to hold accountability at all levels of service to assist or guide the communication-disabled with the help of a public system of experts. Advocacy for people with disabilities makes for a better society, one that makes room for everyone.”

I agree and I’m going to give it to Rajeev to be delivered to the table.

HOME INSPECTION INDUSTRY

Mr. Joe Dickson: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario referencing qualifying home inspectors:

“Whereas home inspections are an integral part of the real estate transaction; and

“Whereas there are no current rules and education system to qualify who is and who is not a home inspector; and

“Whereas the public interest is best served by protecting consumers against receiving a bad home inspection;

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

I have attached the signatures and I will sign that too, Madam Speaker.

DENTAL CARE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here concerning the expansion of the public dental health program.

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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;

"—extending public dental programs for low-income children and youth within the next two years to include low-income adults and seniors; and

"—delivering public dental services in a cost-efficient way through publicly funded dental clinics such as public health units, community health centres and aboriginal health access centres to ensure primary oral health services are accessible to vulnerable people in Ontario."

I affix my signature, as I agree with this petition.

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."

On behalf of the thousand or so dogs that have been euthanized because of the way they look, I am supporting this and giving it to Taylor to be delivered to the table.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Granville Anderson: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas electricity prices have increased and in too many cases become unaffordable for Ontarians;

"Whereas Ontario is a prosperous province and people should never have to choose between hydro and other daily necessities;

"Whereas people want to know that hydro rate relief is on the way; that relief will go to everyone; and that relief will be lasting because it is built on significant change;

"Whereas the Ontario fair hydro plan would reduce hydro bills for residential consumers, small businesses and farms by an average of 25% as part of a significant system restructuring, with increases held to the rate of inflation for the next four years;

"Whereas the Ontario fair hydro plan would provide people with low incomes and those living in rural communities with even greater reductions to their electricity bills;

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

"Support the Ontario fair hydro plan and provide relief for Ontario electricity consumers as quickly as possible;

"Continue working to ensure clean, reliable and affordable electricity is available for all Ontarians."

I agree with this petition, Madam Speaker, and will affix my signature and give it to page Ethan.

AUTOMOTIVE DEALERS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Bill 3, the Cutting Red Tape for Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, 2016 is a vital tool that supports Ontario's auto sector by cutting red tape for dealers and consumers when a vehicle is purchased or leased; and

"Whereas, in 2011, the province of Ontario conducted a pilot project on in-house vehicle licensing at two new car dealerships that was well received by the participants; and

"Whereas the province of Quebec has permitted automobile dealers to conduct in-house vehicle registrations since 2003, with 700 dealers currently participating;

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

"That the government of Ontario immediately pass Bill 3 into law, to promote Ontario's auto retail sector by cutting red tape for motor vehicle dealers and consumers to save them time and money."

I support this petition, affix my name and give it to page Max to take to the table.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Wayne Gates: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas our hydro rates have tripled since Conservative governments started privatizing our electricity system; and since Premier Wynne took office ... four years ago, peak hydro rates have increased by more than 50%," which is 10 times the rates of inflation; and

"Whereas the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) has reported" skyrocketing numbers of hydro accounts in arrears; and

Whereas in Ontario, this increase in arrears has tripled to more than 30,000; and

“Whereas the Ontario Chamber of Commerce” claims one in 20 businesses will shut down in the next five years because of high energy costs; and ...

“Whereas the Minister of Energy has the power under the Ontario Energy Board Act to issue directives to the OEB with respect to fees and pricing,” especially as it pertains to “fairness, efficiency, and transparency ... ;

“We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario ...

“To take immediate and tangible steps to reduce the cost of energy,” taking into account the needs of low-income families and small business, since high energy costs are driving them into energy poverty, and finally, to stop the sale of Hydro One.

I agree with this petition, and I'll sign my name.

GRANDVIEW CHILDREN'S CENTRE

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

“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 this and I'll pass it down to page Jace.

LONG-TERM CARE

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

“Whereas Ontario's 627 long-term-care homes play a critical role in the support and care for more than 100,000 elderly Ontarians each and every year;

“Whereas nine out of 10 residents in long-term care today have some form of cognitive impairment, along with other complex medical needs, and require specialized, in-home supports to manage their complex needs;

“Whereas each and every year, 20,000 Ontarians remain on the waiting list for long-term care services and yet, despite this, no new beds are being added to the system;

“Whereas over 40% of Ontario's long-term-care beds require significant renovations or to be rebuilt and the current program put forward to renew them has had limited success;

“Whereas long-term-care homes require stable and predictable funding each year to support the needs of residents entrusted in their care;

“We, the undersigned, citizens of Ontario, call on the government to support the Ontario Long Term Care Association's Building Better Long-Term Care pre-budget submission and ensure better seniors' care through a commitment to improve long-term care.”

I fully support this, affix my name and send it out with page Nicholas.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the decision to sell Hydro One has been made without public input and the sale will be conducted in complete secrecy; and

“Whereas if the people of Ontario lose majority ownership in Hydro One, ratepayers will be forced to accept whatever changes the new owners decide, including higher rates; and

“Whereas Ontario's Financial Accountability Officer has warned the sale of Hydro One would be detrimental to Ontario's financial situation; and

“Whereas the Liberal government has removed independent oversight of Hydro One, including the Auditor General and the Ombudsman.

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

“That the government of Ontario immediately stop the sale of Hydro One.”

I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Sophie to take to the table.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

LONG-TERM CARE HOMES AMENDMENT ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES FOYERS DE SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

Mr. Walker moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 110, An Act to amend the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007 / Projet de loi 110, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les foyers de soins de longue durée.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to stand today and present Bill 110, the Long-Term Care Homes Amendment Act, 2017.

Today I put before the House an opportunity to make seniors' care a priority. I have served as the critic for long-term care and accessibility for just about two years. During this time, I have listened to and watched how the current system responds—and, sadly, how it does not respond—to our seniors' needs. What I have observed and heard loudly to date deeply concerns me. It's compelled me to put one of the critical items into action by way of this amendment.

Bill 110 amends the Long-Term Care Homes Act to give care homes a guarantee that they will receive stable funding to provide better care to Ontario's most frail seniors. By supporting this bill, you are guaranteeing to our seniors that their essentials like food and hydro will be, at a minimum, indexed to the consumer price index, CPI, each and every year. In return for ensuring funding for essentials never falls below the rate of inflation, homes will be better able to support the care needs of residents entrusted in their care, and, most importantly, the residents will know that they are actually a priority. Anything less than that is setting up our 100,000 seniors in long-term care for disaster.

I believe that writing the CPI guarantee into legislation has never been more pressing than today, when nursing homes are facing rising food and hydro costs, and when Ontario seniors are funded about 15% below the national average. That's a fact, so I will repeat it: Ontario spends about \$20 less a day than the rest of our country on seniors in nursing homes, according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information. Sadly, Ontario also spends less per day to feed seniors than it does to feed prisoners: \$8.33 a day versus \$9.73 a day. That is simply not right. The raw food funding level also remains behind other jurisdictions, like Newfoundland, where the government feeds seniors in long-term care at the amount of \$10.27 a day.

1400

Now add to our homes' cost pressures the skyrocketing hydro bills, which have gone up anywhere between 20% and 40%—the hydro hikes are actually costing more than feeding and bathing a frail senior—and consider that the rising electricity costs are eating up the already diminishing resources, and what are we left with? A long-term-care system that is in crisis in every corner of Ontario.

So is it any surprise that one in five seniors in nursing homes is malnourished and that nine in 10 seniors have higher acuity, and half of them are going without the care they need, or that resident-to-resident violence is increasing? This is a predicament facing our province's 630 long-term-care homes and prove that this government has not done enough. They have not made seniors a priority. It proves that it's time for change.

The members will probably hear the Minister of Health and/or the Minister of Seniors Affairs debate today that this government has bumped up funding for

food by 3.7%. I'll pre-empt that spin by reminding them they only bumped it up last year when Ontarians shamed them for their chronic and long underfunding of seniors' homes. Remember, Ontario today spends about 15% below the national average on long-term care. It spends less to feed seniors, and long-term-care facilities are being walloped by soaring hydro bills, which the chief executive officer of the Ontario Long Term Care Association, Candace Chartier, has warned is putting the proper upkeep of seniors' homes in jeopardy.

Here's what one of the operators said about escalating operating costs: "It's an alarming amount of money we're talking about.... If you have a single-home operator who has a 60-bed long-term-care home and he's paying these hydro bills. That's when someone is going to be in financial trouble."

It's no different than at our own homes. Skyrocketing hydro rates are taking money out of our pockets and out of our bank accounts. We have to come up with the money from somewhere. The bills have to be paid. In this case, sadly, it is impacting the food that our seniors receive. We're not giving them the most nutritious food, which is the fundamental basis of all of our health care.

The status quo is simply unacceptable. We need to give the sector stability, and we can do this by ensuring our homes are covered, as a minimum, for inflationary growth so that they can afford more nutritious food and have more money left to support better seniors' care through more personal support workers, new mattresses to reduce bed sores or whatever that need may be in each respective home, as opposed to higher energy costs which are taking money away from front-line patient care.

If there are still members here in this House, in this chamber, in doubt that change is needed, then I will, for their benefit, present the ministry's funding levels from just a few recent years.

In 2012, long-term care was funded below the consumer price index. In fact, not only did the government not fund for inflation, they actually cut our seniors homes' budget by 1.1% in 2012.

In 2013, they funded our seniors' food below the consumer price index again. This means that when food costs when up by 3.1%, the government covered only half of that, or 1.4%, shortchanging seniors in long-term care by millions of dollars that year.

In 2014, they again underfunded. This means that when the CPI increased, the government did not meet the increase. We're falling backwards. If you're not at least staying at the level then you're going backwards. That's pretty common in anything we do and it just cannot happen when it comes to food, the basis, the fundamental need of all of us, and particularly for our valued seniors.

In 2015, it was also underfunded. Costs increased by 2.4% but the government underfunded food and operations by almost a whole percentage point.

That's millions of dollars withheld every year from the people who need it most, the people who built this province: our war veterans who served in the First and

Second World Wars and the Korean War, our parents and our grandparents.

I'm going to be honest—and, frankly, I'm a little upset about it—if we had the \$11 billion this Liberal government pays every year in interest payments to finance its waste and mismanagement, there would be a lot more and better care for our seniors. Imagine the difference, the quality in the nutrition in meals alone—the most anticipated event of a seniors' day—and the quality of life that money could buy.

I think it's shameful that our seniors are paying for the Wynne Liberals scandal and waste. It's not only impacting their nutrition and upkeep of their care homes, it has stalled funding of new beds and the redevelopment of old beds in long-term care. As a result, we have, sadly, 26,500 seniors going without access to a long-term-care bed as Ontario's wait-list hits a new record high this year, with no new bed commitment from this government. Without new beds, the wait-list will climb to 50,000 seniors—50,000 seniors on a waiting list within just the next five years.

In Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes, where my colleague Laurie Scott is the representative, 1,700 seniors are on a wait-list. Peterborough has 2,900 waiting for a bed. How do you justify this inaction to the 1,160 seniors in Burlington who are on the waiting list and who could wait up to 843 days to access a basic bed? That's almost three years. Think of the burden on the families, the stress, the anxiety that creates, not just for the most important person—the person who needs the bed—but for the whole family.

There are 2,100 seniors on the waiting list in Hamilton, where access to a basic bed could take 700 days, and a private room more than three years. Many senior couples are being forced into separate homes because of a lack of available beds, people like Allister and Marion McKerroll, who have been separated for over a year now. They lived together for 69 years. I brought this to the attention of the House. The Premier said she was actually going to take it to the health minister, but nothing has been done here. At some point, words are shallow unless we see action. It's unfortunate for Mr. and Mrs. McKerroll that they're not seeing action to get them reunited. It's simply shameful.

It's also true that this government has missed its redevelopment targets significantly, having developed only 13,000 beds—or so they claim—out of the 30,000 that they pledged. They actually made campaign commitments: "We're going to redevelop 30,000 beds." I have been asking for two years in the estimates committee, "Where's the plan? Where were you going to build them? How many were you going to build, and when?" I got nothing from that feedback, other than great platitudes that, "We've built a third of them." Tell people you're only going to build a third of them. Don't tell them 30,000 if you're only planning to build 10,000 or 12,000. Tell them the truth.

They still refuse to release the capacity plan to show where and when the beds were going to be completed. As

a result of the missed targets, sadly, half of our nursing homes are outdated, and 30,000 beds need to be rebuilt—which the Liberal Party, as I say, committed to redeveloping since they came into government 14 years ago.

