

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 72

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N^o 72

2nd Session
41st Parliament

Wednesday
26 April 2017

2^e session
41^e législature

Mercredi
26 avril 2017

Speaker: Honourable Dave Levac
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Dave Levac
Greffier : Todd Decker

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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



ISSN 1180-2987

Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 26 April 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 26 avril 2017

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ANTI-RACISM ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 CONTRE LE RACISME

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 10, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 114, An Act to provide for Anti-Racism Measures / Projet de loi 114, Loi prévoyant des mesures contre le racisme.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It's my honour to rise and discuss Bill 114. This bill lays out the framework so that the Anti-Racism Directorate can begin to do its work. For that, it's a positive step.

The key elements of this bill, Speaker: One is the requirement to ensure that the government sets a plan and implements a plan with respect to the mandate of the Anti-Racism Directorate.

The second broad area that this bill addresses is the collection of data. We know without any doubt that the collection of data is fundamental, is essential in addressing the inequality that exists. Only when we have the evidence or the facts can we then find solutions to the problems. We have to name the problem before we can solve the problem.

So this is all very positive. There is a particular area, though, I want to highlight that's been flagged as an area where we're concerned that there isn't sufficient data collection, and that's with respect to health data. At the same time, it's important to acknowledge the importance of maintaining privacy of that data. It's important to ensure that health records are kept private, that there is a sense of strong security in knowing that your personal information with relation to your health is not being disclosed. But it is absolutely important that this area also be addressed in terms of—we know that there is disproportionately a greater impact on the lives of someone who's racialized with respect to police interaction, with respect to employment. We also know that there are connections and intersections between race and health, and it's imperative that we have that data as well.

So I just want to touch on this particular part that wasn't addressed in the bill, that was left out, that stakeholders have addressed as a concern. The association of health centres has raised this issue that the health information that would identify and eliminate systemic racism where the connection between health and race exists, data not being covered by this legislation, not being addressed by this legislation, would create a gap where we know that there are significant problems and where we won't be able to track the data and find solutions.

I just wanted to refer to an article written in the Toronto Star on February 21, 2017, by Peter Goffin titled "Effects of Racism on Physical Health Should Be Better Tracked, Says U of T Doctor." The article quotes from Dr. Onye Nnorom. The doctor establishes how important it is that not only that there is clear evidence of inequality that exists based on race with relation to income and police contact, but that there is very clear evidence that there's a connection not only between income and health but between race and health.

The doctor cites a report by the United Nations' Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent. The report indicates that "many people of African descent continue to live in poverty and poor health, have low educational attainment, and are overrepresented at all levels of the criminal justice system." Dr. Nnorom then says, "Of course, when you can't afford to eat healthy, you can't afford to exercise ... this can definitely adversely affect your health."

The doctor provides a clear example: "For instance, if you're diabetic and the doctor is telling you to eat fruits and vegetables, if you are struggling financially, a fancy salad is not going to be feasible for you. Nor is a gym membership."

We know that there are social determinants of health. We know that income and socio-economic status clearly are related to one's outcomes in terms of health, but we also know that there is a connection, an intersection, between those socio-economic factors and race as well, and we need to make sure that we have the data to actually address this problem. If we don't know that this is going on, if we can't point to evidence, it would be very difficult to provide solutions.

Just a little bit of an overview of some of the evidence that we do have so far: "In Canada's 2011 National Household Survey, black Canadians reported a median annual income of over \$24,000, compared to \$31,000 for those who are not visible minorities." We know that for racialized people, their rates of unemployment are higher

and there are significant barriers to not only employment but also to education.

The important element of addressing race-based data and looking at the inequality that exists in our society is twofold. First off, we want to ensure that we build a society that's inclusive, and that would be of benefit to all of us. When we live in a society where there is less inequality, where people are able to access resources in an equity-based manner, we create a society that's more just, more fair and more cohesive; we all can live together better.

The second area of importance is, when we look at inequality, the findings often all come back to a very similar theme, whether it is inequality based on religion, on race or on gender: The inequality all manifests itself in a lack of access to resources. It really comes down to barriers that people face, and once we acknowledge that those barriers exist based on these equity-seeking factors, we realize that these are barriers that impact people generally across the spectrum, regardless of race or ethnicity or religion; that people in our society continue to face barriers, and those barriers are largely because of access to resources like education.

When we see students who are not pursuing post-secondary education because tuition fees are so high, when we see graduates from university not able to find a job because there are no opportunities for young people, we see more and more that the inequality that exists in our society increases. The gap between those who have resources and those who do not widens.

0910

The issues are all very much the same; the issues are about access to justice, access to opportunities, access to resources. So the analysis of race will certainly address issues of inequality when it relates to those communities that are marginalized, but it actually informs our society about how we can make our society more just for all people, so it's important for us to look at that.

I want to turn now to some of the specific areas where there is inequality and what we can do to address them.

The first step is to acknowledge that there is inequality, that there is certain discrimination that exists. Let's make it very clear that in the province of Ontario, in Canada, there is very clearly systemic discrimination and it exists on a number of levels: gender, race, culture, religion. These are some of the factors that inform this systemic discrimination.

I want to talk about the impact. What does it mean when someone is faced with this discrimination? What does it do to the life of a person? What does it do to the person who faces this?

I want to start with policing. We've heard a lot about policing and its disproportional impact on racialized people, but it's important to really understand what that looks like.

With carding and with street checks, Mr. Speaker, we've seen police practices which single out an individual based on the colour of their skin. What does that do to that individual? I've shared my personal story before. It's

important to humanize what that means. I've met with a number of racialized people. I've represented them as counsel, as a lawyer. I've heard their stories. I've experienced things myself. When you're going to work or coming home from school or just walking to a friend's house in your own community or in a neighbouring community or somewhere in the city, the city that you belong to, the city that you live in—you're walking in your own city and you're stopped, and there's no reason for that stop. If that stop is aggressive in nature, if there's a tone of aggression in the voice of the officer, which often happens—when your experiences have all been like that, and any time your friends have been stopped they've been harassed or mistreated, you already have a notion that this might not go well, just for being in your own community. When you're stopped repeatedly for doing the day-to-day things that we often take for granted, it literally makes you feel like you don't belong. That has a powerfully negative impact on your sense of well-being, on your sense of belonging. There have been reports and studies that show this. If you think about it, if you're stopped again and again in your own community, you start to feel like there's something wrong with you for just being you. Just imagine how hurtful that is, how much of a negative impact that would have on your life.

Mr. Speaker, that's the reality. The reality is that people start to feel a diminished sense of self-worth. They start to feel like they don't belong as much. That is such a harmful thing to have happen.

So we can look at it on a cold, evidentiary basis, and sometimes we need to do that, but it's important to understand the impacts on a human level.

It makes people feel like they're less worthy of being in their society. What happens is—we've seen evidence that supports this—we start to see that those young people who are stopped, those adults who are stopped, those people who are stopped because of the colour of their skin are less engaged in civics, are less engaged in their communities, are less likely to vote, are less likely to want to get engaged in community events, and they increasingly have a distrust of those in positions of power. All of this hurts us as a whole. It hurts our society. It does not create a more cohesive society. It doesn't allow us to flourish and grow together. It's extremely harmful, extremely hurtful.

If we think about the use of resources, Mr. Speaker, if we have a limited number of police officers, a limited amount of resources, and all those resources are targeted towards a particular race, we're actually not using our resources in the most effective manner. We're not actually investigating the activities that need to be investigated. We're not developing evidence that's actually targeting certain problems that we want to address. You have a blanket approach, and you don't get the results that you want. It's a misuse of our precious resources. It's not good for policing to have this blanket approach that stops anyone based on the colour of their skin. It's hurtful to society because it makes members of our community feel

like they're unwelcome. So it has a twofold negative impact. It's important for us to acknowledge that.

Having a directorate that's mandated with collecting data would provide the means for us to have the evidence without having to resort to the excellent investigative journalism of the Toronto Star, or other media, that was essential in uncovering this particular issue. When it comes to street checks or carding, it was the Toronto Star that obtained data that was kept by the police, and they were able to identify this trend, that there is a massively disproportionate number of racialized people who were being stopped by police. Even though their populations were so small, they were being stopped again and again, multiple times. With the evidence that was uncovered by the Toronto Star, then we were able to push forward and raise issues and raise concerns.

With the directorate, the idea would be that the directorate would collect this data and continually assess, through an anti-discrimination lens, what practices are hurting society, what practices are discriminatory, what practices see a disproportionate impact on people from a marginalized community. That's a great thing; it's important. It would be very effective. It would be very useful to have a consolidated source of data with respect to this type of—any time we see discrimination, this would be very effective. This would be very useful.

We actually have a great example in front of us. When we had the data, when we had the evidence that there was discrimination in terms of stopping people based on the colour of their skin, then activists and community organizers were able to use that evidence, use that data, to raise this concern and say, "There's something wrong with the way policing is being administered. There's something wrong with policing in general, if we're seeing this issue happen, and policing in general with relation to people from marginalized communities. There's clearly something wrong if this is going on, where there's such a disproportionate amount of people being stopped based on the colour of their skin, even though they don't make up a significant part of the population." That data provided the evidence for community organizers and activists to raise the issue.

I have to congratulate a number of these activists for their advocacy, which resulted in some change. We had the African Canadian Legal Clinic. We had the Law Union. We had a number of community organizers. I have to give a special shout-out to Desmond Cole, who, as a journalist and a writer, used his platform to raise the issue and put forward the problems with respect to what happens in the lives of people in our province. He shared his very personal story about the number of times that he'd been stopped throughout Ontario, whether it was when he was in university in Kingston or growing up on the streets of Toronto, or just in the community in Toronto—the number of times he was stopped on the street doing nothing, just meeting friends, coming back from work or going to meet another friend. That story was very compelling; it was a very powerful story. Using this platform, we had a number of advocates come forward.

I had the honour of raising the issue in this assembly, and we've seen the government take some action. I acknowledge the government has taken action. But here is the second part of the equation: Once we have the data, we also need to ensure that there is some action that takes place. Just collecting the data is a first step, an important first step, a vital first step, but it is only a first step. It's only because of the hard work of all the community activists and organizers who pushed forward the issue that we actually saw some changes. So we need to ensure that the directorate links the data to an analysis that results in some policy action, some actual changes that are implemented. Because we've seen far too many reports that have been commissioned, that have been written and that have then been shelved just to collect dust. We can't let that happen again. Once we collect the data, we need a robust process by which that data is analyzed and then there are policies implemented to address those inequalities, whatever they are.

0920

The final component is that we need to continually track the policies to make sure they're actually achieving their intended outcome. In the case of carding there was an issue and journalists were able to pull up the data that supported that there was something going on that was inappropriate. Through community activism, the government was then pushed to implement changes. Now the third part is that there needs to be an ongoing assessment of those changes. Are they actually achieving the intended outcome?