Again, Madam Speaker, totally frankly and honestly, if we had that \$11 billion, there would be 17,000 more seniors in long-term care today and a lot more redevelopment of older homes and those beds. Instead, our seniors are paying for this government's mismanagement with capital projects either put off or done in stages, to spread the costs over a longer time, because they have run us into such high levels of debt.

They've had 14 years to complete this capacity plan, and we still don't have any evidence of it. It's not a new thought. The baby boomers are a significant group in our society. Consider that the Liberals knew all along that they were facing a demographic surge in the 75-plus cohort and needed to work harder to meet capacity needs; they made a conscious decision of where they were going to spend—or waste—money, and our seniors are paying the price.

This cost of inaction is that they're short 26,500 seniors' beds and one third of our existing beds will go off-line in eight years because they're too outdated and deemed unsafe, having been built some 30 or 40 years ago.

Madam Speaker, those were election promises made and election promises broken. The government should have done better, but I don't want to hear them say, "We need to do better." We want action today. Our seniors today deserve action—actually yesterday—not tomorrow: today. They need it. Sadly, we're trying to push the government to do that.

They were warned by their own lead on long-term-care beds in 2011 that Ontario was severely behind in capacity and advised that we needed 130,000 beds by 2021 to accommodate all these frail seniors with a nursing bed. Why didn't the government do better? They need to answer that question to the public, to the seniors and to the families why they have done that. They had the data; they knew the facts; they just didn't have the willpower from the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Seniors Affairs—or the Premier, for that matter—to get it done. It's shameful. Billions of dollars this government has wasted, and now the seniors who built our province are paying the price for their waste, overspending and mismanagement.

In 2003, there were 654,000 seniors over 75, meaning that nine seniors were vying for every single long-term-care bed. By comparison, today 13 seniors are vying for every single long-term-care bed. Throw into this mix the hydro disaster and the rising food costs that the care homes are not able to keep up with under the current funding arrangement and you get the message: This Liberal Party chose to head for a crisis in long-term care. They knew exactly what the results and repercussions would be, and they have just turned a blind eye to it. The message that their record on long-term care sends to

Ontarians is that seniors are not valued by their government.

We just heard in our media conference here in the Legislature with the Ontario Long Term Care Association on March 20 that over 11,000 Ontarians signed a petition to call on the government to make seniors in long-term care a priority. This is evidence of the fact that the government has abdicated its responsibility—their priority—to properly fund long-term care, leaving hundreds of thousands of seniors to go without the care they need and deserve.

Long-term care is only going to get worse unless we take action today. I want to implore the government to vote with my bill today, to stand up for seniors, to truly make them a priority and ensure that food and operating costs like hydro are tied to CPI so that they don't have to come as seniors begging for their money every year.

1410

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm pleased to rise on Mr. Walker's PMB bill. Madam Speaker, thank you for allowing me to stand and speak today on the bill. This bill ties annual long-term-care funding and long-term-care homes' operating costs to Ontario's CPI.

I want to say this clearly and loudly so that every member of the government can hear it: Long-term care in the province of Ontario is an absolute disaster. Every week I have people calling my office, and you wouldn't believe what they're telling me is going on in long-term-care homes. They're saying that seniors aren't being fed on time. They're telling me that seniors have such little care that they're stuck in beds and wheelchairs for hours, unable to move. In some cases, they're telling me that their parents are going without a shower for a week. These are residents who built our communities, and the government is not giving them the support they rightly deserve.

That only applies to the residents who can actually get into a long-term-care facility near their homes. In some cases, the wait-lists for these homes are years and years and years. How does that respect these seniors or their families?

Madam Speaker, I'm happy to support this bill and to support any measure by this House which actually attempts to fix the crisis in long-term care in Ontario. I know this member understands that there's a crisis in long-term care in Ontario. In fact, our offices are working together right now to try and get a couple reunited so that they can spend their final years together. I brought that forward with a couple called Clarence and Jessie in Grimsby. They got back together, and they spent the last three months of their lives together. Since that time, Clarence unfortunately has passed away. This is another couple that spent their entire life together: 69 years, and the only time they've been separated was because of long-term care. That's absolutely ridiculous and unacceptable in the province of Ontario.

I think it's clear that long-term-care homes across the province, but especially in Niagara, are underfunded. I've

seen it first-hand: facilities that have ignored necessary repairs because they can't afford it, and staff who have made do with the tools that they are provided because they are not supported.

I appreciate that this bill will increase the funding for long-term care. At a long-term-care facility in Fort Erie—I know Mr. Walker would like to hear this—the workers have to use rubber boots because the drains don't work in the showers. It's appalling.

In fact, I'd like to see it go further. I think this is important, and I encourage the PCs to support this: I'd like to see this government support a minimum standard of four hours of care for every man and woman in a long-term-care home. That's what we need. That's where we should be going with any bill that comes forward. This would ensure that residents in long-term care get the respect that they have earned and they deserve in the later years of their lives, and that they are comfortable. Most importantly, this care would give them the dignity that they deserve.

I'm not just talking about residents here; it's also about the staff. This isn't the fault of the staff. They can't physically be in two places at once. That's why it's so important to have four hours. I know that so many of the front-line workers are working as hard as they can and do the best work that they can.

I'll tell you a quick story. My father-in-law passed away in June. He was in Lundy Manor, and I can tell you, the staff were incredible. They took care of my father-in-law. My wife was there every day with him, but the staff were incredible, knowing how sick he was, knowing that he was comfortable.

The staff—I want this to be said very clearly—end up falling in love with every patient they have. That's the reality, and we've got to make sure that they have the tools to be able to do their job. But how can they expect to do that when they're so understaffed? How can one person be expected to do the job of three? They cannot.

Some have families. Some are lucky enough, like my father-in-law, that they had somebody who was able to retire and take care of them. But a lot do not, and they shouldn't have to wait a week to get a bath, or sit in diapers that have been spoiled for days.

Once again, Madam Speaker, long-term care is a disaster in the province of Ontario. We all know it, we all see it and we all hear it. You owe it to the residents of Ontario and the residents of my riding in Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Niagara Falls to fix this mess and ensure that people can have long-term-care homes so that when they do need them, they are taken care of.

Ensuring that the residents have the care they have earned is the responsibility of this government, and I think it's time they do their job.

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

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I just want to say what a pleasure it is for me to rise as the Minister of Seniors Affairs and speak to Bill 110, introduced by the MPP for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

I want to begin by recognizing the MPP for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for his real and genuine advocacy on the long-term-care file. I had the pleasure of working with him when I was the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care responsible for long-term care, and I know that he brings a genuine passion to this file. He will also be pleased to know that I happen to support the spirit of the bill, and so I will be supporting this bill.

But what's most unfortunate is that while the member has brought forward a bill asking for funding to be pegged to CPI, last year he had the opportunity to support us. We did more than peg increased funding to long-term-care homes to CPI, because in last year's budget, we introduced a budget in which we said that in 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19, funding for long-term-care homes will increase by 2%, which is more than CPI. He had the opportunity to support us in increasing funding to long-term-care homes by an amount that's greater than CPI, but unfortunately, he did not.

So I find it a little ironic that he now brings forward a bill saying that we ought to match it to CPI, while we, as a government, are actually already funding at more than CPI, and he chose not to support us. I have to ask, who is really more supportive of this bill? Because the member opposite himself failed—completely failed—to support his own idea, his own concept, when he had the opportunity.

That said, I also just want to take the opportunity to speak to some of the things that I believe we in this government have done, and speak to some of the investments we have made in long-term care.

For instance, building on what I said, we have almost doubled funding for long-term care to \$3.97 billion in 2015-16 from \$2.10 billion in 2003, which represents an increase of over 85%.

Our government, as I mentioned earlier, included in the last budget a 2% annual increase in funds for the next three years, dedicated to resident care needs, which represents an additional \$81-million investment.

We have invested \$147 million, including hiring over 600 new full-time staff in Behavioural Supports Ontario, and provided long-term-care homes with over \$20 million for staff training, to improve resident safety and advance quality of care.

We also increased by \$10 million our funding for Behavioural Supports Ontario, or BSO, from \$44 million to \$54 million.

We've opened over 10,000 new long-term-care beds and redeveloped 13,500 long-term-care beds since 2003.

The other issue that I do want to address is an issue that I have addressed in the past. The member opposite keeps talking about 30,000 beds. I just want to clarify that what the province committed to was the redevelopment of 30,000 beds, and I know that we have already redeveloped 13,500 beds.

In addition, we have funded 2,500 PSWs and 900 nurses since 2008. Beginning in 2008, we provided \$57.7 million annually to fund 1,200 registered practical nurse positions in our long-term-care homes. We've invested

close to \$70 million in long-term-care homes to improve access to physiotherapy and exercise classes for more seniors. And we have invested in and are improving our safety and inspection of long-term-care homes.

1420

Finally, I want to take a minute to give a shout-out to all of the people who actually make our long-term-care homes come alive: the residents, primarily seniors, and the staff who work there.

I just want to share one story that I think really shines a light on the dedication of our front-line staff. I recall this story, some time back, when there had been a fire at a long-term-care home. Luckily, nobody was injured and everybody was safely evacuated, including the pet birds.

I went to visit some of the seniors who had been affected by the fire in their long-term-care home and had been relocated to another long-term-care home. I met this lady; she was getting her hair done. She was in her late eighties. I said to her, "Ma'am, how are you doing?" She said, "I am doing great. You know, the staff here are so caring." I asked her, "What do you mean?" She said, "Well, yesterday, I was at breakfast," in this new place, "and the caregiver came and asked me, 'How do you like the breakfast?'" The resident said, "I love everything here. The only thing that's different is the bread; in the old nursing home, they used to cut the crusts for me. But I know you guys are really, really busy. It's not really a big complaint. I'm just saying this." The next day—would you believe it, Madam Speaker?—the crust on her bread was cut. To me, it is that attention to detail, that level of caring, that makes what is really the bricks and mortar of the long-term-care home come alive.

Once again, I applaud everybody who works in this sector. I'm so proud and privileged to serve in the role of Minister of Seniors Affairs. I look forward to supporting this bill.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: It's a pleasure to speak today to Bill 110, the Long-Term Care Homes Amendment Act.

Seniors' contributions to our province don't end at 65. In fact, they remain a vital part of our community by sharing their knowledge, experience and expertise. But it's necessary for the government to enhance the care for Ontario's seniors, particularly as shifting demographics are increasing the number of people over the age of 65 in Ontario. More than 26,000 people are on wait-lists for long-term care in Ontario, with an average wait time of over 100 days. Seniors' organizations say those figures are only going to grow unless provincial funding is increased.

Municipalities are already having difficulty addressing the number of seniors that require long-term care across the province. Some of the key issues that they face include an ever-changing regulatory environment, evolving demographics and the regressive nature of property tax. When you consider those issues, Ontario's municipalities and their residents face a perfect storm of growing need for long-term care, but a shrinking cap-

acity. What municipal governments need most is the flexibility to invest their tax dollars in seniors' services, like long-term care, that best suit the needs of their residents.

In closing, our parents and grandparents who require long-term care deserve more than long wait times, they require a safe and highly supportive care environment. Now is the time for this government to provide assistance to our seniors, and the long-term-care homes that serve them, in ways that improve the quality of life for seniors, with a focus on ensuring that funds are going directly to their long-term care.

It's time to recognize our aging population not as a challenge, but rather as an opportunity. Through discussions with seniors in my riding of Whitby–Oshawa, I have heard a clear call to place as much importance on adding life to years as we do on adding years to life.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 110. As the critic for seniors' affairs, home and long-term care. I have been shocked by the chronic underfunding of long-term-care homes in Ontario and the resultant impacts it has had on Ontario seniors.

I recently held public town hall meetings in London–Fanshawe to hear directly from people in my riding about their concerns for either themselves or a loved one in long-term care. I can only say that the response was both overwhelming, and heartbreaking. For each event, the rooms were overflowing with people lined up outside of the room and down the hallways—just to be sure they were part of the community conversation.

First off, I would like to take a moment and thank everyone who took time out of their busy schedules to attend, for their thoughtful comments, and especially for their vulnerability. Many of the experiences that I heard were so intimate, and I want to recognize the courage it takes to share those kinds of personal stories in a public setting.

We also heard from nurses and PSWs who were concerned about speaking on their problematic work environments under the fear of retribution, but they spoke openly and honestly nonetheless. In one case we heard from a woman who had been a personal support worker for 20 years. She spoke about the dramatic increases in patients suffering from mental health issues and complex behavioural needs. In her workplace there are two staff members for every 28 residents. That amounts to six minutes of care for each patient for a two-hour period at breakfast.

We had several people tell us that we need hours of care enshrined in our long-term care. The fact is, Ontario has among the lowest staffing levels in the country. This is neither new nor unexpected, yet for some reason the Liberal government has largely ignored the problem.

Back in 2008, the ministry commissioned what has now become widely known as the Sharkey report. One of the key recommendations from the report was “that a

target staffing of 4.0 paid hours per resident day be set and met by the year 2012.” That target has never been set or met, and as a result, Ontario's seniors in long-term care are paying the price with their dignity and health.

It was the NDP health critic who refused to let the recommendation or the seniors in care be ignored any longer when she introduced her private member's bill entitled the Time to Care Act, which would require long-term-care homes to provide each resident with at least four hours a day of hands-on nursing and personal support services. We only hope that this government will wake up to the realization that Bill 188 needs to be acted upon and not to leave it to languish in committee.

I commend the member for his introduction of this bill. The underfunding of long-term care is at critical levels that is directly impacting patient care. I am genuinely pleased that he has specifically noted the costs of both food and utilities in this legislation. As it stands now, this Liberal government funds the cost of food for prisoners at a higher rate than for seniors living in long-term care; \$8.33 per resident per day is what our long-term-care homes receive to provide daily meals to seniors.

In 2015, a report by the Dietitians of Canada concluded that Ontario homes are “serving cheaper protein foods and fewer fresh fruits and vegetables due to budget constraints.” This has a direct impact on the well-being of seniors, especially those with complex behavioural needs.

Cathy Gapp of the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors was quoted as saying: “Research shows one of the ways to de-escalate behaviours is to give people the food they are comfortable with and familiar with. Many people with dementia revert back to their younger thoughts of what life was like, and comfort food is one of those. It's very hard to react to a situation like that on such a restricted budget.”

The sad truth is that Ontarians are losing faith in the long-term-care system, and chronic underfunding only serves to exacerbate their fears. The Ontario Long Term Care Association has reported that only two out of 10 Canadians believe there will be enough staff to provide care to seniors when they need it; nine out of 10 are concerned that patients are waiting too long for placement in a home; and nine out of 10 are concerned that there will not be enough beds to meet the growing demand.

They have also been lobbying this government for years for stable, predictable funding, yet the calls have fallen on deaf ears. With this bill, I see that the member is trying to do his part to help make that a reality. However, I do have concerns that the amendments proposed do not have dedicated envelopes that can't be redirected elsewhere.

In its current iteration, this increase in funding is specific to long-term-care homes' operating costs, including the cost of food and utilities. There is nothing in the bill that specifically states that this funding cannot be used for other purposes. The minister, if willing, has the

authority to attach conditions to the new funding increases to ensure that they are dedicated to long-term-care homes' operating costs, although we do have to question if the minister, who has allowed our long-term-care homes to fall into a state such as they are, would be persuaded to do so.

1430

I have said it before and I'll say it again: The problems in the long-term-care system are not new and they're not a surprise. Advocates and families have been raising these issues for years, and it's not acceptable that this government continues to refuse to prioritize and stabilize funding for long-term care, nor is it acceptable that they behave as if the problem has just arisen.

What we see is this government investing public funds in more private clinics, the outsourcing of home care providers to private, for-profit companies, the layering after layering of health care bureaucracy, the cuts to front-line staff and services, and the list continues.

Lastly, I want to remind the minister about his announcement in January of this year to strengthen Ontario's quality and safety inspection program. Minister, you promised that legislation was to be introduced early this year, yet we are approaching spring and nothing is in sight. From bed shortages to two-year-long wait-lists to the lack of behavioural supports for the increasing number of Alzheimer's and dementia patients, the funding deficiency in long-term care needs to stop now. Ontario seniors deserve better, and I won't stop demanding better for them until they get it.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's my intention, and, I think, of most of us on this side of the House, to support this bill: because I think it's consistent with the direction the government has been going in and indeed consistent with what the priorities are of all members of this House.

I turn 60 this year, Madam Speaker, and my mom also has a zero at the end of her birthday. I have a feeling she's watching, so, Mom, I'll tell you, I won't give the prefix number.

That's one thing about being an adopted kid: your parents adjust the year you were adopted frequently. If you were born from your parents biologically, they can't mess around with it. I have a lot of different eras I was born in that adjusted well with my parents' sense of age. So I'll just leave it at that.

The investments this government has made have been quite extraordinary in building infrastructure here. I know the member for Prince Edward-Hastings was at a talk I was giving the other day. There was a little graph I used that shows the history of capital investments in buildings, hospitals, long-term-care homes, highways, transit and energy infrastructure in Ontario. Coming out of the Second World War, the government of Canada and the provinces had raised taxes quite significantly to fight the war effort and introduced debt instruments in that period of time. Those taxes were not significantly reduced in the 1940s. As a matter of fact, with all the vets

coming back and the baby boom, massive amounts of money went into building public schools and things for generally young people, because the era of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s was the age of a lot of babies and an unprecedented number of children in the public school system.

We built almost all of our major transportation infrastructure: the subway system in Toronto, the seaway and the Trans-Canada Highway. If you walk across any university campus or you visit any hospital in Ontario, it's estimated that somewhere between 60% and 80% of all the infrastructure in Ontario was built between 1945 and 1970. It's really quite remarkable.

In the 1970s, health care comes on. We established medicare and health care, and now, more recently, it's the cost of that same baby boom aging that is taking up much of the operational costs of government. But a very significant decision was made after Premier Robarts left office. He was the last Premier to get close to 5% of GDP in all of our infrastructure. The 40-years-plus after was a period of massive disinvestment in public infrastructure in Ontario that was unprecedented, through parties of all stripes. As you know, we were all in power over those decades. But we massively disinvested. As a matter of fact, Ontarians were paying as little as 25% of the average that other provinces continued to spend on their infrastructure through that period of time. And in that period of time, the population of Ontario grew from six million to 12 million people by 2000. So we doubled our population and went through a period of historic disinvestment. That's a problem, because starting in the last decade, just over 10 years ago, when we started ramping up—it's only been for about five or six years that we're actually back to the level of infrastructure spending in Ontario that was the case from Premier Robarts all the way back to Premier Hepburn.

The challenge is that all that stuff that was built in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, like many of us who were born in that period of time, is getting, as I am, to 60 years old and older, needing new bits and new parts, and is a little bit creaky and in need of major repairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Say it isn't so.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Oh, it is, my dear friend. It is, sadly.

So we have a massive backlog of 50 years of underinvestment in repair, which we're now trying to catch up on. We have 50 years where we did not keep up building infrastructure proportional or anywhere near the doubling of our population.

And now we have climate change, which is creating climate and weather events that we've never seen before. Burlington, in the last three years, has had three one-in-100-year floods that are basically taking down its storm-water systems, and have caused us three years in a row to replace the operating rooms at the Burlington hospital. I could give you many—you could talk to the warden in the Bancroft area, who I met with recently, about that problem.

That's why I say we should all approach this topic with some humility: We have a problem in Ontario that is

the elephant in the room that no one wants to talk about. We never built what we did when we had a growing population and tax base—every party has their hands dirty on that one—and we never did the repair we need.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I didn't get to talk about how that affects—

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 110. I have to say, what a well-thought-out, well-researched piece of legislation. Clearly the fact that you have acknowledgement from the government that they intend to support it speaks to how thorough it was.

I think it's important to note that the two specifically related rising costs that we are looking to protect with Bill 110 are, of course, food and—there it is again—utilities. So we're back to those rising costs.

I know the minister spoke about an investment that was made in the last budget—

Hon. Dipika Damerla: You didn't even vote for that.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: —but the point of Bill 110 is the consistency. What the long-term-care homes want to hear from the government is consistency in the expectation—and Minister, if you could give me one example of when an opposition member supports government budget bills, I'd love to have you table it, because it doesn't happen.

Now, Bill 110: We have 26,496 people looking for long-term-care placements, and there's more of a story to that number, because frankly, what is happening today—and we are all dealing with it in our constituency offices, and if you're not, then you're not paying attention—is families being told/encouraged/bullied into taking long-term-care placements that are nowhere near where their family member wants to live or where their family member has lived.

So instead of a situation where I have the opportunity to visit my mother or my grandparent because the long-term-care home is in my community, and I'd like to go every day, I'm faced with an hour and a half, and suddenly that daily visit turns into twice a week. Well, guess what that does to people? Guess what that does to the guilt of the family? Guess what that does to the senior living in that long-term-care home, wondering why they don't get to see their grandkids and their children anymore?

The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound raised the one egregious example where two individuals who have spent 69 years together are being separated. Well, that's happening every day with family members and with friends.

In my riding of Dufferin–Caledon, we get snow. We get rain. We get freezing rain. We can't have our loved ones an hour and a half away in a seniors' home where we can't see them.

1440

I know that there are many members who want to speak to this bill because it is an excellent one, but I want people to remember: This is about our loved ones.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: I'll get right to it. I want to commend my colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound on Bill 110. Of course, this is an issue that touches every riding across the province and certainly my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, where I recently heard many of the concerns we're hearing about today from residents in a local long-term-care home. In fact, a gentleman who had spent some years at the home wrote me in the late summer to ask that I come to speak to residents about the long list of concerns that he went on to detail relating to care at the facility and in those across the province.

To be clear, when I called to take him up on his offer, he was sure to explain that it was not the staff or the facility itself that he was concerned about; they do a great job at his place of residence. It was more with regard to the support their home and others like it across the province receive from this government.

During my visit and talk, I heard from a number of residents about their worries relating to proper care, and reports that they were hearing on the lack of government support. Following discussion with residents, I spoke to a number of staff who echoed those concerns—long-term-care funding, setting requirements for minimum staffing levels, additional funding for physiotherapy, and the fact that the current funding limits management and their ability to make ends meet in providing proper care and meals, for instance.

Back in February, the Ontario Nurses' Association called for more funding and a minimum of four hours of care per day for long-term-care residents. Of course, we saw the report come out of the Toronto Star earlier this month that showed that here in Ontario, we provide more funding every day to feed prisoners, those who have broken the law, than we do for our seniors. That's \$9.73 per day for prisoners, compared to \$8.33 for seniors in care homes who have spent their entire working careers providing for their families, have paid into the system, and simply want some fairness for themselves in their glory days. This becomes even worse when we hear from our CEO of the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors that an increase of just 33 cents per day would drastically improve the quality of life and allow long-term-care homes to provide for better nutrition.

This bill from my colleague for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound makes positive steps in the right direction to address this problem. By tying long-term-care funding to the Ontario consumer price index, the government could ensure that our seniors in care receive the support they deserve and have a drastically improved quality of life.

Thank you for your time, Speaker.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: In my short time here, I'm going to give you a couple of examples. One's quite personal and one is about a nursing home in my riding, in the town of Mitchell.

About a month ago, they wrote to the health ministry to tell them what problems they were having in keeping their nursing home open. Despite what the government keeps bragging about, telling the public that they are increasing funds and care for nursing homes, this nursing home is facing real challenges. Their costs have gone up. Certainly hydro has been well documented as one of the factors that's not helping them out at all. They're going to be in a deficit situation. I do hope that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care gets back to them in a timely manner, because this is getting to be a very serious situation.

The other thing I would like to talk about is the food allowances for seniors. This was first brought to my attention when my mother-in-law went to a nursing home in Palmerston. Palmerston is a little town north of Listowel, where I live. She was very lucky to get that bed. She was in the hospital at the time. This bed became available and away she went, and she was very comfortable there.

Now, my mother-in-law was a very determined lady and worked in business all her life. She passed away last summer at the age of 93. But she knew in her business life that if she didn't take care of her customers and give them the attention they deserved, she wouldn't have them very long.

This is something that if she had known about the food allowances for seniors versus prisoners in this province, she would have had a bird. In fact, I don't doubt she would still be living today because she would have wanted to get up and tell somebody about it, that this was just absolutely silly. She had spent all her life paying taxes and working hard, her and her husband, and this is what she got back. She paid quite a bit of money to stay there. Yet we see the differences between what people in long-term care receive for food allowances versus those in prisons.

The person who owns the Royal Terrace in Palmerston had brought this to my attention a couple of years ago. He said, "It's getting very difficult to keep on budget with the allowances we're getting for food allowances for the day." The other thing he also pointed out is that he's been trying to get more beds in his home. He keeps getting refused all the time. He has applied and applied and applied, and he says it's very, very difficult to see why he is getting turned down all the time. It costs him a lot of money to keep reapplying for these beds, and he's getting very discouraged.