In this case, with carding, the regulations that were implemented by the government—there are some regulations which are quite good, I have to acknowledge that. The key ingredient being, if someone's stopped by the police, they should be informed that they do not have to speak with the police, that they have the right to walk away. Any communication should be voluntary. Ensuring that that's an element of any police contact, that there is this information that's provided up front, is essential. It's one of the key requests by civil liberties and civil rights activists who have been raising this issue. They said one of the most important things is to ensure that police provide that rights notification, and that's good.

However, the way that the regulations were crafted—and they received criticism from the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and from the African Canadian Legal Clinic—there is a massive exception that has been put in place. This is where we need ongoing analysis. Does the policy actually achieve the intended outcome? In this case, there is a massive exception, and the exception is that if there's an ongoing investigation, then the police are not subject to the regulations.

The problem with this exception is that "ongoing investigation" is very broad in definition. That could mean that if there was an ongoing investigation about something very serious like a series of robberies that were happening in a community but there was no specificity with respect to time, with respect to what specific location in the community, what specific objective factors in

terms of the description of the suspects who are involved—without any of those additional elements, just saying that there's an investigation going on—the current regulations allow for a broad exception that none of the rights notification elements apply anymore. Basically what it means is that you don't have to—if there's an investigation going on generally, any sort of investigation, that could be used as a reason to say, "Well, now I'm no longer going to apply the regulations." That was the analysis done by a number of legal experts. That exception is too broad. It creates a massive gap in the protection that otherwise this regulation could have provided.

Now this gap exists, but what's important is that we have follow-up to ensure that we are seeing less discriminatory stops when it comes to street checks or carding. That would be very important, to have a follow-up. It's so important that we not only address the data and have policies, but that we continue to track to see if the policies are working, and this is an example of how that would help.

What we really want to see as a vision in this province is that we need to apply a lens of anti-discrimination and of anti-racism to everything that we do, much like we need a gender lens with respect to budgets. We know that there are significant gaps with gender pay; that in this time and in this day and age, right now, here in Canada, here in Ontario, we continue to see the circumstance or the situation where women, for the exact same job, the exact same position, continue to get paid as much as 30% less. It's still going on and it is shameful.

If that's going on, we need to look at why that's happening, and a gender lens approach to a budget would look at the issues that are being raised by a budget and look at the impact on gender, and then suggest policies that address that. It's not enough, again, to identify the problem. That's the first step. We need to then implement policies to change that, to alter those outcomes.

One of those key areas, for example, if we look at a budget, would be: Where do we see some of the biggest gaps? One of the biggest problems, we know, when it comes to equity issues with relation to women in Canada, but specifically in Ontario, is child care. We know that if we address child care—we have so much evidence that clearly points to this—and make it affordable, make it accessible, then we will literally change the lives of so many women in this province. It will literally address so much of the poverty, so much of the inequality that exists.

Time and time again, we don't see enough action on this file. That's another example of where we need to not just identify the problem, but we need to implement policies that will actually change it, that will actually address it.

One of the steps, just to give you a concrete example, was that we needed a commitment from this province that—if you want to address child care, the only way to ensure that we have high-quality, affordable child care is through publicly delivered programs that are not for profit. It's really clear; the evidence is there. We know

this is a fact, and we know that this is true. If we have for-profit delivery models, we know that it compromises care or it's extremely expensive, and then it's not accessible. It's not going to work that way.

Similarly, in this, whether it's on the policing, on the carding element, we need to make sure that we have policies that actually create the intended outcomes we want.

I want to touch on a couple of other areas.

There is strong evidence with respect to the intersection of race and education. The outcomes we see—that racialized people, young people, don't see the same level of success in schools—we need to address that. We know what the solution is. Some of the solutions have been suggested by a number of task forces in this province, in this city.

We know that one of the key areas—we've seen a failure again on the part of the government to address this—is that we need to see students reflected in their classrooms in terms of representation—in terms of race, religion, culture and ethnicity—in the teachers, the principals and the vice-principals. We need to see that reflected in schools.

That's something that has been suggested before; it has been recommended before. We know that it works. We know that when young people see themselves reflected in positions of power and authority, like a teacher, like someone who is running the school, it allows that young person to achieve better. It allows them to see that they're reflected in the institution and that they can then achieve more success. That's something that we've seen this government, again, fail to follow through on.

We need to see that identification of the problem, and then move towards the solution. We need that next step. It's so vital and so crucial.

This is why I want to broaden the issue: We know that in general, if we address the specific problems with relation to race, we can also address the broader problem of how we make our education system better in general. This is something that we should always look at. The data that we are able to obtain in this area—in education, for example—will also help us make a better education system in general, a more holistic education system, where all students achieve success.

I think it's important, when we're addressing the Anti-Racism Directorate, to name some specific elements of racism that exist. I think it's important to name them specifically because we have to address them specifically.

One of the elements that we need to be very clear about is that there is very clearly a very specific form of racism: anti-black racism. It exists in our society. It's a specific form of racism. It's very pernicious, and it needs to be identified specifically and named specifically. It's important to do so.

We've done this in this assembly, and I congratulate all members of all parties for doing this: We need to identify Islamophobia as a specific form of racism. It's a form of racism which has specifically targeted a com-

munity, and that has been very hurtful. Naming an injustice is the way you address the injustice. The fact that there is a clear attack on a particular community, a broad-stroke attack on a religion, is hurtful to our society in a holistic sense, in a general sense, and it's also very painfully damaging to that specific community. We also need to continue to name and continue to address the fact that anti-Semitism is a specific form of racism, a specific form of hate, that continues to exist, and we see it growing.

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The reason why I wanted to name these, specifically, is that we know that racism, discrimination and hate are all connected. When we see discrimination, it fuels hatred. With hatred—the extreme form of discrimination results in hatred—hatred is not isolated. We know that hatred is far more like a fire than it is like an isolated, specific, targeted approach. And fires, like we all know, spread. So wherever we see a rise in hate, whether it's based on race or religion, we see it impacting many people.

We can just look to the south to see examples where, as we've seen a rise in Islamophobia, we've seen a rise in attacks against racialized people in general. There is an example that is just so telling: There were four individuals; two of them were South Asian. In terms of religion, they were Hindu. They were shot at and attacked by a man who said, "I wanted to get those Arabs." They weren't from the Middle East; they were actually from India. And they weren't Muslim; they were Hindu. But it shows you that Islamophobia is not something that's only targeting Muslims. The idea of hate spreads, and it creates a climate where it's okay to disrespect someone based on their unique factors.

We've also seen a rise in anti-Semitism. People might say that there's such a difference in terms of framing Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, that they're so different. But hate is very much the same. Once you allow the climate for hate to exist, it spreads and it grows. That's why it's so important for us to address, to name the specific forms of hatred that exist, and also acknowledge that discrimination allows for the climate of hatred to grow. There is a strong connection, and it's something we need to address that way.

On this issue of the connectivity of discrimination, I think it's also important to highlight the intersections of racism and when there are multiple factors leading to discrimination or racism. We know that in our community, your race will impact your social determinants of health or it will impact your contact with the police. But we know that when there are intersections, if you are racialized and Muslim, that will increase the level of discrimination you might face. If you're racialized and there's a particular religion and you face physical disabilities, that increases the level of discrimination that you'll face in your life, whether it's employment or whether it's access to opportunities. Sexuality will also increase those. So I think it's a very crucial moment we have. It's very vital that the Anti-Racism Directorate acknowledges

this intersectionality. I think the directorate is in a great position to address this, to raise this awareness, and to then solve these problems in an intersectional way. It's a great opportunity, I think, we have here.

We've talked about a number of areas of racism and intersectionality, and I want to spend the last bit of my time focusing on this last issue: One of the worst things that we've done as a society here in Canada, here in Ontario, and one of things that we all share responsibility for and that we have to address with a shared responsibility model—we all need to work towards addressing this together—is the treatment of indigenous people. Indigenous people in this province and in this country have received the brunt—and not to compare, but I think it's very clear, in terms of evidence, in terms of historic and ongoing discrimination and just horrible treatment, that indigenous people have received the worst, the brunt of the racism and of the discrimination in our society. It's our shared responsibility to (1) acknowledge that, that that's the case, that that's factually true; and (2) to really address this issue in a meaningful way. I think the Anti-Racism Directorate is, again, in a strong position to do that. We need to acknowledge that. It's our shared, horrible legacy, and it's incumbent on all of us to rectify that legacy by actually doing some concrete things to address it. So we need to address it, and there's some key ingredients to this.

I think we need to acknowledge—and the word is very strong, and it's an appropriately strong word—the genocide that the indigenous people have faced. There's been both a physical, direct killing of indigenous people, and then a cultural genocide which is effectively another form of genocide. It is another genocide to strip people of their language, of their way of life, of their culture, of their identity. They have suffered this at the hands of Canadians. This is a fact. We need to acknowledge that. It is our shared responsibility to acknowledge that. Once we've acknowledged it, it's incumbent on us to address this by meaningfully changing the circumstances that they face because, as Canadians, it's our shared responsibility that they're in this place in the first place.

There is a number of areas that we need to address: education, employment, access to opportunities, and access to justice, more importantly. I want to start with access to water, something as simple as access to water. It's unbelievable, it's literally unfathomable, that in a country as rich as ours and in a country as resource-gifted as ours, we have so many communities in our province, in our country, that don't have access to clean water. In Ontario, a province that is so rich with clean water, that has such a massive amount of clean water, where we have so many resources, it's just unacceptable that people are living without clean water.

We know that in certain communities that there is ongoing contamination of their water. We know that in Grassy Narrows—it's clear their water has been poisoned, their water has been polluted to such an extent that it's poisonous to the people, but we're not doing anything about it. We're not cleaning that water up. The gov-

ernment has to address this, it's a fundamental element. If we care about addressing and we have a directorate that talks about anti-racism, then we need to fundamentally take care of this basic necessity. People should have water as a fundamental right. It is unacceptable that the water is not clean. We need to address that access to water. That's a key ingredient.

We know, again, with the police system, that there is a disproportionate contact rate and incarceration of indigenous people. We need to look at solutions to addressing that. We know that too many young people go missing. We know about women who are the missing and murdered indigenous women.

Now, particularly, in a chilling story that we recently saw a couple of years ago, an inquiry was called. Students from certain communities needed to go to larger cities. Indigenous students needed to go to larger cities to get access to high school and to move forward with their education. We know of approximately five or six young people who went to Thunder Bay for schooling and died. Their deaths were under circumstances that it's unclear how they happened—suspicious circumstances. An inquiry was held to look into what could be done to address that. The inquiry had key recommendations—recommendations around ensuring that there's mentoring, ensuring that there's adequate housing that allows for central community-building for these students who are often hundreds of kilometres away from home, to allow them to build a cohesion in their new communities, to put support systems in place. One of the key areas that indigenous communities raised that was not addressed was the climate that some of the students indicated that they felt in the city, particularly in this city, that there was a climate of racism that hurt these young people, that when they moved to this city they felt that, and that played some part in creating the conditions, eventually, for their untimely passing.

0940

We need to be very serious about racism, because it means that people are dying. People are dying as a result of racism. People are being denied access to resources and denied clean water. People who are going away to go to school never come back home. Because there's something going on here, we need to address it.

We know that there is a massively disproportionate number of suicides that happen in First Nations indigenous communities. We need to address that. That's a clear sign that there's something going wrong, that we need to do more.

Where I really want to spend the last couple of minutes is on focusing in on solutions. The solutions are where we need to make sure that everything we do moves towards a solution. Even data has to be collected in a manner such that we are looking towards implementing this information in a policy that will actually rectify the problem. Once we identify it, we need to rectify it.

I ask the government now: We have one case where we can start implementing this process. You have regula-

tions that have been implemented. I hope the government pays clear attention to the ongoing street checks and carding, to ensure that there is no ongoing discrimination, that people are not facing continual discrimination. We need to make sure that this is addressed.

There is a general sentiment that racialized people need to be surveilled, contained or controlled. These ideas of containment, surveillance and control perpetuate negative stereotypes. They create a society that is not holistic, that is divisive, that is divided, that is not coherent.

It's important that we understand that when we have policies that enact discrimination, it creates a society that's not reaching its full potential. We're actually building a society that is not achieving what it can achieve, so it's important that we work on that.

We know that representation is key. We had a recent report released. After a long court battle and tribunals, a decision was reached that in the Peel region—and this is the finding of the decision-maker. The finding was that in the Peel region, the police had a culture that projected, or that indicated, that South Asians were second-class citizens. This was a result of a decorated, distinguished police officer who was passed over for promotion a number of times and who raised the issue. The decision-makers found that the reason he was passed over was because his policing experience, which was in large part in the South Asian community, was discredited and not valued because it was in the South Asian community and it was considered of less value.

This is a public structure. This is a public institution that is saying that someone's policing experience—their hard years of work in the police service—was less valuable, was of less value, of less merit, because most of that experience was in the South Asian community.

Mr. Speaker, at least 50% of the city is South Asian. That's suggesting that 50% of the population of the city have no value or merit. If you're a police officer in Brampton or in the Peel region, a vast percentage of your work will probably be with the South Asian community. For the Peel police to say that that means your work is of less value—that is so incredibly offensive and discriminatory.

This is an example of where we need to now have some action. We know that this is going on, that this culture exists, so let's do something about it.

There is certainly provincial guidance and provincial leadership that can be implemented in this case. The Anti-Racism Directorate is clearly in the best position to provide that leadership in terms of the government, and should do so. That report, that decision, should be something that the Anti-Racism Directorate looks at—looks at the evidence that was presented to the decision-maker, and then implements some policies to address it. It has to be done. This is a serious issue.

I'll just make my final appeal now and wrap up. We have an opportunity with the Anti-Racism Directorate to really look at: How do we build a more unified society? How do we build a society where there is less inequality,

where there is less discrimination, ideally no discrimination? How do we build a better society? Building a better society isn't just for the equity-seeking communities. It's not just for racialized people or people of different religions. When you build a better society, a society that's more cohesive, a society that's more united, it benefits everyone. It's a better society for everyone.

When we look at the reasons why people are being discriminated against, often the reasons are socio-economic, meaning their lack of access to education or employment, and these are issues that impact everyone. So when we look at these problems, we're actually looking at problems that impact everybody in this province, and we can come up with solutions that will then help everyone in this province. I think it's important to always look beyond, that when we address inequality in one form, we're actually looking at ways to address inequality as a whole. I think this is an excellent opportunity for us to do that.

I think the government needs to seize this opportunity. If they don't, please be aware that New Democrats will continue to hold you to account and make sure that we build a society that's more just, that's more fair, because that is what we do as New Democrats, and that is what we need to do as Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Granville Anderson: I wish to thank the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton for his remarks. I sat here and I listened to every word he said, and it was very well done and a point well taken.

Our government is taking leadership, Mr. Speaker, a leadership role in trying to eliminate racism, which is a daunting task. Indeed, I don't think we'll ever accomplish that in today's society. Given the fact that we have had to introduce a bill like this, it is saying a lot towards attitudes in this province. Hopefully, it will help to change attitudes and make life easier for our indigenous people, people in the black community and other racialized people in this province and in this country.

When we remove barriers for the most disadvantaged, we improve our institutions and we improve the outcome of their lives. We want to be open and transparent about our work, through public reporting and meaningful dialogue with our communities, to build a better society for all of our people, where people can come together and have job opportunities and opportunities to succeed in life, whether it's in our school system or in the workplace. This bill goes a far way towards accomplishing some of that.

Speaker, I saw an article in the Toronto Star over the weekend that's saying the situation is so bad in this country that they want to remove names from resumé's, just in case, just to level the playing field to give people even the opportunity to have an interview. That's a sad commentary, indeed. When I saw that, I realized we do have a problem, and it goes far deeper than this legislation maybe could ever address.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I want to comment on my colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton and thank him for his deliberation here today. I take exception to the fact that things are so bad in this country that we're in worse shape than any other nation. Look, we are not dealing with genocides here in this country while we are seeing it elsewhere, where people are actually being targeted to death because of who they are. That said, I do agree that we have to do more to combat racism, anti-indigenous bigotry, anti-Muslim bigotry and anti-Semitism.

I will bring this to the floor of the assembly because I believe it is very important: The Jewish community continues to be one of the most targeted communities when it comes to hate crimes in Ontario. In the latest Toronto Police Service's report alone, the Jewish community was the target of 43 of 145 hate crimes in 2016, meaning that 30% of the offences were directed at the Jewish community.

Similarly, in Hamilton, 21 of 115 reported hate crimes in 2016 were directed at the Jewish community. These are not isolated events. They have happened in my own city of Ottawa, and I'm not proud of that. That's why our institutions across the province need to ensure that we are protecting everyone, including the Jewish community.

0950

I just want to point out the recently launched Anti-Racism Directorate. The minister addressed the need to stop systemic racism and discrimination against a number of communities, including the black community, the indigenous community, as my colleague mentioned, and the Muslim community, yet there's no mention of a plan to combat anti-Semitism and help the Jewish community, which is one of the most targeted in Canada, so I would ask that the government consider that. Obviously, I support those groups that have been mentioned in the bill, but I do notice a glaring omission of those who are not included.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to thank the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton for his very thorough depiction of the bill. I want to bring it back to another bill that's before this House at the same time, and that's Bill 89, and how the two of them really have so much to do with each other. Bill 89 is dealing with our Child, Youth, and Family Services Act and the repealing of the ministry's current act and putting in this new act.

Right now, there are figures that say that in Toronto 8% of those under 18 are black, yet 42% of children in care have at least one black parent. That's five times the representation of the general population.

If we're not gathering data, if we're not making sure that we're using data for future use—these are the kinds of things that have happened. We know that so many families are living in poverty and are ending up with their kids in care, and that those same youth are then ending

up in corrections. These are all systemic issues, and this is a big part of it.

So I congratulate the member on his work.

I also want to touch base with the member from Nepean–Carleton. I met a Jewish family—and she told me this story about her daughter going to her new boyfriend’s church with him. When she went to the church with him, she said, “Where are the police?” He said, “What do you mean? There are no police here.” She said, “Every time we go to the synagogue to pray, there are police.” That in itself was so mind-blowing for me.

I’m out of time, but thank you for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton for his comments. I noticed that he mentioned something about a recent glaring case in our own community of Peel. These are the reasons why what we’re doing here is so important.

The proposed Anti-Racism Act is the first one of its kind in Canada, and it would embed the ARD into law. It allows for the collection of race-based data. It is supported by the Information and Privacy Commissioner and provides high privacy standards for the protection of personal information.

We understand that the things that are happening right now in our own community should not be happening. I’ve been following the same case that was referred to in the member’s speech, and I think that many members of our community were shocked to see what happened and the outcome with the tribunal—to see that somebody wasn’t able to move forward based on their race and based on racial issues. We want to be able to support people like that in moving forward in their careers, in our communities. That is exactly why our government has been so focused on consulting with communities, consulting with people to develop anti-racism legislation, ensuring that it will be incorporated into law and that it can’t be changed.

I also want to comment a little bit on something that the member from Nepean–Carleton said. I don’t think that, in our legislation, we are ignoring any group. We are not focused on any group. All groups are included under this legislation. Yes, we have talked about two of the highly targeted groups in our province, but we’re not ignoring anything. We understand that all groups face some sort of racism. Coming from an ethnic and racial background, I understand how important it is to have protections available for all groups. Everybody should feel safe when they go to pray.

The comment made by the member from Hamilton Mountain: It’s not fair that somebody should think that when they go to pray, there needs to be a police officer there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton has two minutes.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I just want to acknowledge—I should have done this before—the tremendous advocacy

of our leader, Andrea Horwath, in pushing forward the Anti-Racism Directorate in this province. I want to acknowledge that our leader’s determination to get that pushed forward was very crucial.

I want to thank all the members for their comments. I want to thank them all for their responses.

I just want to finish off with two specific examples that I didn’t touch on in my previous speech. The Peel school board saw some really horrible racism as well, and it was targeted against the Muslim community. That Islamophobia was just disgusting to see. It was very divisive, but there was also a shining example of hope when other communities came together to support their Muslim brothers and sisters. That’s something that we need to see more of, the idea that we need to work together.

I absolutely agree that we need to address anti-Semitism. That is clearly an issue that I touched on in my speech, but it is clearly an issue that we need to address and continue to address. Really, whenever we see discrimination or an injustice against one community, it’s an injustice and discrimination against all of us. That’s important.

The final area that has to be touched on is the York school board. The York school board has ongoing issues of systemic discrimination, and it’s been very troubling to see. There’s been a real lack of leadership and a lack of action in that board. We need to see better outcomes; we need to see better results. We can’t have a school board allowing practices that are so clearly racist, that are so clearly discriminatory. That’s essentially the board that’s going to determine the future education of young people. We need to make sure that they have the brightest future possible, that they have all the access possible to education. Having a climate where their race is not respected, their uniqueness is not respected, is so hurtful to that.

I want to acknowledge those two areas that are also important for us to address, the school boards, and thank everyone for their input.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and one half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Mr. James J. Bradley: It will be adjourned?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Minister?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we wish for debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Further debate? Last call for further debate.