I hear that all sides are going to support Bill 110, and I congratulate the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for bringing it forward. It's a good bill, and I hope that it does bring some change to long-term care.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound to wrap up.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to thank all the speakers from the third party, the government and of course my colleagues for speaking in support of this.

By supporting this bill, we're going to have more nutritious food—healthier, happier. There's nothing any

of us like more than a good nutritious meal to make us feel more content, happy and good about ourselves. The funding for increasing hydro costs will ensure that funds are not taken away from food and front-line care, and more time for workers to spend with the actual patients.

The Minister of Seniors Affairs asked a question and I'm going to actually respond. She asked why I didn't vote for their budget, even though they suggested that last year they put more money into seniors. I'm going to tell her why: because they overspent \$11 billion that goes to interest payments, not to these seniors that it could be going to. They have doubled the debt in their 13 years to over \$300 billion, so that money cannot go to our seniors.

There was no money in the budget for new beds despite knowing that we're going to have 50,000 people in six years on waiting lists. They didn't make a firm commitment to make sure the beds they promised were going to be redeveloped on a timeline that I could understand. It's chronic underfunding. One of the other members, the Minister of the Environment asked about the elephant in the room: It is that debt and deficit.

Bill 110 was the product of feedback I've received from a lot of people. Long-term-care associations like the Ontario Long Term Care Association, the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors, the Christian Labour Association of Canada, from seniors groups, administrators, nurses, PSWs and, most importantly, families and patients. But I also introduced it because I care. I believe seniors deserve our respect.

The fundamental question that we all need to ask before we vote on this bill, and what everyone should have to answer, is, whether they think Ontario seniors in long-term care deserve the chance to live with better support and dignity. I believe our seniors deserve better and over 11,000 Ontarians signed a petition to say the very same thing. It is my hope that every single member here will do the same and will support my bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

KICKSTARTING PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION ACT, 2017
LOI DE 2017 DE DÉMARRAGE
DE LA PARTICIPATION CITOYENNE

Mr. Hillier moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 77, An Act to enact the Kickstarting Public Participation Act, 2017 / Projet de loi 77, Loi édictant la Loi de 2017 de démarrage de la participation citoyenne.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's a pleasure for me today to debate Bill 77, the Kickstarting Public Participation Act. I wanted to first explain some of the motivation and the reasons why I have drafted this bill and have chosen it as my ballot option.

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All members in the House understand that all members have precious few opportunities to actually influence public policies; however, our singular ballot day is the exception to that rule. It is the one day that we can demonstrate to other members and to our constituents that we have a unique and specific priority that is not necessarily our party's priority or the government's priority. Our ballot day is the one time we are not responding to some other policy but advancing our own initiative.

All members of the House also share—and I can say this with complete certainty—many similar experiences as members of the Legislative Assembly. Indeed, I would say that we have far more shared experiences than we have differences, and it is these shared experiences and interactions that help us develop our private members' bills.

Bill 77 is a result of my interactions with my constituents. I think everybody will have shared these experiences when we have constituents come to our office, often seeking our advice, our guidance, our help or our advocacy in helping them advance some of their initiatives. That's very commonplace. We all see it. We also know that, often, when our constituents come to see us, although their list of ideas and initiatives may be exhaustive and may be infinite, where they really need help is often singular, and it's in the place of funding. That's where most projects get bogged down. It's where most people come to seek our assistance and our advice.

Bill 77 recognizes this singular but huge obstacle. We've seen it with service clubs. We've seen it with not-for-profits, with social enterprises that have come into our offices seeking our assistance. We have also seen—and, I think, as an unintended consequence—that some of the new regulations from the AGCO have constrained and limited not-for-profits and service clubs from being able to raise funds on their own. We've seen this with service clubs having difficulties hosting raffles or lotteries or 50-50 draws. Their mechanisms to raise funds have been diminished.

We see this for all kinds of examples. I've seen people come into my office to get a new scoreboard at the ball diamond, a new labyrinth walk in Carleton Place or a new splash pad in Perth—service clubs wanting to be engaged, people wanting to be engaged but funding being a significant problem. Bill 77 brings a new mechanism forward for service clubs and not-for-profits.

Before I speak to the bill itself, I would also like to thank the many municipalities around the province who have sent myself and the Premier letters of support for Bill 77 and who are encouraging all members to support Bill 77. Communities such as Essex, Lanark county, Carleton Place and Mississippi Mills have all passed resolutions supporting it.

Speaking to the bill, the bill requires the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport to maintain a website to facilitate the funding of projects that benefit local communities through the use of crowdfunding. The bill establishes the requirements to submit a proposal for

publication on a website, as well as the manner in which the minister is to collect and distribute the donations received via the website. Anyone may submit a proposal to the minister through the website as long as their proposal contains the appropriate project description, the fundraising target, and other prescribed information.

The minister, through the website, can accept a project proposal and begin crowdfunding donations once the following criteria have been met:

—The sponsored organization (the municipality or civic group) has approved the project.

—The sponsor organization meets the definition of "qualified" in subsection 149.1(1) of the Income Tax Act.

—Approval has been granted by the affected municipality.

—The project is not similar to an already approved project.

—The project meets any further prescribed conditions.

The minister will then be required to keep track of the amount of donations received for each project on the website. Refunds are granted for donations that exceed the fundraising targets or for projects removed from the website.

I would like to add that this is meant for civic engagement and public participation. It's not meant to displace or supplant municipal responsibilities. I've been made aware by some members of the House and by some municipalities that they're concerned that this would allow roads and bridges to be done under crowdfunding. That, of course, is not the intention of the bill, but those concerns have merit. If the bill passes second reading, at committee I would certainly be open to an amendment to close that loop and ensure that core municipal responsibilities are not to be funded by a crowdfunding mechanism.

I think it's also important for me to just mention a few things. Having all civic projects in the province located on one website will certainly make it more accessible for individuals to contribute and also to be aware and to be engaged in their own communities, as well as other communities across the province. Having all projects listed on a single site, rather than spread across the many different crowdfunding platforms, will certainly be a significant advantage. A single site specifically for Ontario would promote greater engagement with one's own community as well as with the larger community of Ontario.

At the present time, there is no civic-focused platform operating in Ontario. I should also add that civic crowdfunding allows those closest to the ground, those residents themselves, to quickly identify, plan, gather resources and implement a project that addresses those immediate needs that are identified by the people living in those communities.

This is not unique. There is civic crowdfunding happening around North America and around the world at present. However, they are done as a one-off condition. As we take a look at those, you can see that most of the civic crowdfunding projects are very small. Most are

about \$4,000. That's the average: \$4,000. Most of the contributions are \$5 to \$10. These are not the big mega-projects. These are satisfying a specific niche need in their communities. We've seen them for community gardens. We've seen them for splash pads, improvements to docks, a number of different—we've seen them for murals on old buildings that are less than esthetically pleasing. They come from all corners and in all fashions.

Maybe I'll end off by reading a quote here from Katie Lorah. She's a director at a civic crowdfunding platform in Brooklyn, New York. She is an urban planner whose work centres on mobilizing community participation in public projects. Here's the quote:

"The types of small, local, place-based campaigns that ... crowdfunding platforms support through civic crowdfunding occupy a necessary niche along a" very long and wide "spectrum that runs from large, government-led infrastructure projects and sprawling social programs, to charitably supported public-good initiatives led by the traditional civic sector, to small, citizen-led and emergent grassroots movements and projects. Rather than threatening the heavy end of that spectrum, civic crowdfunding has a great power to draw from the light end, mobilizing the resources of citizen ideas, energy, and small donations to deploy quick, visible, meaningful change to communities that need it most.

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"This has two powerful side effects: First, the 'quick wins' achieved on the small scale can help government do its job better by identifying areas of need, momentum, and leadership, and by sending the message that 'these are not people we can ignore.' Second, civic crowdfunding raises more than just money—it builds local leadership, strengthens place-based social networks, and gives a real sense of hope that positive change is possible. In a neighborhood that has seen decades of neglect and systemic disinvestment, that hope can be transformative."

It's why we've called it "kickstarting public participation." It's funding, but it's also engaging people in their community, in their democracy, in their government.

I do encourage and hope that all members of the House see value in Bill 77 and support it at second reading.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I want to thank the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington for bringing this forward. It's an interesting idea. While listening to him, I have to admit he did sway me a little bit, because I was going to vote against it. Now I'm not so sure.

My major concern about this bill is that it really is a slippery slope. Right now out there we have far too many social service agencies—hospitals on down-and-out—that spend a vast majority of their time focused on how to raise funds for what they should be doing and spending with their front-line services because of the lack of funding and because of unstable funding from governments.

What I fear that this would do would be to destabilize that even further. It's a very fine line between crowdfunding and charity—"charity" is the old way of saying it.

I'll give an example to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, and that is that, sadly, under this crowdfunding model, the wealthy may very well get their way, and those who don't have the money to donate won't get their say. For example, if he wanted to put a park in the centre of his riding and name it the Randy Hillier Park and put a statue in that park of Randy Hillier himself, and if he wanted to set up a crowdfunding spot to do that and happened to have the means to fund said statue and said park, he'd be off to a running start. Whereas someone who's on social assistance who might actually just prefer to have a bigger social assistance cheque, might not get that social assistance cheque, but Mr. Hillier might get his park and his statue.

I don't think that's the kind of world I want to live in, quite frankly, Madam Speaker. I think there's a place for government. There's a very strong role for government. I think government should play a stronger role. We have far too many examples in this province alone of the creeping privatization of the public sphere. Witness the sell-off of Hydro One. Witness the privatization of many of our transit projects. Witness the Auditor General's report that said that \$8 billion have been wasted by doing private projects we could have done publicly. That's her dollars-and-cents figure.

In my riding, they crowdfunded for a bus to get from Liberty Village to downtown because our transit system had let them down. The one thing it did kick-start was the government, which woke up and said, "We'd better get something going here," and finally, they did. So it was advantageous in that regard, but it shouldn't be up to citizens to fundraise—as even the member himself says—for a bridge, for a park, for transit.

For small projects: absolutely. It's happening already, of course, and that would be my other point: It's already happening. There are many crowdfunding sources for individual, smaller, artistic-based projects. That's a good thing. That's a way of getting your film made, your book published or your mural done. That truly is civic engagement, but again, wouldn't it be great if we actually had status-of-the-artist legislation, if we actually had what many European countries have and recognized our artists as real workers, and gave them tax benefits, gave them something they could live on and gave them housing?

When we look at the days where charity filled in where government didn't go—the days of the robber barons, the Dickens days of England—those were the days when a Scrooge could say, "Are there no work-houses? Are there no prisons?" We don't want the slippery slope to take us back to the days when charity was all you had to rely on, and raising funds for projects that were absolutely necessary had to be done through charitable means and wasn't done through taxes.

There's a very good way of raising funds for absolutely beneficial public projects. That's called paying taxes.

If the government doesn't have the backbone to demand the appropriate revenue tools to pay for what we need—and what does the UN say we need, Madam Speaker? We need housing. We need decent jobs. We need education. We need health care. These are human rights, and these, quite rightly, should be the domain of government.

I don't have any objection to the small projects. People will do what they will do. I'm sure all of those small projects would be a lot happier if they got government funding and didn't have to crowdsource for it. That would be their druthers too. But because government isn't stepping up where it should, and because that's all that they've got, in that sense I can see that there's a role.

But beyond that, I'm very concerned. I'm very concerned that we're taking away the role of government and giving it to the private companies, to folk. When we do that, some will gain and most will lose. As I said, going back to my example, those with a lot of money will raise the money far easier for the projects that they favour than those who don't have the money. So it favours those with money.

I hope that we live in a society and in a structure where all are equal. This would chip away at that structure. There's a cautionary note here, Madam Speaker, a cautionary note.

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

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I'm always delighted to take part in the debate on Thursday afternoon, one of my favourite times of the week, when we get discussions on all sides of the House, with really good ideas and really good conversations—and sometimes contrary opinions, but quite often we discuss areas and issues of common interest and concern.

I want to salute the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, and the member from Parkdale–High Park, always an advocate for the not-for-profit sector. To both of you, thank you for your ideas.

Thank you to the member opposite for putting forward this idea, for a couple of reasons. Number one, it's an important conversation for us to be having, about the support for the not-for-profit sector. So I'm going to use my time to talk a little bit about that, with the members' indulgence, and then talk a little bit about why I think there's some merit to this conversation, but—I think the member from Parkdale–High Park touched on this—I think we need to just be aware of usurping the roles or overtaking some of the things that already exist. How would we find a complement to that, and is this really an arena, given the things that government is already doing, where we should be active?