Mr. Coteau has moved second reading of Bill 114, An Act to provide for Anti-Racism Measures. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

I believe the ayes have it.

A recorded vote will be required. It will be deferred until after question period this morning.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Orders of the day.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: No further business, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 0958 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to welcome Dr. Totton from Owen Sound and Dr. Drake, who has dental offices in both Sauble Beach and Lion's Head, and all the dentists and all the staff from the Ontario Dental Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'd like to welcome Dr. Lesli Hapak and Dr. Charles Frank. They're both dentists from the Windsor area.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: It is my pleasure to introduce and welcome Dr. Vipin Mithia to the Ontario Legislature today. He is a constituent in my riding of Mississauga–Erindale and is a practising dentist in Mississauga.

I also want to introduce Ninder Thind and Bhajan Thind as well. They are here to watch their son and grandson.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce through you to the Legislature Dr. Lesli Hapak, Dr. Kerr Banduk, Dr. Raffy Chouljian and Dr. Charles Frank, all members of the Ontario Dental Association, here with us today.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to introduce Dr. Victor Kutcher from Hamilton, here with the Ontario Dental Association.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to welcome Dr. Graham Baldwin from my riding of Durham, who is here today with the Ontario Dental Association. Welcome.

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, I want to introduce to you and through you to the members a constituent from my riding who is here from the ODA. I'd like to welcome Dr. Kim Hansen. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I would like to welcome Dr. Andy Syriopoulos from Toronto–Danforth. We appreciate his presence today. Thank you. Welcome.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: From the ODA: Dr. Peter Fendrich, a great friend of mine.

Career Colleges Ontario is also here today: Paul Kitchin, Diana Boal and Sharon Maloney. Welcome, all.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to welcome, from my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Dr. Kevin Roach, who is here with the ODA.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to welcome Dr. Rick Caldwell from my riding and everyone else from the Ontario Dental Association.

Mr. Mike Colle: It's my pleasure to introduce the president of Bryan College, Adriana Costenaro, who is here with Career Colleges Ontario. Welcome, Adriana.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm honoured to welcome family friends of ours to Queen's Park today, Bill and Jane Bruinink from Mount Brydges—welcome to Queen's Park—as well as Dr. David Jones from Dorchester.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Today, I would like to welcome Alice Jackes-Sweetnam from my riding of Barrie. She's here with the Ontario Dental Association.

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I'm very happy to welcome Clovel Folkes, administrator of Dare to Care HIV/AIDS program, from Jamaica, and Lola Adekoya from my riding. She is also a volunteer for Dare to Care.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: I would like to welcome, on behalf of the Ottawa–Orléans community, Dr. Wendy Low, who is here today from the Ontario Dental Association. Welcome.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to welcome a special guest who is in the gallery today, Dr. Malcolm Wood, who is a dentist from the great riding of Oxford. I want to thank him for being here at Queen's Park today.

Hon. Bill Mauro: In the members' gallery, west side, from Thunder Bay and the Ontario Dental Association: Dr. Gerry Smith. Great to see you, Gerry.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Please join me in welcoming, from the Ontario Dental Association, from the beautiful riding of Dufferin–Caledon, Dr. Lisa Bentley and, from Guelph, Dr. Maneesh Jain. Welcome.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure to introduce Nadia Guerrero, a teacher from my riding of Davenport, who is here with a number of students and schools: Michael Power–St. Joseph, Marshall McLuhan, and Cardinal Carter. Welcome to Queen's Park here today.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I am very pleased to be able to welcome to the Legislature today Kevin Boyce, James Jeffs and John Thompson, from my riding of Niagara West–Glanbrook. They're from the Ontario Dental Association, and I'm very pleased to have them in the Legislature today.

Mr. Han Dong: It gives me great pleasure to introduce two Career Colleges Ontario representatives from my riding of Trinity–Spadina. Please welcome J.P. Roszell from Anderson College, and George Hood, president of Herzing College.

I encourage all members of this House to pop by the Career Colleges Ontario reception this evening, between 5 p.m. and 8 p.m., in the dining room.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I wish to welcome to the Legislature today the mayor of the town of Erin, Allan Alls, and his wife, Diane, as well as Dr. Thomas Drake, who is here with the Ontario Dental Association. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I met this morning with three great dentists from the region of Halton who have joined us here at Queen's Park. Vipan, Kelvin and Brenda are with us today.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Joining us today are friends from Don Valley East: from the Trebas Institute, Luisa Tanzi; and Laleh Bighash, from the Academy of Applied Pharmaceutical Sciences. They're from the beautiful riding of Don Valley East.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I notice that students, teachers and parents from Father F.X. O'Reilly school have just joined us in the gallery behind me. They're grade 5 and 6 students from Tottenham, in my riding.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to introduce Dr. Jack McLister. He's the president of the Ontario Dental Association, and he's here from my hometown of London. I'd also like to introduce Dr. Peter Fendrich. He's a long-time volunteer and advocate for the ODA. He's from London as well.

I understand that the dentists are celebrating 150 years, which is very coincidental, because Canada will be 150 too.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I want to introduce three dentists, who I met with this morning, from the Ontario Dental Association: Dr. John Glenn, who is a constituent of mine in Etobicoke Centre; Dr. Domenic Trotti; and Dr. C.P. Giri. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As we've heard, the Ontario Dental Association is here today. I'd like to welcome four dentists in particular: ODA president Dr. Jack McLister; Dr. Jerry Smith; Dr. Lynn Tomkins, who is a constituent of mine; and CEO and executive director Frank Bevilacqua.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Please help me welcome to Queen's Park today, from Wilfrid Laurier University, director of government relations and former QP staffer Maria Papadopoulos; and students Kyle Laverty, Aqsa Naveed, Lisa Irimescu, Steve Bagin, Jonathan Ricci, and Jordan Baechler; and their instructor, former Kitchener Centre MPP and friend to many, John Milloy.

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue à mon bon ami le D^r Roch St-Aubin, de Sudbury; Dr. LouAnn Visconti, from Timmins; and Dr. Donald Young, from Thunder Bay. They are all dentists, here to celebrate 150 years of dentistry.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I have a great introduction. As we know, April is donor month, and in honour of this month, we have some special guests here today: Kim LeBlanc and Dave Allingham. Kim made the brave decision to donate her 15-year-old son Tyler's heart, and Dave is the recipient of Tyler's heart.

I want to thank you both for being here with us today.

Also joining us today from Trillium Gift of Life are president Ronnie Gavsie; communications director Mary Ellen Armstrong; and communications adviser Shilpa Sharma.

This tells us just how remarkable that gift of life can be.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I also want to welcome all of the dentists from Ottawa who are visiting Queen's Park. In particular, I want to thank and welcome Dr. Don Friedlander, who is a good friend of mine and also my personal dentist.

Mr. Todd Smith: Speaker, I know you've heard, but the Legiskaters arose last night to beat the Dentinators 16-6 in our game. I want to make a special welcome to the hardest-working player of the game—he saw more rubber than a dead skunk on the 401 in last night's game—who was the goaltender, Dr. Rick Caldwell. We welcome him.

1040

Mr. Joe Dickson: On behalf of the MPP for Mississauga-Brampton South, the guests of page captain Gurjaap Brar are his mother, Ninder Thind; his grandmother Jasbir Kaur Thind; and his grandfather Bhajan Singh Thind. Welcome.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'd just like to introduce two very fine guests from my riding: John Nelson, from the Canadian Business College, and Frank Gerencser, from triOS College, two very fine career colleges in my constituency.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, just doing your job, sir: If there's anyone else in the House who wasn't welcomed yet this morning, welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Everybody's stepping on my lines today.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I just wanted to welcome the students from Michael Power-St. Joseph High School in my community, Etobicoke Centre, and to welcome Nadia Guerrero, the fantastic teacher who has brought them here today. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions. I'm still doing them, Minister. Minister, go ahead.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I would like to introduce a constituent, Rodney D'Souza, from CDI College, who is visiting Queen's Park today and representing career colleges. Welcome, Rodney.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to welcome Dr. Giri and Dr. Elise Wong from my riding. Please join me in welcoming them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have a few. The former member for Kitchener Centre in the 38th, 39th and 40th Parliaments—which the Speaker tends to do for former members—John Milloy, is here in the House. Thank you, John. He's hiding.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He's as elusive as ever, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Also from the riding of Brant, on behalf of the Ontario Dental Association, Dr. Murray Pearson.

I would also like to echo what one of the members said during introductions. At this moment of maximum hockey, it's my great pleasure to advise members that our very own House team—pun intended—the Legiskaters, won the annual trophy last night by defeating the ODA Dentonators 16-6.

I would also like to invite the victorious players and coaches and anyone else who wants to consider themselves a hockey player involved with the team to pose for a victory photo with the trophy on the grand staircase after question period. Congratulations to our team.

I would defer now to the member for Leeds–Grenville for a point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: On a point of order, Speaker: In the event that the trophy the Legiskaters won arrives in the chamber, I would like to have unanimous consent that, during question period, the trophy make its way to the desks of the players in rotation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Looks like we're starting a Stanley Cup tradition. To the dentists in the room: This is not rubbing your nose in it, I'm telling you right now. We're not doing that.

The Minister of Children and Youth Services on a point of order.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I found John Milloy. He's in the east gallery.

MILTON "BUD" GREGORY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to recognize the former member of provincial Parliament from Mississauga East, Mr. Milton Edward Charles Gregory, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

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

Before we proceed, I too would like to draw your attention to the Speaker's gallery. Please join me in welcoming the family of the late Milton Edward Charles—also known as "Bud"—Gregory, MPP for Mississauga East during the 30th, 31st, 32nd and 33rd Parliaments, who are seated in the Speaker's gallery: daughter Martinne Oliver and her partner, Ed Howell; daughter Judy Fraser and her husband, Chris Sanders; granddaughter Christie Atkinson and her partner, Nathan Horenburg; and great-granddaughter Kelsey Atkinson Trimble. Welcome to the House. Thank you for being here.

Also in the Speaker's gallery, to show support, is Mr. David Warner, the Speaker during the 35th Parliament; Mr. Steve Mahoney, MPP for Mississauga West during the 34th and 35th Parliaments; and Mr. Phil Gillies, MPP for Brantford during the 32nd and 33rd Parliaments. Welcome, gentlemen. We're glad you're here with us.

I would now ask for our tributes to be paid.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I also want to extend, on behalf of all New Democrats, our welcome to you all, all the friends and family and loved ones. Thank you so much for joining us here today.

I took this as an opportunity to learn, and I learned a great deal. I learned three key things from the life of

Milton Edward Charles "Bud" Gregory. I learned three key things, and I think these are key things we can share with this assembly.

First, I think it's important to acknowledge a little bit of background. As we all know, Bud Gregory, Mr. Gregory, was an MPP who served 12 long years here in this assembly. He served five years in his capacity as city councillor in Mississauga, and at the regional level as well. He was born in Toronto in 1926. Over those years, he gave a lot to this assembly, he gave a lot to the province, and I know that was a massive sacrifice for his family.

He taught me three things that I can share with this assembly. One: The pain of losing, but in losing, some of the wisdom that you can learn from that. He mentioned initially, in an article, that losing was a very emotional thing, that there was a lot of extreme anger and hurt at first. There was an initial feeling of resentment: "A feeling that I'd been cast aside."

But then, in time—and this is something I think we can all learn—afterwards, he realized that politics is really about winning and losing; that's a part of the game, and it's not personal. The years that he sacrificed, the years that he gave to the people of Mississauga were not in vain. People appreciated that. But sometimes there comes a change and sometimes there is a desire for change in government that's not personal. It's something we can all learn as legislators, that there will be a time that we will no longer be able to serve our communities, but it's not something personal. It's time to move on.

He also taught me how to mellow, and I think that's something that's very important for all of us sometimes during question period.

He was known as the Mississauga rattler. He was very effective in opposition. It was reported that he took glee in doing his job as an opposition member. He was once a staunch opponent of Mayor McCallion. He would take great joy in calling the NDP at the time the "little red rump." But later on in life, he ended up being a big fan of Mayor McCallion and was quoted as saying of his one-time political foe that she had done a great job and that he respected her work.

In addition—and I found this quite powerful—on a trip to Zambia, he talked about what he had learned from that exchange on that trip and this is what he said: "Another thing that I learned was that it's easy to communicate with people who live in different conditions than you're used to. It's quite easy to find common interests. The morality of these people is basically the same as ours. Their politicians really want to help their people."

Sometimes we get caught up in partisanship. We think that we're on different sides of the House, that we don't really have the same values in terms of caring about one another and, really, on this trip to Africa with his daughter, Mr. Gregory said that, really, we're all connected, not just as politicians in different parties, but as people across the world in countries that you'd think you'd have nothing in common with. He said that it's quite easy to see the common humanity of all people. That's something

that we sometimes lose and I think it's important. I think it was a part of his mellowing out to realize that.

1050

He also taught me a great way to retire. He did his tremendous years of service: 17 years of his life committed to making this province a better place. He served in a number of roles, both in opposition and in government, notably as a Minister of Revenue, the Solicitor General and the chief government whip. He did a lot for this province, but also knew how to take it easy.

He was a long-time member of Grampa's Goodtime Gang band, where he played the harmonica and the accordion. He retired in the beautiful area of Prince Edward county, where he settled in Picton. While enjoying time as a golfer and playing the accordion and harmonica, he still realized that, even in retirement, it's important to give back and continued to give back as a member of the police board in that county.

He taught me a number of things. I salute his great work in this province. I think it's a lesson we can all learn. These lessons are things we can all share.

Again, I want to thank the family for sharing some of Mr. Gregory with us. Thank you.

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

Hon. Dipika Damerla: It's a pleasure to rise today to pay tribute to former MPP Bud Gregory. I would also like to welcome the family and friends of Bud who are here today.

I first got to know the name "Bud Gregory" about 15 years ago when my husband and I, for the first time, became proud homeowners. As it happened, the street that led to my new home was called Bud Gregory Boulevard. Almost every single day for the past 15 years, I have turned on Bud Gregory Boulevard to enter my subdivision.

I recall that about that time, I had learned that many of the arterial roads in Mississauga were named after family names of the farmers who owned the surrounding land. These road names recognized the men in the family but left out the daughters who, as we know, would give up their maiden names in marriage. In a touching gesture to do right by their daughters, when these farms were sold to builders, the farmers would request that some of the subdivision street names be named after their daughters' first names. And so it is in Mississauga we have main roads named Kennedy and Cawthra, and inside streets with names like Maxine Place and Joan Drive.

So I wondered, "Who was this Bud Gregory who had not just his first name on a street, not just his last name, but his full name: Bud Gregory?" I figured he must have been somebody of some consequence. This was back in 2002, when Wikipedia wasn't yet the default option. I have to admit, over the years, every once in a while, driving on the street, I would wonder, "Who was Bud Gregory?"

Then, around 2013, after I was elected, I met with a stakeholder who asked if I would like to meet his mother, Irene Robinson. Irene had been the Liberal candidate in Mississauga East way back in 1975, so of course I met

her. I remember asking her who she had run against, and she said, "Oh, a Conservative named Bud Gregory." And that is how I finally got to know who Bud Gregory was.

While I never had the privilege of meeting him, Milton Edward Charles Gregory preceded me as the representative for Mississauga East by a quarter of a century. He was first elected as the Conservative member for Mississauga East in 1975. Over the years, he served as chief whip, Minister of Revenue and the Solicitor General. But it was in opposition as the transportation critic that Bud shined the most, and those who knew him say Bud was "the best Minister of Transportation the province never had."

Bud was a passionate and forceful MPP and was nicknamed "the Mississauga rattler" for his ability to get under the skin of his opponents. A fervent Conservative, he once famously remarked, following a heated debate, "My friend should not be too insulted. I could have done worse; I could have called him a Liberal." But for all his partisanship, Bud took many stands in this Legislature that could frankly sit very well with us Liberals.

For instance, back on December 8, 1977, Bud spoke in favour of freezing property taxes for homeowners who installed solar energy, arguing, "This kind of heating can be used without chemical combustion and the release of harmful chemicals into the environment."

On June 5, 1986, as the transportation critic, he introduced a private member's resolution asking for an Eglinton West rapid rail transit connecting Toronto to Mississauga.

On May 11, 1987, Bud Gregory had this to say: "May I say it is a great pleasure to have the opportunity to speak in the throne speech debate, particularly with a woman Speaker in the chair. It is quite a precedent and I think it speaks well for the future." He went on to say, "Perhaps someday we can look forward to ... even a woman in the leader's chair."

Public transit for Mississauga, keeping seniors in their own homes for as long as possible, a sustainable environment and advancing the role of women in politics are all issues that are important to me today as the MPP for Mississauga East-Cooksville, and it is humbling to know that two and a half decades ago, Bud was already fighting for these issues.

Those who knew Bud knew that he was devoted to his family, friends and the staff that worked for him, a devotion that was returned in full measure.

Fifteen years ago, when I first wondered who Bud Gregory was, I could not have known that one day I would succeed him as the local MPP and pay tribute to him in this Legislature. It is an honour to have had this opportunity. I want to thank his family and assure them that, in the years to come, as I make that turn on Bud Gregory Boulevard on my way home, I will think of Bud and his service to our province. I know I speak for all those who knew him when I say he is missed.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: I, as well, would like to welcome the family, some of them from Prince Edward county and

some of them from Mississauga, to the Legislature here today, and his former colleagues as well. I had the opportunity, just a moment ago, to talk to a former colleague of his in the Bill Davis years, Phil Gillies, a former member from Brantford, who was telling me that when Bud was here as the government whip, he said that he was like the pope, and before anybody got anything, they had to kiss the ring. Only he kept his ring in his back pocket.

And so it was with Milton Edward Charles Gregory—"Bud"—cabinet minister, Solicitor General, chief government whip, MPP and Mississauga city councillor. He was a real performer.

When they were being bathed together by their mom back in 1926, his older sister Phyllis was the one who called him "Bud" for the first time, and it stuck for 90 years. He was Bud. In fact, Phyllis takes some responsibility for his success in public service. Bud had a career in the insurance business—it wasn't all that glamorous—before entering municipal politics in Mississauga, where he served as councillor from 1971 to 1975. Phyllis said that "Milton Gregory" would have been a pretty bland name on election signs around Mississauga. So she coined the phrase "Vote Bud. It's Wiser." There may have been some trademark infringement at the time—I'm not sure—but as we all know, slogans are pretty impressive and important in local politics. And he had a very impressive political life after that.

Much has been already said about the political career of Bud Gregory, but Bud achieved some plum positions, as chief government whip and Minister of Revenue, in the Big Blue Machine era of the Bill Davis government. He became Solicitor General in the short-lived Frank Miller government. He served as an active backbencher, winning several battles, working alongside his Liberal and NDP colleagues, to ensure that Mississauga East was getting the type of investment from the province that that fast-growing city at the time needed.

It's been said that the only things that Bud didn't like in life were cauliflower and Liberals. However, his former EA, Michael Burke—he's the fine-looking gentleman there at the end of the front row—worked for Bud over in the Whitney Block, and he said that Bud had great friends on both sides of the House. Bud always stayed grounded. He had lots of fun in spite of his important government post, and he never took himself too seriously. Michael says that Bud had actually mastered the work-life balance before that concept ever existed.

1100

I knew Bud, and he was a great guy. Certainly, as the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton mentioned, he mellowed when he moved to the county. He was a very dignified person. He was very elegant and quick-witted. He epitomized grace. Bud had tremendous political skills and a great sense of humour. He was a savvy negotiator. As a matter of fact, when he was working out deals here with the public sector, as Solicitor General, and all the contracts that go along with that—there were some pretty serious things he was working on, but they say that the best contract that he ever negotiated was after he moved

to Picton. As you know, Picton is stuck out in the middle of Prince Edward county, by Lake Ontario. We get a lot of snow there. When he moved in, he went to his neighbours and negotiated for the husband to come and shovel his driveway. That contract existed for 18 years. He never paid them. They shovelled his driveway every time it snowed—and it snows a lot in Prince Edward county—and there would be Bud waving out the window. Everybody loved Bud.

It was thought by many that, after leaving Queen's Park, he might get back into municipal politics. He left the big-city life for Prince Edward county. He left his perfectly pressed three-piece suits, his chauffeured limousines and big-city life behind. He traded them in for county life. Big, baggy overalls were what Bud wore when he was in Prince Edward county. He had his harmonicas, as was mentioned. He was never directly involved in politics, although he was on the police services board in Prince Edward county. He remained a very recognizable face in the county.

Shortly after arriving in Picton, he joined that gang, Grandpa's Goodtime Gang. He was the lead singer, and he would play the harmonica and the whistle. His long-time friend Peter Rea, who performs in a rival local band, said that Grandpa's Goodtime Gang was actually Picton's second-best band. They were pretty good, and he was a great entertainer.

One time, a young county musician who had grown up in Mississauga was performing a gig with Bud. He learned of Bud's last name and said, "I know a street in Mississauga"—as the member from Mississauga just said—"named Bud Gregory Boulevard." Bud replied, humbly, "Yes, they named that street after me." The young musician said, "Wow, it must be really cool having a street named after you." And he said, "Yes, it was a great honour to have Bud Gregory Boulevard, until they added the extension onto Bud Gregory Boulevard and called it Trudeau way." Remember what I told you about cauliflower earlier?