One of the reasons I'm delighted about the member opposite's motion and discussion today about the Kickstarting Public Participation Act is because civic engagement and engagement at the community level are something that everyone in this House cares about. We all are active in our local communities, and we all are familiar with the number of vehicles that exist already. There are several great community organizations and on-

line crowdfunding sites that exist—for example, gofundme.com, chuffed.org, FlipGive, FundRazr, Small Change Fund, cookiejar.com. These are all really great names for organizations that help to do what the member is trying to talk about here. Crowdfunding is not just a fundraising tool, but it creates an online community, a discussion and a mechanism for other funders and sponsors.

It's important to note, too, that our federal government has a role to play here through the Canada Revenue Agency. Of course, the member opposite for Parkdale–High Park talked about taxes and so on. They of course have the charities directed federally, and they have a searchable list of all Canadian charities.

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Prior to being elected—one of the reasons that I'm so engaged in this discussion is because I was a vice-president at the United Way of Ottawa. As members in the House will know, United Way is an organization that is international in scope and is arguably one of the best fundraising organizations in the world. While there, I learned a lot about community development, but I learned an important maxim, and that is, the number one reason people don't give, Speaker, is because no one asks them.

To the extent to which we can create platforms that engage people, that ask them, that really get them excited about a cause or an interest that's close to their heart, I think that's a very valuable tool. From the community engagement perspective, I think there is merit in creating these arenas where people can give and where they can have conversations about things that are important to them.

Back to United Way for a moment: This is where organizations that raise money like United Way are often involved, not just in the raising of funds, but they exist to address issues at a systemic community level. They are building communities and changing lives and, year-round, raising money but also investing it in organizations and in very valuable causes. They are often involved with—always, in my experience—municipal leaders in figuring out what the priorities are for communities and how communities can come together.

Those issues that the United Way has addressed really are at the root of what I think the member opposite is trying to engender: What is happening in a community? What are the priorities in a community? What should communities be addressing, whether it's mental health, whether it's poverty, whether it's housing or whether it's issues with respect to youth and youth engagement? These are all important issues. The degree to which organizations like United Way and others are already addressing those—I'd want to make sure that we weren't duplicating our efforts.

I just want to say, in closing, a quick word about the Ontario Trillium Foundation, which, of course, is an important mechanism for our government. It's a part of my ministry; I'm very proud of Trillium. It is unique in the Canadian charitable landscape. They really exist to build

capacity in organizations and people who are doing the important work of engagement, solving problems and addressing a wide variety of issues right across the spectrum. I would want to make sure that any endeavour that we got involved in as a government would not duplicate the work of the Trillium Foundation, which invests \$136 million a year in projects in communities right across our province. They really address the entire scope of communities in Ontario and the issues, common interests and concerns within them. Of course, Trillium engages thousands of volunteers in their efforts as well, so we need to be mindful of that.

Through the conversations that we have with organizations like Trillium, be it in our pre-budget conversations or ongoing meetings with the not-for-profit sector, this idea that the member opposite is presenting is a new one. It hasn't come up in my many conversations with the not-for-profit sector. It's refreshing to hear new ideas. I think there's always merit in discussing and having these conversations.

The caution I would apply is that we need to just make sure that there aren't unintended consequences from whatever we might do and that we're not duplicating efforts. But I do appreciate the member opposite's tabling of this conversation so that we can discuss how to create avenues for people to continue to give in their communities, to be mutually interested and concerned and, of course, always open to have that conversation about community engagement and making sure that we're staying receptive to people across this province who want to continue to invest.

I'll close with a quote, Madam Speaker. The other thing I learned at United Way is, "A community is not truly great until it is great for everyone." So, to the extent that we can, again, encourage engagement, encourage donations, encourage civic discourse, I support that very much. I thank, again, the member opposite for bringing this conversation to the floor of the Legislature.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: Madam Speaker, it's always nice to see you in the chair on a Thursday afternoon.

It's a great opportunity for me to rise in the House and speak in favour of Bill 77 from my good friend and my neighbour, the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. His bill, the Kickstarting Public Participation Act, is a great example of the kind of innovative thinking that Mr. Hillier displays on a regular basis here at Queen's Park and in his riding.

Traditionally, when we measure provincial government support for community or civic projects, we tend to do it in dollars and cents. But the reality is, there are so many worthwhile projects that it's impossible for the government to fund them all. The good news is, for ridings like Leeds-Grenville, we're blessed with so many people who really dig deep and financially support community projects.

The point I want to make is that technology is changing the demographics of who is giving that money to

community projects. Through crowdfunding campaigns and through social media, we're seeing a real explosion in the number of younger people involved in fundraising initiatives. With the click of a button online they can donate \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, whatever denomination they choose. I think it all adds up to a tremendous amount of money that is donated through crowdfunding. The stat I want to leave members with is that a 2015 estimate puts the value of crowdfunding at \$34 billion worldwide.

The challenge that any campaign has, of course, is standing out amongst other incredible projects that are out there. I think that's really where the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has really come up with a very unique idea, so much so that he's received a number of supportive letters from our municipal partners across the province. I have with me letters of support from the town of Essex, the council for the municipality of Mississippi Mills, the town of Carleton Place, and even the county of Lanark, which the member so wonderfully represents in eastern Ontario. I'm glad that the county and the other three municipalities have already come up with resolutions of support even before we've had our vote today for second reading.

Here is where the member's idea comes in. It proposes to use the government, not as a means of funding, but as a means of tapping those community organizations to look at the billions of dollars that people are already giving. The website that the member proposes within the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport would really serve as more of a provincial database for these projects. It would provide, I think, a trusted platform for those who want to connect with others who are looking to give and looking for those projects that are in need.

I have to look at my own riding of Leeds-Grenville. I can see how an idea like this would benefit organizations in the communities I serve. Not every organization is working to raise money for a community project and has that capacity to organize an effective marketing campaign to drive donations. Not everybody can do that. I think the beauty of this is that while some of those ideas occasionally catch lightning in a bottle and take off, what Bill 77 would do is allow these projects to connect with a wider audience using this website and leveraging the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport to give these projects a better chance to succeed. They may reach someone in their own backyard, in their own jurisdiction, in their own area, but they might connect with someone many, many places away. It could be another corner of Ontario.

I think that's why this project deserves our support of second reading. We deserve to get it into committee and have that broader discussion. I want to compliment the member, I want to thank him for bringing this bill forward, and I'm going to look forward to supporting it this afternoon.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House. Like others, I enjoy Thursday

afternoons because non-partisan, thought-provoking legislation is put forward. Sometimes, we get overly partisan with a lot of legislation. With this one, I sense the member for—it's a long one.

Mr. Steve Clark: Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. John Vanthof: Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. I sense his frustration, because I'm sure every constituency, every office, has people come forward with a great idea and, quite frankly, there's not enough money in the pot.

When I look closely at this legislation and at some of the comments, there's more to this and possibly more problems than some are anticipating. The way I read the legislation, it isn't simply setting up a website. Take number 4, where it's up to the minister: "The minister is satisfied that the project is not substantially similar to a project currently published on the website." And number 5: "The minister is satisfied that the proposed target amount would reasonably cover the costs of the project."

1520

It's stuff like that. This isn't just a simple website; this is taking crowdfunding, which in some instances is a good idea, to be administered and overseen, the projects themselves, by the government. That's not just a slippery slope of what gets funded, but of what project is favoured or not. I'm leery of this: that if crowdfunding becomes an administered thing through the ministry—and I'm not saying that it would happen under the current minister or if it was a minister under our government or another government—you run the risk of, "How much have you crowdfunded? Oh, we'll just check on the website. Oh, yeah; this is a worthy project to look at." But this could happen.

Mr. Randy Hillier: No.

Mr. John Vanthof: This could happen. I don't believe it's the member's intent. I'm fully in favour of the member's intent of trying to get good projects—the one he mentioned, a scoreboard in a local rink: I'm fully in favour of that concept. I'm not sure I'm comfortable that this is the way to do it, because it's being portrayed here as simply, "We're just going to create a website." This has got much more to do than a website, and I'm not quite comfortable. We often hear from parties—and I'm going to be a bit partisan here—on all sides, "Oh, we have to watch out because it says one thing and we'll never know what will happen to it two governments down the road." Well, this is one that I'm concerned about. We all want good projects to go ahead. I don't want, at any time, projects' validity to be based on how popular they are on a website that is administered by the government.

Some small organizations just don't have the ability to promote this themselves, so is this to be a promotional website? Which project gets the bigger promotion? It doesn't say that in the legislation, but in the comments someone did say that—someone who supported it. Is this worth talking about? It's the first time I've heard of it. Other crowdfunding sites exist. It's a bit like—I hate to

say it, but—no, I'm not going to say it. I'm going to go too far with that. I'm just wary—weary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Leery.

Mr. John Vanthof: Leery is the word—leery that this could go to places none of us, including the member who proposes it—but I believe in the member's intentions. He's facing the same issue that we are all facing, but I question whether this is the vehicle to do it.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a few minutes to make a few comments with regard to this bill. I have read the bill, and I share the concerns of my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane on it. From the vantage point of charities that need to have projects funded, I think this involves something that's really outside the scope of looking for funding. This is crowdfunding, and I'm not sure it's the appropriate thing for the province to be doing. It is, however, one of the avenues which, if you are a charity, you may wish to explore. There's not really a solid business case for the province to be involved in creating that degree of infrastructure when, if you are a charity, it's not that hard to use any of the popular content management systems and to subscribe, either through your bank or through a third-party provider like PayPal or bluCommerce. You can actually set up the mechanism to do this yourself. It doesn't take a lot of programming skill and it is something that, very frankly, I'm not sure you really need to have a ministry of the crown do for you.

One of the things that the province does have, however, is an absolutely first-rate, world-class agency called the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The Ontario Trillium Foundation should be thought of as a means of providing community support through what's left over from lotteries. As a rule of thumb, roughly half of the amount collected in gross from lotteries by the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. is given out in prizes.

One of the things you do know, if you're buying a lottery in Ontario, is that you actually have a fighting chance of winning the game. The lottery money collected in Ontario is not only overwhelmingly disbursed to Ontario citizens in the form of winnings, but what's left over—roughly half, because the administrative costs in the Ontario Trillium Foundation are really very small—is money that is reused in the community.

For example, if you're the band at the Legion or in the school and what you need to do is to raise money to buy new instruments, you'll be approaching the Ontario Trillium Foundation to apply for a grant. Using tools that are already commonly available through e-commerce, things that any non-profit can actually build on a website that would be made with any popular content management system, be that something like Joomla!, Umbraco or the ever-popular WordPress—through a plug-in, you too can manage to do what the member is proposing that the government ought to do. I don't really see the need for that.

But you could raise some of that money yourself and you could use the funds that you do raise to validate the

veracity of the application that you make to the Ontario Trillium Foundation. This would be one way of raising it through your community. The odds are overwhelming that, should a particular organization that needs uniforms, band instruments, equipment or whatever within a community choose to do it through this type of crowdfunding, the majority of the donations to the particular cause would likely come from the community or the area or the region around them, where there's some affinity with or knowledge or support of what they are doing.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation, each year, would receive some 3,000 applications, and something like \$136 million each year are disbursed throughout Ontario to community organizations through the Ontario Trillium Foundation. They're mated basically into six action areas, and one would be active people who are doing something in the community that would qualify for a grant. It would be made to groups. It would be made to people who are trying to do something that would, for example, enhance the environment, enhance the community, promote learning, promote the accomplishments of people.

For example, last month, in February, the Ontario Trillium Foundation announced the successful recipients of the Ontario 150 Community Capital Program grant. That's a program that will provide up to \$25 million for more than 200 municipalities and not-for-profit organizations to renovate and repair existing community and cultural infrastructure.

Of course, in this year, the sesquicentennial year of the province—one of the four original provinces in Canada, along with Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia—many of those projects, the monuments and buildings that we're repairing, are likely ones that were constructed with the original Wintario grants and probably have the name "Centennial" in them. I guess, in that sense, we have indeed come full circle.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm happy to speak to the Kickstarting Public Participation Act, brought forward by my innovative colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, Mr. Hillier.

Of course, this is a very unique and interesting bill. It challenges us to think about the funding of community projects in new ways. I'm always pleased to see great initiatives like this, which modernize and improve on our traditional way of doing things. Online crowdfunding is still a relatively new area, of course, but one that has a lot of potential. I think my colleague has put something forward here that's a very interesting concept.