At his popular Thursday night hangout, Coach's sports bar in Picton, he was known as "Chairman of the Board" by the locals there. In fact, it was Thursday, June 16 of last year that Bud performed for the final time on this earth during an open mike session. He was there on the stage. He was found dead the next morning. But what a great night he had, his final night on this earth, performing in front of that crowd, having a few pops, a few dances. He actually closed down Coach's sports bar that night with his own very recognizable rendition of Louis Armstrong's What a Wonderful World. He was quite an amazing guy.

I think we are probably all, as legislators, guilty of this at times: We're so busy with our own lives that we don't take the time that we should to appreciate those who have paved the way for us and gone before us and represented our communities either in this place or on Parliament Hill or on our local municipal councils, and take the time to sit down and have the advice of somebody like Bud Gregory. I certainly enjoyed every moment I had talking

to Bud Gregory. I will really miss his sage advice and I know we all will.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their thoughtful and heartfelt comments and indicate to the family that we will provide you with a transcript and a DVD of the tributes. I am going to edit the ring story just to make sure that we're above board in the House.

Having said that, we want to thank the family for the gift of Bud. Thank you very much.

DENTIST DAY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I'm seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the Ontario Dental Association.

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

Government House leader?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that this House recognize today, Wednesday, April 26, 2017, as Dentist Day in honour of the 150th anniversary of the Ontario Dental Association and to thank Ontario's dentists for their contribution to our health care system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader moves that this House recognize today, Wednesday, April 26, 2017, as Dentist Day in honour of the 150th anniversary of the Ontario Dental Association and to thank Ontario's dentists for their contribution to our health care system. Do we agree? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

HOCKEY TROPHY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is my understanding that unanimous consent has passed that the trophy can be displayed on the member's desk. If the member wishes to display the trophy and pass it to all of the hockey members, he may do so. Congratulations.

Just before we start question period, a reminder that a photo will be taken with the team winners. If the dentists want to show up for the picture, too, they can be in the picture.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know that we're going to keep this brisk. It is therefore now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Listen to these quotes: "For my tax dollars, I

want politicians who aren't frightened to disobey a provincial regime I believe is destructive to human beings."

"If trustees don't agree with the funding formula, I expect them to go out on a limb and push back—not implement it."

"Trustees acted like bureaucrats, when what we desperately need are politicians who will tell the province 'No.'"

Those are the words of our current Liberal Premier about the school closures that this government is now implementing. My question is, why has there been a complete 180 in the tone of the Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Leader of the Opposition has laid out exactly why I ran for provincial office: Because there was a government in office that wouldn't take our meetings, that didn't listen to us, that had cut funding across the province—

Mr. John Yakabuski: What happened to you? You've become what you were against.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order. If this continues, we'll move to warnings. I'm prepared.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There were billions of dollars taken out of education in this province during the Harris years. That is why I ran for provincial office. In fact, there are many members here who ran for provincial office because of the devastation that was wrought by that party when Harris was in office.

I'm proud to be here. We've rebuilt our education system. Just 68% of kids were graduating—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

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

1110

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: I don't think the children and the families at the rally outside Queen's Park today would believe those words from the Premier.

Another quote from our current Premier is this: "A key priority of the McGuinty government has been to keep good schools open. Immediately upon taking office, the government asks school boards to put a moratorium on school closures. This pause allowed the government to develop a new tool for boards to empower local decision-making on school closures." They wanted a moratorium then. Something has changed.

That was our current Premier advocating for a moratorium on school closures, but right now, when parents and children are pleading for a moratorium, the government is deaf to those concerns. Why have they changed their mind on the moratorium on school closures?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Of course when we came into office there had been, as I said, devastation across the education system in this province. It was absolutely necessary to put a moratorium in place while guidelines were put in place.

Look, Mr. Speaker, I know how difficult it is—and has been for decades—for school boards to make decisions about school closures or potential consolidations. It's the most difficult decision that school boards have to make. But that moratorium was lifted at least in part because school boards were saying, "We can't run our boards unless we have the authority to make decisions that are in the best interests of kids." That means the best programs and the best staffing, and that means that, as schools are built, as new modern buildings are created, there have to be, sometimes, school closures and consolidations.

In the final supplementary, I'll talk about—

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: The Premier said there was devastation when she was running for office. Now, I have a stat here, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

Mr. Patrick Brown: I think the government needs to hear this, rather than heckle.

According to the legislative library, this Liberal government has now closed 100 more schools than the previous Conservative government ever dreamed of. They are setting records on school closures. The facts don't lie, Mr. Speaker. This Premier, this government—they said they were in it for education. This Premier was the education minister—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's actually coming from both sides, too.

Finish, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: I guess the truth hurts, and that's why the government benches are heckling.

The reality is that this Premier said she was in politics for education, and she has now closed 100 more schools than any previous government ever dreamed of. This Premier is setting records on school closures—

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think what we also need to talk about is the 810 new schools that have been built and the 780 new school renovations. There have been schools built in ridings across this province, in rural, northern, suburban and urban communities. There has been a renovation of 780 schools on top of the 810 schools.

So I go back to what I said in the second question: I understand that closing a school or consolidating two schools is a real challenge for school boards. I also know that we have great examples in this province where school boards have worked together, where school buildings have been kept open because there has been co-operation between school boards and municipalities. We need more of that. We've put money in place—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —to help boards do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In case he didn't hear it: The member from Leeds–Grenville, come to order.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Tomorrow is a big day. The Liberals are allegedly tabling their first balanced budget in many years. But I share the concerns of the Financial Accountability Officer and the Auditor General that the government's numbers don't add up. We've heard descriptions in the media: "cooking the books"; it's a "shell game"; it's "smoke and mirrors." Regardless of what you—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. I'm—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation will come to order.

I'm going to ask the member to withdraw because I don't want to get into this accusation before or after the budget about anything that's happening between individuals and making an accusation. So I'd like you to withdraw.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You will be able to complete the question, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Regardless of the term used, the evidence that the independent officers are highlighting speaks to the fact that the government's numbers do not add up, and when things don't add up in Liberal Ontario, there's usually only one result, and that's big tax increases or severe budget cuts. If the Premier could share with the Legislature today, which is it going to be? Given the independent officers say the numbers don't add up, is it going to be a tax increase or a deep cut?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Leader of the Opposition will be in the Legislature, will hear the budget speech tomorrow, and I would think, given his conservative outlook on life, he would be pleased that the books in the province are being brought to balance. He would see that as a positive thing.

But I will say that where we perhaps diverge is, from my perspective and from our perspective, a balanced budget means that we have the opportunity to build on the foundation that we have already put in place in this province. We've been building infrastructure. We've been building roads and schools and hospitals and bridges and transit. We've been investing in children's education and in the education of our post-secondary students.

We now, with a balanced budget, have a responsibility to make sure we tackle the needs people are confronting in this globally uncertain economy, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

Interjections.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: If it actually was a balanced budget, then I would be pleased, but when the independent officers of Parliament are saying that the numbers don't add up, that rings alarm bells across the province.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Labour, come to order. We're inches away from warning people.

Carry on.

Mr. Patrick Brown: The Minister of Finance has been claiming that there will be a major booster shot for health care funding, but in January the Financial Accountability Officer reported that the government would need to slash its health care budget by \$2.8 billion over the next years if it was to meet their balanced budget targets.

Once again, my question to the Premier is: Who are we to believe, the Financial Accountability Officer or Chef Sousa? Please enlighten the Legislature.

Interjections.

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

The member knows better. I ask in this House that we either refer to people by their title or by their riding, and it won't happen again.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have a recipe for success, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

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

I'm not amused. My responsibilities are to hold this place in decorum, and any member making it happen in an opposite way is not liked by me. Bring it down.

Please, take that prop—I'm charged with the decorum in this place; I'd appreciate help.

Minister.

1120

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the numbers do speak for themselves. We're increasing our revenues. We're growing our economy. We're exceeding Canada, the US and the G7, and we're balancing the books tomorrow. We're balancing the books next year. We're balancing the books the year after that, and we're investing in the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We're moving to warnings. If I'm not getting help, I'll give myself some help.

Final supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: The reality is, no one believes this recipe the Minister of Finance is putting forward. No one believes this recipe. Let me share the words of the Financial Accountability Officer: "The outlook for the budget balance ... has deteriorated,"

and he concluded that "Ontario's budget would be expected to remain in deficit over the next five years."

Will the Liberals come clean? You've got the Financial Accountability Officer saying one thing. You've got the Minister of Finance saying something entirely different. To the Premier: Who do you expect Ontarians to believe? The independent legislative oversight or the Minister of Finance?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Independent agencies around the world, and here in Canada, the Conference Board of Canada, have cited that Ontario's numbers are the most transparent, with the greatest integrity of any government in Canada. Every year the opposition and naysayers say, "Ontario can never come to balance. Ontario cannot do what they say they will do." And we exceeded targets—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Not a true balance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nipissing is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We've exceeded targets year over year. We've been deliberate, we've been consistent and we're balancing the budget. More importantly, the people who believe it are the people who have jobs this year, over 700,000 more jobs since the depths of the recession. It's families who have more to care for their families. Mr. Speaker, it's about them, and we're delivering for the people of Ontario.

PHARMACARE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. Does this Premier believe in universal, public pharmacare for Ontarians?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. The member opposite knows that for the past few years our government has been relentless in advocating for a national pharmacare program here in Canada. Quite frankly, we have been the leading political voice in the country advocating for a national program that would ensure that all Canadians have access to medicines, which is critically important.

We know that at least one out of every 10 families in this province and across the country is unable to secure the medicines that are prescribed to them because of financial difficulties. That's the basis of our advocacy. It's an issue of fairness and health equity. The social determinants of health are no less important than the other aspects of medicare. That's why we have been working so hard with this advocacy of—

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Does the Premier think that it's okay for Ontario to sit by and wait for Ottawa to do something while the people in this province have to empty their wallets to pay for life-saving medication day after day?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Quite frankly, this member is late to the party. We have been working across this country

for the last three years in advocating for the exact access to medicines that the member opposite is quite recently—

Mr. Paul Miller: You forgot about Tommy Douglas, did you?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is warned. The member from Ancaster is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Despite being late to the party and despite recently having found the ability to articulate their advocacy for access to medicines, I applaud the third party for their advocacy. It's important that all of us who believe in issues of health equity and social determinants of health and the importance of access to prescribed medicine—it's important that we all work together. I just wish that the third party had been there three years ago. Or two years ago. Or even one year ago—

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, all across Ontario people are getting prescriptions that they can't afford to fill. People are reaching for their credit cards so their kids can get a much-needed asthma inhaler. They're splitting their pills in half or, worse, going without medication. The NDP plan for universal pharmacare will save lives.

But let's talk about being late to the party. Instead of doing anything, what has the Premier done? She sent her minister to Ottawa to talk, and—let's talk about advocacy—last year this government—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Natural Resources is warned.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: —implemented a budget that slashed coverage of drug plans, that slashed coverage for seniors' drug care and medication. That's their plan: to slash coverage.

Why is this government so out of touch with what's going on in this province?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry, but I remember things last year a little differently, because I remember that 170,000 more seniors in this province at the time were paying a \$100 deductible annually and were paying at least \$6 as a copayment each time they refilled a prescription. We brought that 170,000 of the lowest-income seniors into a position where that annual deductible was gone. It was abolished. Their copayment went from \$6 per prescription down to \$2 per prescription. That had an incredible impact for some of the most vulnerable people in this province.

We will continue to advocate for pharmacare, as we have. I'm glad that the third party has decided to join our efforts towards this end.

PHARMACARE

Ms. Catherine Fife: Peter Thurley lives in downtown Kitchener.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I just want to remind people, in case they forgot: When I get to warnings, the next is naming, meaning you'll leave. Just to reinforce that. You didn't want to co-operate? I'm going to get it.

Finish, please.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you. My question is to the Premier. Peter Thurley lives in downtown Kitchener. In April 2015, Peter had a series of surgeries that saved his life because public medicare works. But now he's paying between \$700 and \$1,000 out of pocket each month for medications he needs because there's no public pharmacare program in Ontario. Peter has had to stop working because he still is recovering. He no longer has drug coverage. Peter's wife has some drug coverage, but it's not enough. They don't know how they will continue to pay for Peter's medication. Peter told me that every dollar his family spends on medication comes directly out of their food budget. Does the Premier think that in a province as wealthy as Ontario this is ok?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, we have an excellent program in this province, called Trillium, which is accessible to all Ontarians who find themselves in that very difficult, challenging situation of affordability of their medicines. And it's an income-based program, Mr. Speaker, so if those costs are exorbitant, if they're unable to afford them, there's a place where those families, those individuals can go. They can put in an application based on their expenditures and there will be support for them based on their ability to pay.

I have no doubt that the member opposite is aware of this program. It's been in existence for many years in the province. I would encourage her to work with her constituent to see if there are measures that can be done through that program and others.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The Ontario New Democrats brought in the Trillium program. You're not listening to his story. Peter had a good job. Peter's wife has a good job. But getting sick forced them to make decisions that no Ontarian should have to make. We're used to hearing these stories coming from the United States, not from Canada. New Democrats want to fix this. Your government wants to wait for Ottawa. Can the Premier explain to Peter and his wife why they should have to wait in this province?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that the NDP brought in Trillium. They also were the government that eliminated—removed—10% of all the drugs that were on the formulary at the time. When they were government they took almost 250 drugs off the formulary, that were no longer available to Ontarians.

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But it's important that Ontarians understand the efforts we've made. We have had great success, in part, because of the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance, where we are finding across the country—with a significant portion, as you can appreciate, here in Ontario—\$700

million in annual savings because of the reduction in drug prices we have been able to achieve because of bulk purchasing and bulk bargaining, or working out the price with the manufacturers.

We have reinvested those savings into new medicines that we continue to add. We have more than 4,000 drugs on our formulary today.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Talking to Ottawa isn't going to help the 2.2 million people in this province who have no coverage.

The Liberal government in Ottawa isn't doing anything to help families like Peter's. The Liberal government at Queen's Park isn't doing anything to help families like Peter's. Getting access to life-saving medications isn't going to get easier unless Ontario does something.

The NDP is ready to act on pharmacare. Why doesn't the Premier of this province believe in universal, public pharmacare?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I am elated at the change of heart from the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, because we need to remember that it was only during the last election campaign, in 2014, when the NDP committed to finding \$600 million in savings. When the member opposite was asked where those savings would come from, she said that they would likely—

Miss Monique Taylor: How many gas plants is that?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton Mountain is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Their new accountability minister, their minister of cuts, would look to find efficiencies in health care and post-secondary education—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If we're going to play that game, I'm going to win. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo is warned.

Finish.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: She went on to say, "I would go first to health."

I am elated that she's had a change of heart.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the education minister. The minister has just announced a Liberal Party tour across rural communities to seek solutions to her government's mass school closures. Mr. Speaker, Ontarians can smell a junket when they see one, and they know this is no fact-finding mission. This is about damage control and the Liberals looking out for their best interests, not Ontarians'.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I ask: Since the minister did not consult these communities before changing the rules and removing the community impact component from the school closure review process, why should they trust you now?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member opposite for this question. First of all, I know that there are parents who are here at the Legislature today to talk about their school communities, and I want to welcome them. It's very important that we do listen to parents and to schools and to students, and to hear what they have to say.

I also want to be clear that I understand how vital schools are to local communities. They're the heart of our communities. Every student, every parent, every educator cares about our students and their success.

That's what we're focused on, and that's why we have engaged in consultations: Because we want to ensure—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Niagara West–Glanbrook is warned.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: These engagements are important, because we want to ensure that we hear about the ideas and the information that parents and school communities want to tell us about their local schools.

We want to continue to ensure that we provide the best education possible for all students in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the education minister: You should be ashamed of tearing the hearts out of our rural communities, because that's what you're doing.

You blew the public's trust once before, when you failed to consult them on new accommodation rules, resulting in possibly as many as 600 schools being closed across Ontario.

Considering the serious deficit of trust and credibility with you, Minister, and your government, I want to know: In the spirit of trust and collaboration, why hasn't the minister included members from this side of the House on the province-wide consultation tour?

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Right. Good thought.

Minister?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: The member opposite is suggesting something that is simply not the case. Just last week, I was in Markdale, and you were there. So there's nothing that's excluding you from coming.

Mr. Speaker, these engagements are designed so that we can ensure that we're providing the best education possible.

I've also made it very clear to our school boards and municipalities that we're looking for creative and innovative solutions. We want boards to work together. There are really great examples of that. If you look at Terrace Bay, for instance, the English and French Catholic school boards are working together to share an elementary school. This is allowing access to libraries, gyms, play

spaces and technology labs, ensuring that students have the best range of programs possible.

That's what these engagements are about: How do we provide the best education for students in Ontario?

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Last year, the Minister of Energy denied that there was a crisis with soaring hydro bills. Then the government ignored the NDP's demand for a moratorium on disconnections of hydro through the winter. Only when a crisis had pushed her government into a political corner did the Premier act.

Well, a new crisis is upon us. Starting May 1, Ontario families will start losing their hydro. Does the Premier know how many families will be losing their hydro on May 1?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased to rise and talk about what Hydro One is doing. Hydro One, which has millions of customers in this province, is extending their winter moratorium until the end of May. That is great news. It just shows that Hydro One is working closely with their customers who have fallen behind on their bills. The extra time will allow customers to take advantage of some of the early savings from Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan, in which all families, small businesses and farms in this province will get up to, on average, a 25% reduction. And for those families in the rural or northern parts of our province, that rate will be between 40% and 50%. They will see significant savings—unlike nothing in their plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: So I guess the rest don't really count; they really aren't a factor anymore.

Again to the Premier: If a family heats with natural gas, they have access to up to \$1,000 in emergency relief to help pay their hydro and gas bills if they can't meet their payments. But many rural families don't have access to natural gas and must heat with hydro. Not only is hydro more expensive, the government only offers these struggling families \$600 in emergency relief, not \$1,000.

Why does the Premier think it's fair that rural Ontario families, who are paying some of the highest hydro rates in Canada, don't have access to relief the way everyone else does?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: First off, when it comes to the west, the east, the north and the south, this government is acting. I don't know where that member is coming from with the west.

Also, when it comes to rural, when it comes to remote and when it comes to northern, I just said in the last supplementary—and I know he hasn't been listening in the last month and a half in terms of what our plan is doing, and I know he probably didn't pay attention during the technical briefing, but let me remind him: That's 40% to 50% off for rural or remote families. On top of that, if these families qualify for the Ontario Electricity

Support Program, they can get an additional 50% off their bills. So we're making sure that those in the rural and remote parts of our province are seeing significant relief on their energy bills.

We have a plan. It's already working; for example, with the OEB. It's too bad they don't have a plan that even fathoms to work.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is for the Minister of Energy about a concern that my constituents have raised in Davenport.

Last week, the Ontario Energy Board made an announcement regarding new electricity rates to be effective on May 1. As the independent regulator of Ontario's energy sector, the OEB is a quasi-judicial board which governs the sector with a mandate to protect ratepayers. It sets electricity rates twice a year, so Ontarians know what to expect with their bills.

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As members of this House know well, our government has recognized that Ontarians want relief on electricity costs, and we have acted. Our plan is to lower electricity bills by an average of 25% by this summer. I understand that the OEB has taken early action in beginning to put these savings on ratepayer bills. Would the minister please clarify what the impact is to all Ontarians?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I also want to thank the member for that important question. I was pleased with the OEB's decision to begin lowering rates on May 1 in anticipation of our government's fair hydro plan. This is the next of several steps which Ontarians will see as we work towards bills being reduced by 25%, beginning this summer, with rates held to inflation for the next four years.

The OEB's decision means that bills will be reduced by 17%, beginning May 1. That's even earlier than expected. The rest of our plan is intended to come into effect by this summer in order to achieve the rest of the promised savings. The OEB would require to reduce rates again this summer when final legislation is passed to ensure Ontarians see the full benefit of our plan as soon as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you to the minister for that response and for his hard work on this file, on a file that is so important to my constituents.

Our government heard from Ontarians who were struggling with the cost of electricity, and that's why we introduced the fair hydro plan. It's also why, this winter, we gave the OEB the power to ban power disconnections during the winter months. Several utilities actually already have this type of policy, including Hydro One. In fact, Hydro One had already implemented a ban on winter disconnections and introduced a winter relief program to restore power to disconnected customers as part of a broader effect to be a more customer-focused company.

I understand that, yesterday, Hydro One made an announcement where they extended their winter mora-

torium to provide even more support to customers. Would the minister share with this House the details of that announcement and how it is providing further relief to Ontario ratepayers?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Again, thank you to the member for the question. Yesterday, as the member mentioned, Hydro One announced that they are extending their winter moratorium until the end of May. So Hydro One will be working closely with customers who have fallen behind on their bills, and this extra time will allow customers to take advantage of some of the early savings from our fair hydro plan while they work with the company to make sure they get back on the right track.