1530

Of course, crowdfunding is a process which normally takes place over the Internet where the proponent of an idea presents that idea on a crowdfunding platform and then solicits financial support from the public. People pledge a certain amount of money and, when a predetermined threshold has been met, the project begins. Bill 77 proposes that we take that great idea, which circumvents

the problem that many entrepreneurs face in getting seed capital, by appealing directly to the market and applying that to community projects. Organizations would submit proposals on a website maintained by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, and the public would contribute to the projects they most want to see move forward.

I think this is a great idea. It addresses a number of problems at once: It gives citizens a voice in their municipal projects through direct funding, allowing them to show support for certain initiatives; it helps tackle the problem of underfunding of municipalities, which of course has been an ongoing problem; and it democratically engages Ontarians by getting them to take an interest in their local government and projects. While I was doing some research on this idea of civic crowdfunding, I saw some great projects out of the USA that have received funding from their communities.

Before I continue, it is important to note that we're not talking about passing the buck on serious infrastructure projects here. This isn't bridges or highways, of course. It's your neighbourhood community: a garden, a new dog park or a piece of art for the town centre. It is the small projects, the first ones to be cut by government when a budget is tight, the little changes that make your community your home.

In my own riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, great projects like rebuilding the Heidelberg community centre struggle to get enough funding because of municipalities' inability to have that funding which they need—or wheelchair ramps in Baden, which we constantly hear about, and street lights in one of my smaller communities of Wellesley. So I see this as part of a solution to this problem we're seeing, and as an innovative way of re-engaging Ontarians.

With that, I commend my colleague for bringing forward, yet again, another innovative piece of legislation that all members of this House can debate and communities can engage in. I look forward to supporting this bill.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House and represent the fine constituents of Niagara West–Glanbrook. In this particular case, it's a huge honour to be able to stand after the members who have already spoken to this innovative bill. I want to particularly thank the honourable member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington for thinking outside of the box and for being a strong advocate for his constituents, but most importantly for being a strong advocate for that which is going to benefit Ontario. In this case, the idea he has brought forward and the piece of legislation that he has brought forward is one that will benefit many communities in Ontario.

Bill 77, the Kickstarting Public Participation Act, 2016, recognizes the difficulties that many municipalities across our province are facing. The reality is we live in a time when municipalities are struggling to balance the

competing needs of their budgets. Community projects are often being delayed in order to undertake higher-priority obligations. This sometimes leaves some citizens feeling ignored or overlooked. I'm sure we've all heard from residents that they lack the appropriate tools to help them advocate for and promote these very important community projects.

The reality is that civic crowdfunding has become a very popular mechanism to solve this problem across not only North America, but very much so in Europe, as well. It provides citizens with a chance to really have input into the issues that matter in their riding and into these community projects. They're actively engaged in the development of public projects, and they're given the opportunity to take part in and see the direct benefits of community investment.

I believe that this crowdfunding mechanism put forward today by the honourable member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington is a highly important one and one that I hope to see supported by many members on all sides of the aisle today.

I want to speak to the unique capability of crowdfunding because the most important and, in my opinion, fundamentally beautiful thing about crowdfunding is not so much the money, but the community involvement that is brought. I want to assure my colleagues from the NDP that this is not a piece of legislation that is attempting to remove important funding for important projects that we receive from the government in our communities, but rather it's addition to; it's adding.

The member spoke about charity. In my faith, charity is one of the three great virtues: faith, hope and charity. And I'm sure in hers as well. So I think charity is a good thing. This is in addition to the funding brought forward from the government in infrastructure.

We've seen crowdfunding exploding across the US: over \$30 billion from crowdfunding. We see some of the examples of innovation and technology that have been brought about in the private sector through the use of crowdfunding, especially virtual reality, which was largely ignored by traditional funders after the disappointment in the 1990s. But in 2012, Palmer Luckey, a member of the virtual reality community message board, started a Kickstarter. We had members from the virtual interactive digital media group here, I believe it was last week, and we've seen now that that is turning into an industry that's funding jobs, where they're paying taxes and they're very involved in their community. It's a sign of the success that crowdfunding can serve.

We've seen this in other places in communities, specifically with a skate park in October 2016 in the town of Bridgewater. Crowdfunding was seen as an effective, appropriate and fun way to involve the community. That interactive approach is something that I believe will benefit all communities.

I encourage all members in this House to support this legislation.

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

I'm going to return to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I want to thank everybody who spoke to Bill 77 this afternoon.

I want to thank the minister for speaking in a supportive fashion of continuing the conversation. I trust that means the mechanism to do that is at committee hearings, after a positive vote at second reading. So I do hope that the conversations do continue and that we do have them at committee.

I will take a few moments, Speaker. I was somewhat disturbed by some of the comments from the third party, just the level of cynicism and the level of—

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Hillier: No, no—the cynicism and this idea that there's something sinister behind public engagement in crowdfunding.

I want to share a little story with all members. Shortly after I got elected, Erin Lee-Todd from Lanark County Interval House came to see me, looking for additional funding for the interval house. Along with so many others, I sat down and I spoke with Erin, and there wasn't enough money in the government coffers to do all that she would like to do. So we talked about fundraising, how Lanark County Interval House could do fundraising.

This past year, they raised \$28,000 at the polar bear plunge in Perth. It's a significant community engagement. And every year, they have a Feed the Fight to End Violence fundraiser that I participate in as well.

Having people engaged, having them being involved is a good thing. Speaker, I can say to you, since that time, Erin Lee-Todd has not had to come back seeking additional funds from the government for the operations for Lanark County Interval House. I think that's a testament to where we would like to go.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. We will vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

END THE PUBLIC FUNDING
OF PARTISAN GOVERNMENT
ADVERTISING ACT, 2017
LOI DE 2017 VISANT À METTRE FIN
AU FINANCEMENT PUBLIC
DE LA PUBLICITÉ
GOUVERNEMENTALE PARTISANE

Ms. Jones moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 112, An Act to amend the Government Advertising Act, 2004 / Projet de loi 112, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2004 sur la publicité gouvernementale.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: First and foremost, I want to thank my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka, Norm Miller, and his staff, Hannah and Lesley, for their assistance in researching and drafting Bill 112. Norm offered this

private member's bill to me so that we could debate this issue now, and we all know why we want to debate it now: that is, of course, the famous hydro vanity ads.

In 2015, no press releases were issued, no media announcements were made, but the Liberal government made numerous amendments to the Government Advertising Act, 2004. Some of these amendments changed rules regarding the Auditor General's review of government advertising. The previous legislation required the Auditor General to review most government advertising, and issue, if it was not partisan, a formal approval prior to the ads being aired. The changes the Liberal government made turned the Auditor General into a "rubber stamp" for the government's advertising campaigns.

1540

To quote the Auditor General, "We found the old standards useful and effective in our review process to promote transparency and accountability in government advertising. These standards also helped ensure that items provided useful information and did not unduly promote the governing party or criticize its opponents."

The Auditor General goes on to say, "We believe ... their primary purpose" was "to promote the government's partisan political interests or give the government credit for its accomplishments, rather than to inform citizens."

Now, Speaker, let's remember: The Premier has promised to be the most open and transparent government in Canada. Unfortunately, the Premier's actions do not match her words.

It is clear that the government's decision to water down the Auditor General's oversight has repercussions. The auditor has commented on a variety of examples of the government using public money for partisan purposes. We all know the most recent example of the hydro vanity ads. The government has spent nearly \$1 million in a last-ditch attempt to prop up their floundering polling numbers.

The minister likes to defend these ads by saying they help people plan for the rate decrease. Well, if that's the case, where were the ads informing people of the 400% increase? Surely Ontarians would have liked some warning that they would need to choose between heating and eating. Surely Ontario's hospitals would have liked some warning that their hydro rates would take a larger percentage of their operating budgets. Or maybe the government should have advertised that they are considering closing down 600 schools.

The reality is that Ontarians see right through these Liberal talking points. These ads don't pass the smell test. Ontarians want the government to respect their tax dollars, not prop up the Liberal Party.

Importantly, the Auditor General, when speaking on those hydro ads, said, "Under the previous legislation, it would likely not have passed because it does convey a positive impression of the current government and it's more like a pat-on-the-back type of advertisement." That is not the member from Dufferin-Caledon; that is the Auditor General.

The most recent example of the hydro ad is not the only example of government using taxpayer dollars on advertising that would not have been approved by the Auditor General under the previous rules. The government spent \$8.1 million promoting the ORPP, including during the federal election campaign, and following the cancellation of the ORPP, the government spent another \$800,000 on radio ads promoting the federal CPP. On those ads, the Auditor General said, "When we look at those ads, we wouldn't have approved them because they don't provide any information to the public that they need to know."

Another example is a series of ads, including the ads featuring David Suzuki, which cost Ontarian taxpayers nearly \$6 million over two years. The Auditor General called these ads "misleading" and "self-congratulatory."

Another would be the infrastructure ads, which again the Auditor General called "self-congratulatory" and "aimed at ensuring that the government gets credit for its potential future spending plans." They haven't even built it, and they're promoting it through ads.

Since the Liberals removed the Auditor General's oversight, they are now openly using taxpayer dollars to boost the Liberal Party brand. We also know that since that change, the government made a substantial increase in their advertising spending, from \$30 million to \$50 million.

Let me be clear: Not all government advertising is bad. We are not proposing to stop the government from sharing important information with the public. But these hydro vanity ads show why the government's removal of the Auditor General's oversight is wrong. The hydro ads do not have a real action item. Ontarians don't need to go to a website, to sign an application, to fill out a form.

These millions of dollars on these ads could have been spent on other causes which Ontarians need to know about. It could have been spent on a campaign telling Ontarians about how to recognize the signs of human trafficking, or how to deal with the fentanyl crisis. This information could have saved lives, but instead it is helping the Premier's re-election campaign. That is unacceptable, and it must stop.

Another important note is this piggy-backing that is occurring between the Liberal Party and Ontario government ads. Speaker, I'm not sure if the standing orders allow me to table documents as a member of the opposition, but it's very telling when you actually compare what the government ads are saying and what the Liberal Party is walking around in terms of brochures. Methinks the similarities are a little too close. If we had the AG's oversight, as we had for almost 10 years, this would not be happening. It's inappropriate, people see through it, and it must stop.

The similarities between the government ad campaign and the Liberal Party brochures are unsettling and eerily similar. These ads are similar, and they blur the line between the government and the Liberal Party. Ontarians expect better of their government.

I also want to draw to your attention the fact that this issue is a total flip-flop from the Liberal members oppos-

ite. You may remember a Liberal campaign promise made in 2004 where they extolled the virtues of banning government vanity ads. At that time, candidate Kathleen Wynne criticized “the dissemination of partisan, hollow advertising masquerading as information.”

Then-Deputy Premier Deb Matthews—then-candidate Deb Matthews—also criticized partisan government advertising, saying, “It’s just outrageous to me that governments spend money on what are, in essence, political pieces.” What’s that line? “That was then; this is now.”

What has changed, Speaker? It appears that the Premier will only maintain those principles when they are convenient. It is clear that these ads and the Premier’s stance on the Auditor General’s oversight are not about the well-being of Ontario, but the well-being of the Ontario Liberal Party.

It’s not too late. The Premier and the Liberal caucus can do the right thing. When you support Bill 112, you will be sending a clear message that you understand that there is a clear and distinct difference between Ontario Liberal Party advertising and Ontario government advertising.

You can change course and support Bill 112. I urge the Premier to stop wasting taxpayers’ dollars and start prioritizing the interests of Ontario residents over the Ontario Liberal Party and support Bill 112.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to rise in this House and address Bill 112, put forward by the member from Dufferin–Caledon.

I want to thank the member from Dufferin–Caledon for bringing forward this bill. I think that she is acting responsibly. She is acting as a legislator should. She has explained her bill, but I just want to note that this restores the ability of the Auditor General to vet and approve or reject ads put forward by the government, based on whether or not they are partisan ads. I would say that the current Auditor General and her predecessor discharged their duties to this Legislature, to the people of Ontario, by reviewing ads put forward by the government over the years and making sure that there was a depoliticization of those ads.

That has all changed, and that is why this bill is before us today. As people are well aware, this bill is coming forward because the government has been pushing the envelope on government advertising for a while—the Liberal Party has been pushing the envelope on government advertising for a while. Most recently, with their advertising about the proposed reduction in our hydro bills, they have been really going over the line. Member from Dufferin–Caledon, I think you’ve nailed it in this.

I took a look at the ad—actually, I looked at the posting at the ministry, which uses the same words as the ads that have gone out. It uses the same words as the Liberal postcards that you get distributed in the street here. The quote is to “deliver the single-largest reduction to electricity rates in Ontario’s history.”

Speaker, a simple statement saying, “As of June 1, the government is proposing to reduce hydro rates by 25%.” I still think would be blowing their horn. But frankly, it would have been somewhat closer to being relatively objective and consistent with the act that has been brought forward by the member.

1550

But frankly, Speaker, it would only be fair if they had, in April 2015, put out advertising saying, “Your hydro rates are going to go up because you didn’t use enough electricity this past winter. This will be one of the largest rate increases ever seen in Ontario’s history, which came about because you didn’t use enough power.” I could see that would be balanced.

But it’s completely unbalanced. We have a system now where the Liberal Party gets to use government dollars to put out advertising praising itself, patting itself on the back.

If the government had put out an ad saying, “We’ve raised your bills 100% in the last decade, and as of June 1 we’re proposing to cut them by 25%,” that would be closer to the truth. And it’s interesting to me that when you look at the government wording they say, “will reduce June 1”—intriguing to me, Speaker, because as I understand it, some legislation has to come forward, and unless people in the House have some information that I have not been able to put my hands on, I haven’t seen any notice of a bill coming forward, no notice of legislation on this.

I’d be fascinated to see it because I want to see just how many billions of dollars are going to be spent using this payday loan, effectively, to pay down our bills for three decades, to stick us with—what’s the calculation?—roughly \$40 billion in interest expense and frankly, at the end of it, us owning nothing. The Premier uses the term regularly, likening this whole process to that of extending the life of a mortgage. As you are well aware, Speaker, typically in this society, when you have a mortgage, when you’ve paid it off you own something. But in the world of privatized electricity systems, we will own nothing except a huge liability—a debt—that we are going to have to pay off.

If the government put out an advertisement saying, “We are going to pay the banks \$40 billion to bring your hydro bills down in advance of the next election,” well, who could argue with that? That’s sort of truth in advertising. I can say then that maybe the member’s bill would be redundant, but that obviously isn’t what’s being used.

It’s fascinating to me to hear the Premier respond to these questions about the hydro ads with her saying, “Well, we brought in this whole process of taking the partisan out of government advertising in 2004, when we brought forward the legislation.” But Speaker, in 2015 they gutted the legislation. They kicked the Auditor General to the curb and said, “You’ve been interfering for too long. We really want to put out these ads. We like it that they praise us a lot. We like to pat ourselves on the back, and you’ve been holding up the whole process.”

To claim virtue and then dump virtue over the side is a pretty amazing thing to watch in public, in full colour, live on television, but we get to see it regularly.

I urge everyone in the House to vote for this bill. It's a sensible bill. It restores some balance in the public spirit. It doesn't end government advertising, but hopefully—hopefully—it will cut the partisan out of it.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's great to have the opportunity to speak on this bill this afternoon.

Madam Speaker, November 2, 1999, was a remarkable day in the Leal household for Karan and I. Our daughter Shanae was born. But in the spring of that year, my wife, who was pregnant, was locked out as a grade 8 teacher at St. Teresa school in Peterborough—locked out as a teacher that day.

At the very same time, I remember, my wife was quite sick during that pregnancy, but she was out with her fellow folks, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, unit 8. I remember sitting in our front room after she came home, after she was doing her locked-out picket duty—because Mr. Harris locked her out—and there were these wonderful ads on TV. I just had the opportunity today to look at them again.

Here is what those ads say: When teachers went on strike, Mr. Harris chastised them publicly on TV with ads that questioned why they were striking. The Premier himself boldly looked into a camera and said the province was asking them “to spend a little more time with their students.” He finished off with, “Let's put our children first,” to the backdrop of the words, “Our kids deserve better.” That was no way to deal with strikes in our province, and clearly was an effort to politically influence public opinion against professionals in the province of Ontario—and my wife, being part of the wonderful teaching profession.

As a city councillor in those days, I was a member of the St. Joseph's Hospital board, and had the great privilege of chairing their finance committee. I remember he had Mr. Sinclair going across the province of Ontario closing hospitals. I also remember coming home after a St. Joseph's board meeting, and I recall, again, that ad on TV.

When Mr. Harris started closing hospitals to save money at the expense of Ontario's health care, he ran ads paid for by the government wherein he addressed Ontarians, saying, “Empty wards like these cost money and cure no one,” clearly partisan advertisements which attempted to distract Ontarians from the fact that Mr. Harris was ordering the closure of 28 hospitals and firing 6,000 nurses while in office. And he called them “hula hoops.”

I kind of like the member from Dufferin—Caledon, and I really wish that today she had pulled out of her briefcase a letter that she would have addressed to the former Prime Minister of Canada. It would go like this, “Dear Mr. Prime Minister, I find it totally objectionable that you would use public money to advertise Canada's

action plan in every nook and cranny, every back row in the province of Ontario.”

It got so bad with those signs and paid advertising that, when the former Prime Minister built an outhouse, he put a “Canada's action plan” sign right front of that. That was partisan political advertising.

I say to my friend, there's no letter that exists. Did she write letters to her federal colleague, Mr. Tilson, to say, “I totally object to the public money you're spending on Canada's action plan”? The answer to those two questions is, “No and no.”

Did any of these members opposite take the time to write the former Prime Minister of Canada and say, “Mr. Harper, that public money that you're spending on paid advertising to enhance your political”—to the Prime Minister, who said, “I will be the most transparent Prime Minister in the history of Canada”? They did none of that. That is factually correct.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Did Patrick Brown say anything?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Did the Leader of the Opposition, in 10 years in Ottawa, ever send a letter to the Prime Minister of Canada? The answer to that is no.

This bill would have a heck of a lot more credibility if they were consistent and told the Prime Minister of Canada to get rid of his paid advertising.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the member for Leeds—Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thanks, Madam Speaker. It's always nice to see you in the Chair on a Thursday afternoon.

I want to say that it's truly an honour for me to be able to speak in support of Bill 112 from my colleague and my fellow Ontario PC deputy leader. The member for Dufferin—Caledon's act to end the public funding of partisan government advertising is a bill that's definitely ripped out of today's headlines.

Ontarians are justifiably disgusted to see this government spending their hard-earned tax dollars in a desperate bid to prop up Premier Kathleen Wynne's tanking popularity. Although the energy minister hasn't bothered to table any legislation to deal with the hydro crisis, we're bombarded in this province by an ad blitz touting their hydro scheme.

What's happening speaks to the incredible disconnect between this Premier and this government and the pain that Ontarians are feeling from the energy poverty her government created. They know that every day we wait for legislation needed to give people a break on their hydro bills is another day that these people continue to suffer. Debts are piling up, businesses are closing their doors, and what's the priority over there on that side of the House? It's to write ad copy to save the Premier's political hide instead of writing legislation to give families and businesses the relief they are asking for. It's shameless, and I applaud Ms. Jones for bringing forward this legislation to put an end to that behaviour.

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I can also tell the government that this is backfiring on them. Any popularity boost they were hoping for from

their scheme is being eroded by the anger Ontarians feel about an ad campaign that's paid for right out of their own pockets. I've had so many calls in my constituency office demanding that the government stop these ads and for the Liberal Party to repay the hundreds of thousands of dollars that have already been spent.

One of the great suggestions I got, Speaker, from my constituents: Several of them said they don't ever want to hear "Paid for by the government of Ontario" on any of this government's advertising. They want a new tagline, Speaker: "Paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario." That's what they want to see, and I like that idea. We have to give this government a reminder on who's actually footing the bill for these ads, but we all know that wouldn't be enough to change this government's behaviour.

I can just hear them over there. It just basically tells me they don't want to change that government behaviour. After all, this is a government that loosened their own rules on partisan advertising in order to bankroll their political message from the public purse.

We need to give the veto power on advertising back to the Auditor General. It's the only way to ensure that the next time Premier Wynne does a partisan ad blitz, it will be the Liberal Party of Ontario, not the taxpayers, that will pick up the tab.

Thank you. I'm pleased to support Bill 112.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Listen, I just have to point out that the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs spent his time criticizing the official opposition with the weakest argument I've ever heard. His argument was that you have to step out of provincial politics and criticize what's going on in the federal government to have any credibility here in this provincial assembly.

Madam Speaker, it makes no sense. We are provincial elected officials, and the honourable members are raising an issue that is in the provincial government. They have fallen so low that the only argument they can pull up is this convoluted argument that they have lost credibility because they're not criticizing what's going on in the federal government. The fact that the member thought that that was somehow a logical argument and somehow a compelling argument shows how disconnected this party really is. They don't get that no one is going to agree that that argument has any value.

The reality is, this government is absolutely hypocritical. There's no way to get around that. They acknowledge that there were partisan ads going on before them. They acknowledge that. They saw that there were partisan ads going on with the previous government. They implemented a law which, in fairness—the 2004 law—was actually adequate. It addressed a number of issues when it came to partisan ads. They gave oversight, appropriately, to an independent person, the Auditor General, to review whether the ads were appropriate or not. They ensured that a clear criterion was that the primary objective of the ad should not be strictly to foster a positive impression of the government, that that shouldn't be the goal.

Those were the old rules. The new rules stripped that level of accountability, and this government can't look anyone in the eye and say that they've not weakened the accountability. You can't look anyone in the eye and say you haven't taken away the strength and oversight that used to be there. You did. You've taken it away. There's no way to get around that. There's no one on the government side who can look anyone in the eye and say, "Yes, our current laws are actually fair." They know they're not fair. They've weakened them. They've gotten rid of the accountability that used to be there.

Madam Speaker, they can't make any argument to justify their current position because they know it's wrong. Many of the members who are sitting in the government right now got up in this House and said that it's inappropriate for the government to have partisan ads, and now they're doing exactly that.

We have very clear evidence, the Auditor General said, that \$50 million of government-paid ads would have been flagged as partisan if the previous laws had continued—\$50 million of ads. Specifically, they pointed to the \$8.1 million in ads that were used to promote the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, which also highlights that the most money that went towards this plan was the money they spent on advertising for a plan that never actually came to fruition. They'll say that because they advertised this plan to people, somehow their advertising was able to get the federal government to make an incremental improvement. Listen, no one buys that as well. But again that \$8.1 million they spent would have been flagged as partisan, because it didn't benefit the people.

Now, if the government wants to provide a heads-up or some notice that there is a vaccine available; if there is a service available that people need to be aware of; if there is a notice, a warning, a health concern, some sort of environmental issue, whatever it may be; if there's an educational program—let's let people know about healthy eating, promoting healthy activities—those are appropriate uses of our public dollars.

But what the government is doing is using partisan spending, partisan ads, to actually advance their own political agenda, their own party's agenda, instead of benefitting the people of this province.

That's why the member's bill is absolutely appropriate. I will be honoured to support it. It would send a clear message that we need accountability in this province. We don't want to give the government free licence to use public dollars to promote themselves in a way that's effectively pre-campaign advertising, and that's exactly what it is. The government is essentially using public resources to try to campaign for an election. That's incredibly inappropriate. There's no one in the government, there is no Liberal, who can say that's appropriate.

Interjection.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Do you dare say that's appropriate? How dare you say it's appropriate to use public dollars to campaign? That's inappropriate, and you know that. You know that it's inappropriate.

This is something we're going to vote in support of, to ensure that the people of Ontario see that we will fight for accountability and fight for oversight. This government is incapable of having that oversight and that protection.

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

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to be able to join the debate this afternoon. I think it's pretty clear, the reason we're here. We have a new electricity plan. It's going to take 25% off the cost of electricity for homeowners, for renters, for small businesses, for farmers. We have an ad and it tells people about it, because we think the public in Ontario is entitled to know. Unfortunately, the opposition doesn't have a plan for controlling energy prices, and they don't want anybody to know we do, so that's why we're really here.

But on the face of it, it's a bill about legislation and advertising, so let's talk about the legislation.

Ontario was actually the first jurisdiction in Canada to enact legislation that bans government-paid advertising. Of course, any advertising that we are doing is consistent with the legislation. The Speaker has ruled that it's consistent with the rules of the House, that it's allowed by the rules of the Legislature. I guess the only thing you can do is change the law, because we're following the law. We're following the legislation. They want to change the law so we can't tell people about the 25%-off electricity plan.

Let's look at the history of political advertising, of government advertising, if you will, in Ontario. I was a school trustee, as were you, Speaker. I can remember the days of Mike Harris, when there were ads with the Premier of the province telling people how awful school teachers were. They ran day after day after week after week after month after month. It was the Premier of the province telling people how awful school teachers were.

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I talked to teachers all over the province because at that point I was president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, and I had teachers all over the province telling me that they were afraid to admit in public that they were teachers. Our children's teachers were afraid to admit what they did, which was teach children, because of ads that featured the Premier of the province of Ontario—a Conservative Premier.

When we came into power, we said, "We're stopping that. We're going to set out legislation that puts some boundaries around what any government can do when it comes to advertising." One of the things we did was, we gave the Auditor General the authority to approve it. I think that was pretty successful legislation, but there have been a few hiccups along the way. For example, I don't know whether anybody remembers the Foodland Ontario ad.

Hon. Jeff Leal: A good one.

Hon. Liz Sandals: A good ad, but it ran in black and white. Do you know why it ran in black and white? The strawberries were too red—or was it the tomatoes that

were too red? Maybe it was the apples that were too red. Do you know what, Speaker? Ontario farmers have an unfortunate habit of growing fruits and vegetables that are red. The auditor said, "You can't do that. This ad has to go in black and white because red fruits and vegetables are just too partisan."

Then we had the ad—I can't even remember what the ad was about, but it featured a main street in Ontario, a typical residential street in Ontario, and do you know what? Some of the houses had red bricks. I don't know about your neck of the woods, Speaker, but in my neck of the woods, in Guelph, a typical old house has red bricks. But red brick houses are partisan; don't you know? Do you know what happened? The taxpayers of Ontario had to pay to have that ad digitally remastered so that we would have brown bricks on our houses in Ontario, because red brick houses are way too partisan.

So yes, we did amend the law. We amended the law to say in part that you'd better show the auditor the ad in advance so you don't waste a whole lot of money having the auditor reject an ad, if she's going to reject it. We're actually going to require that you show her the ad in advance so that we don't waste money on correcting whatever she doesn't like. To me, that's just a sensible use of taxpayers' money.

We defined "partisan." We thought that would actually be helpful. Let me tell you about partisan. We clarified that an ad is partisan if it includes the name, voice or image of a member of the executive council or the Legislative Assembly. The legislation that's before the House this afternoon would remove that restriction. You would be able to go back to Mike Harris criticizing teachers.

We clarified that an ad is partisan if it includes the name or logo of a recognized party. The PC legislation would remove that as a requirement. We don't think you should have anything that even vaguely looks like a partisan logo.

We clarified that an ad is partisan if it identifies and criticizes a recognized party or a member of the assembly, but the PC legislation would get rid of that requirement. You could go ahead and you could directly criticize a member of the Legislature—not acceptable.

We actually did say that you should not feature a colour that is associated with a particular party, unless the thing that you happen to have a picture of is something that really does naturally occur in that colour. It would actually be okay to have tomatoes that are red or strawberries that are red or radishes that are red, but you could have blue blueberries. You could have orange peaches. All of those things would be okay because that's the real colour that real things are.

Let's talk about some of the things that we have advertised about. We've told the Ontario public about climate change. We actually think it's important that people understand that climate change is real. We've told people about the availability of flu vaccines. As you know, because you're a nurse—herd health, as it's called—flu vaccine is more effective if a lot of people

have it. We've told parents about what vaccines are available for their children. It goes on and on, the things that we have informed the public about because we think the public should know what the government is doing.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm proud to stand and support an act to end public funding of partisan government advertising, introduced by my colleague from Dufferin-Caledon and also our member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, Norm Miller, who spent some time on this.

We have recently seen and heard the Liberal government running multi-million-dollar ads to sell their promise of cutting soaring electricity bills, which they caused by implementing reckless energy schemes in Ontario. It's interesting that they failed to say that those rates have risen 200% to 400% under their reign. It's interesting how the wording is the same as the Liberal partisan postcards that came out. The problem is, they're using \$40 million of public funds dedicated for public services, like health and education, social services, seniors' food, long-term-care beds, on advertising of promises in response to the Premier's rock-bottom polling numbers. It's shameful that they put their political hide ahead of the needs of Ontarians.

Firstly, the hydro cut promise hasn't even been put on legal paper. It hasn't been debated or passed by Parliament. It's actually against parliamentary rules to publicly discuss a bill before it's introduced here in the House. More importantly, we, the members of this House, want to look at the details of how much this cut, motivated by the Premier's desire to win votes in the next election, will actually cost the ratepayers and, most importantly, our pages, our children and our grandchildren.

Maybe the government can answer the billion-dollar question today: Will the Wynne hydro cut cost \$25 billion in interest, \$35 billion, \$40 billion? Does anybody on that side of the House even know how much this re-election narrative will cost? More importantly, do they care? It appears they can't say. I guess things aren't thought through clearly to be communicated clearly either.

The Auditor General suggested that there was \$20 million in self-congratulatory ads this year. The President of the Treasury Board used the term "hiccups along the way." I think what she meant to say was that hiccup along the way was the Auditor General, who could scrutinize and actually make a ruling of whether they were partisan ads. It's interesting that she didn't mention they took the power of the Auditor General away from her. She can't comment on those ads. She can't decide that they can't, Madam Speaker.

It's wrong to use public funds for self-promotional ads. This brings us back to the Liberals' advertising gimmick. They're swerving around the hydro cut truth in order to serve their re-election narrative. Ontarians are frankly fed up with that party's nonchalant attitude. "So be it," the Deputy Premier said, with their taxpayer dollars, especially when they're facing runaway expenses at home, soaring hydro bills, when they're fighting to

keep community schools open, when they're trying to get more long-term-care beds in their communities. The worst move a government can make at this time is to dig deeper into people's pockets to promote their own self-serving interests.

My constituents in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound are those people, and they're offended. They're offended that the Ontario Liberals believe they can get away with spending millions of people's hard-earned money to tell them how wonderful the Liberal Party is. Twelve million dollars they spent just a little while ago about one of their other hydro relief programs. Why do they need so many programs if they were operating things well and efficiently? That's \$12 million that could have gone to the front line, to the people to help pay their hydro bills; \$81 million for an accounting error by the government agency in charge of electricity transmission costs; \$8.1 million for the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan that never saw the light of day.

We need Bill 112 to stop this arrogance, to stop this abuse. The change is strongly supported by Ontarians, who are beyond fed up with the habitual wasteful and scandalous abuse of their taxpayer dollars by this Liberal government.

It's supported by the province's watchdog and Auditor General, Bonnie Lysyk, who called the Liberals' recent radio spots a "pat on the back" for government, or maybe, in the terms of the President of the Treasury Board, a "hiccup along the way."

We cannot continue to allow this Liberal government to use taxpayer money for their political gain. It's not our fault that their Premier is at rock bottom in the polls. At the end of the day, we need to truly give power back to the people. We need to allow people like the Auditor General to do that and stop the Liberals from spending the way they have on partisan ads—\$40 million with their recent hydro ads. It's time to end the abuse.

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I call on all members: If you're truly here to serve the people of Ontario, if you truly care about the Ontarians who have given you the privilege and the right to come to this sacred House, truly vote on behalf of the people of Ontario, not to save your political hide, not to save your own skin. Do the right thing for Ontarians. It's never too late to do the right thing.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to support Bill 112, introduced by the member from Dufferin-Caledon, which would restore the Auditor General's oversight over government advertising.

The need for this oversight has become clear over the past few weeks, as the government has spent \$1 million or more on hydro ads that appear to be designed to improve public opinion of the governing party. These are ads that boast about a hydro plan, even though legislation to make it happen hasn't even been introduced. The auditor said, "Under the previous legislation, it would likely not have passed because it does convey a positive

impression of the current government and it's more like a pat-on-the-back type of advertisement."

This is money that could have gone to government services, such as health care and education. It could have gone to lowering hydro bills for people who are choosing between heating their homes or turning the lights on, and essentials such as food and prescriptions.

Ironically, spending this money to try and improve their polling results may have actually had the opposite effect. Last week, I launched a petition calling on the government to stop spending money on these partisan ads. Approximately 1,600 people have signed it so far, and more are signing every day: people from Tillsonburg, Woodstock, Norwich and Ingersoll; people from Barrie, Brantford, Cambridge and Guelph; people from Hamilton, London, Kitchener, Ottawa, Peterborough, Windsor.

I've received a number of emails on this topic. One person said that the government "is broken." Others said that they want the government to stop taking people for granted and want the government to show them some respect. I heard people who were angry that the government is spending their money on these ads. I did not hear from a single person who supports the ads, or a single person who is opposed to giving the Auditor General more oversight over government advertising.

As chair of public accounts, I've worked with the auditor regularly and I know her professionalism and dedication. I believe that she has the ability to judge which ads are appropriate. I believe that giving her this authority will ensure that taxpayers' dollars are protected and used to advertise when it is necessary, such as programs where eligible people need to apply, instead of these partisan ads.

Several years ago, I introduced a private members' bill that would have given the Auditor General more oversight over the Housing Services Corp. Every dollar that corporation spends is a public dollar that was intended to provide social housing. Housing Services Corp. makes this money by overcharging housing service providers for natural gas and insurance mandated by the province. This is money that came from the government, that was intended to help people who need affordable housing, and instead is being spent by the Housing Services Corp. on trips to Europe, lavish entertainment, board retreats at the Old Mill and even a seven-day luxury vacation in South Africa.

If auditors had oversight and could investigate, we could make sure that money instead goes to deliver services that people need—just like the money that is being wasted on partisan advertising; just like the ads where they were talking about how money is being spent on health care, instead of investing that money in hospitals and front-line services; the money that was spent advertising about the pension plan program for—

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

I return to the member from Dufferin–Caledon to wrap up.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's pretty clear that the government has no intention of changing their mind and restoring the Auditor General's powers.

So I ask that the next time you're in your constituency or in your riding and you have to speak that nurse who got laid off; or you have to talk to that family member who's desperately trying to find an educational assistant for their child, who doesn't have one in the school system; or the family who is facing their school being shut down in their community; or seniors sitting in the dark, afraid to open a hydro bill; or that family member who has come to you and is desperately looking for a long-term-care placement for their loved one, but the closest one is two hours away—and the list goes on and on. The next time one of those constituents approaches you, one of those individuals comes to you in your ridings, you look them in the eye and you say, "No, it was far more important for the Wynne Liberals to spend \$50 million on vanity ads that only promote their Liberal brand."

It was far more important for you to spend \$50 million on vanity ads than to help the hundreds of thousands of people who are looking to us as legislators and to you as government to do the right thing. You think about them when you stand up and oppose this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

LONG-TERM CARE HOMES AMENDMENT ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES FOYERS DE SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will deal first with ballot item number 43, standing in the name of Mr. Walker.

Mr. Walker has moved second reading of Bill 110, An Act to amend the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2017.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I am going to turn to the member to tell us what committee he wants the bill referred to.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to refer it to the social policy committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Agreed? Agreed.

KICKSTARTING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 DE DÉMARRAGE DE LA PARTICIPATION CITOYENNE

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Hillier has moved second reading of Bill 77, An Act to enact the Kickstarting Public Participation Act, 2016.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to turn to the member to tell us what committee he wants the bill referred to.

Mr. Randy Hillier: To justice policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Agreed? Agreed. Congratulations.

END THE PUBLIC FUNDING
OF PARTISAN GOVERNMENT
ADVERTISING ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 VISANT À METTRE FIN
AU FINANCEMENT PUBLIC
DE LA PUBLICITÉ
GOUVERNEMENTALE PARTISANE

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Ms. Jones has moved second reading of Bill 112, An Act to amend the Government Advertising Act, 2004.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed, please say "nay."

I believe the nays have it.

This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1627 to 1632.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Michael	Singh, Jagmeet
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Hillier, Randy	Tabuns, Peter
Clark, Steve	Jones, Sylvia	Taylor, Monique
Coe, Lorne	McDonell, Jim	Vanthof, John
Gélinas, France	Oosterhoff, Sam	Walker, Bill

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah
Anderson, Granville	Dickson, Joe	McGarry, Kathryn
Baker, Yvan	Dong, Han	McMahon, Eleanor
Ballard, Chris	Duguid, Brad	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Naidoo-Harris, Indra
Bradley, James J.	Fraser, John	Naqvi, Yasir
Chan, Michael	Hoggarth, Ann	Potts, Arthur
Chiarelli, Bob	Hoskins, Eric	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	Kiwala, Sophie	Rinaldi, Lou
Coteau, Michael	Lalonde, Marie-France	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	Leal, Jeff	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	Malhi, Harinder	Vernile, Daiene
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Martins, Cristina	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 18; the nays are 40.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

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

Interjection: Glen? Glen, orders of the day.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You will not be surprised, given how sleepy and inattentive I was, Madam Speaker—I apologize, first. Second, because most members may be feeling the way I do, I would move adjournment.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change has moved a motion to adjourn the House. All agreed? I hear agreed.

The House will be adjourned until Monday, April 3, 2017, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1635.

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 Quioc 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**

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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**

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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
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**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
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**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