I was also pleased to see Hydro One take this step, which provides just more evidence of their new customer focus at this company. As part of yesterday's announcement, Hydro One is also eliminating requirements for security deposits from residential customers, as well as reducing deposit requirements for businesses. This removes a substantial burden for many customers and will put money back in the hands of Ontarians. These actions from Hydro One work together with our government's fair hydro plan, bringing fair relief for everyone in this province.

OPIOID ABUSE

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Health. Yesterday, I once again approached the minister to join me in Ottawa with parents and teens who are, right now, struggling with dangerous counterfeit drugs laced with potent and potentially fatal opioids.

In my city, we are at a crisis level. Earlier today I spoke by email with our city's chief medical officer of health, Isra Levy, who agrees that this is a crisis. Last week, there were 15 recorded overdoses in a 72-hour time frame. Since last Tuesday, there have been a total of 28 recorded overdoses, all told—13 over the weekend. These drugs are like nothing we have ever seen on our streets. The first pill can be fatal. The person taking it may only have taken the pill once.

I've written and spoken to the minister and his government many times, and we need his attention on this crisis. Mr. Speaker, will the minister join me in Ottawa and meet the faces of this crisis?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As always, I appreciate the advocacy of the member opposite on this important issue. I describe it as a crisis. It's a national crisis. It has obviously got very serious provincial consequences, including in Ottawa.

I was very distraught when I learned of the increase in overdoses as a result, likely, of an increased presence of fentanyl on the streets in Ottawa. I think the member knows this is a multi-faceted approach that we have to take to this. We are working very closely with the mayor of Ottawa, with the local municipality. We will shortly be having a meeting of all municipal leaders that I will chair. The Premier has asserted that that meeting will take place, and it will allow us, I think, to work even more closely with local jurisdictions.

It is important that Ontarians also understand that, in that multifaceted approach that's required, we unveiled the most comprehensive opioid strategy that this country currently has.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Back to the minister: Each week when I go home, I meet with Steve Cody, who lost his son to an overdose, and Sean O'Leary, whose daughter is struggling with addiction. Both of them are prominent businessmen who have co-founded We the Parents. They have become grassroots advocates and they spend their spare moments meeting with hundreds of Ottawa parents and their children who have taken these counterfeit pills laced with fentanyl, some of whom have lost their own children.

We have reached a crisis level and, with respect, what is being done is either not working or it is too slow in reaching the people who need the help the most. Will the minister commit today to ensuring that students in our middle and high schools are part of an awareness campaign about the dangers of these new drugs? Will the minister join me in Ottawa, and will he commit to spending resources to alert the parents and their kids to these potentially life-threatening drugs that are now on the streets of Ottawa? The time to act is now, Minister.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, I think it's important that the Legislature and Ontarians not be left with the impression that this government isn't acting with the highest level of seriousness, including in Ottawa, where we've committed this year \$1.5 million to the Dave Smith Youth Treatment Centre to support the construction of a new 30-bed residential treatment facility for youth.

I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that the Liberal members of provincial Parliament from Ottawa, particularly the member from Ottawa South, have been working very closely with me and with the Premier in addressing this issue.

It's important to mention that there are more than 80 pharmacies in Ottawa alone that are providing naloxone, which is a life-saving treatment for those who experience an overdose—80 pharmacies that are being accessed, getting naloxone and naloxone training free of charge through their pharmacist.

SCHOOL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci, monsieur le Président. Ma question is for the Premier.

Let me be clear, Speaker: The Premier's school funding formula discriminates against small northern and rural schools. What does that mean for our kids? In Nickel Belt, four-year-old children who live in Geneva Lake will be on the bus for three hours each day if they want to stay in French immersion.

In the winter, kids leave home in the dark and come home from school in the dark. They are tired. Some of them hate school because of it. Their parents will struggle to convince them to stay in school. I know of little kids who are being bullied right now because they have

to pee and cannot hold it for one and a half hours in a bus.

Premier, do you believe that it is acceptable for northern and rural children to grow up without a community school?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Interjections.

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

Minister of Education.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Our priority is to ensure that every student in Ontario receives the best education possible. We recognize the distinct challenges that are facing rural and northern school boards, and that is why we are giving more resources to rural and northern boards than ever before.

The school boards are projected overall to receive \$23.8 billion in the 2017-18 school year through the Grants for Student Needs. This is an increase of \$849 million from last year. Every board across this province will receive an increase in funding.

Rural boards are projected to receive \$3.8 billion in the 2017-18 GSN. That's an increase of \$1.3 million, or a 3.7% increase from last year. We want to ensure that our rural boards have the resources that they need, and that is exactly what we're doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Our children suffer because of this Liberal government's school funding formula, and so do our communities. After the school in Naughton closed, the first thing to go was the ice cream shop; then the chip stand; then the one and only store, and now even the one and only gas station is gone.

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Dahnja Schoengen moved to Levack so that her six-year-old son could attend French immersion at Levack Public School. She is now worried that Levack will be the next ghost town if this Liberal government continues with its spree of school closures. Yet, when the Premier and her minister hear the fears of families in Levack, they ignore them and just keep right on at it with an unfair funding formula.

This government still has 300 schools on the chopping block. What do they have to say to the worried families in Levack?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: It's important that everyone recognizes that the funding formula recognizes the unique needs of our rural and northern boards. That's why there is \$1,200 per student more for rural and northern schools than to urban schools. I want to make that very clear.

I have visited schools in northern Ontario. I've visited schools in Sioux Lookout. I want to talk about some of the innovative things that our school boards are doing on behalf of our students. When you look at the Keewatin Patricia District School Board, they're opening a new secondary school in partnership with Confederation College, with Meno Ya Win Health Centre and Firefly mental health. Because of the unique needs in that com-

munity, they are working together to design this unique hub to meet the needs of the students who are in that community so that they have the support that they need. We are supporting the board in that decision as they move forward.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. The green investments that are outlined in our climate change action plan are now starting to roll out, and we are seeing the tangible benefits of these investments. In my own riding of Kitchener Centre, home energy audits are saving many homeowners a lot of money.

Just over a year ago, Mary Jane Patterson, who heads REEP Green Solutions, a non-profit group that promotes energy efficiency in K-W, came to see me to lobby in favour of home energy audits and retrofits. A few days later, we delivered on that in our budget. In my community, home energy evaluations have doubled. This clearly shows that homeowners and businesses are actively engaged in our climate action plan.

Ontarians know that these investments are lowering their carbon footprint, and it's lowering their energy costs. Could the minister please explain to the House the long-term value of these investments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I know that it probably won't come as a surprise to many people here that the part of Ontario we know as K-W awesome is out ahead of much of the province on this. The REEP program is truly one of the most innovative in doing education and demonstrating technology. The program and expansion, based on that experience and the member's advocacy, is going to lead to 1.6 million tonnes of GHG reductions, one of the largest.

This was actually the Premier's idea to get these audits out so people could learn and understand the technologies, the savings and the development. We're doing 37,000 of them that will, in the end, not only reduce GHGs but significantly bring down people's heating and energy bills.

So, no pun intended for the Premier: This is a win-win-win scenario, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you to the minister for his answer and for his leadership on this important initiative. He has a lot of fans and supporters in Kitchener-Waterloo. It is very encouraging to hear that Ontarians are seeing the benefits of green investments and that they're taking an active role in fighting climate change. Not only is this helping us to achieve our emission reduction targets, but it's also helping us to create jobs.

To date, we have produced over 40,000 jobs tied to green energy. And here's another interesting stat: According to reports released by Environmental Defence, Blue Green Canada and the Clean Economy Alliance, green investments can produce up to 32,900 green jobs in the province. Their research also found that an additional

24,000 jobs could be created from the reinvestments of the green cost savings.

Could the minister please explain why making these investments is important to creating jobs?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It gives me great pleasure to talk about the economic dimensions. You're quite right: Environmental Defence and, actually, a parallel study done by the Pembina Institute showed that the first—just the first—tranche of investments of \$2.5 billion creates 33,000 high-skilled jobs in Ontario. By the time we have retrofitted all of the buildings in Ontario—which this program will do over the next couple of decades—it will probably be the single biggest job-creation program in Ontario.

But while we have the wind on our side, we are very worried about a “brownout” from the other side, a complete brownout of all of the funding programs, because the member opposite would tear up the cap-and-trade system. These jobs and these savings would never appear. We know Ontarians want to win. They don't want a brownout, Mr. Speaker.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. People in northwestern Ontario have a life expectancy 2.9 years shorter than the rest of the province. Speaker, a report from Health Quality Ontario has confirmed the reality facing northern Ontarians. They're more likely to have cardiovascular disease, to have limited access to healthy foods and to be obese, and they are more likely to commit suicide. Northerners navigate the health care system with reduced access to testing and to doctors. The ministry's own Rural and Northern Health Care Report identified these issues in 2011.

Speaker, when is the minister going to address the regional disparities in our health care system?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important issue and I appreciated the report that came out from Health Quality Ontario that pointed to the work that needs to be done to address—as they themselves indicated, a lot of this has to do with the social determinants of health, but to address the fact that individuals in the north do have challenges in the north because of residing there, because of the nature of the situation, which is different than in the south.

But we are making enormous investments in the north, as we are throughout the province. Since coming into office, we've increased the funding in northern hospitals by 55%. We just announced recently in Thunder Bay a new cardiac centre, which will provide both vascular surgery as well as cardiac surgery. I want to thank both members from Thunder Bay, both MPPs, who worked hard to be able to make that a reality.

I'm happy to speak more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Again to the minister: Research published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal

about cardiovascular events shows that the three healthiest LHINs are in the GTA. On the other hand, three of the four least healthy LHINs are the North East, North West and North Simcoe Muskoka. It is deplorable that today, where you live in Ontario is a determinant of your health and your life expectancy.

Speaker, I'm going to the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association conference later this week. What does the minister have to say to the people in the North West LHIN?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: That we continue to invest in the north, Mr. Speaker. The first nurse-practitioner-led clinic was in the north, in Sudbury. We have 42 family health teams in the north as well.

If the member opposite read the CMHA report, I think it was likely the one that referenced the Health Quality Ontario report, which was the report that we commissioned through an agency of government to actually provide us with that additional valuable information. They pointed to areas where we could continue to improve and where investments should be made. We've made over \$157 million of investments in additional surgeries and bringing down wait times in the northern region as well.

There's a lot of work to do across the province. I'm very fixed at the north as well because of the unique challenges faced there and what we can do more to improve the health situation of our northern residents.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, we've all heard the latest attack on Ontario's forest industry. The Trump administration is slapping a 20% tariff on softwood lumber, claiming the Ontario industry is subsidized.

Premier, we all know that's not the case. In fact, in 2015, a decision by the trade tribunals found that Ontario does not—I repeat, does not—subsidize its forest industry.

What the US couldn't get done through the front door in 2015, Trump is trying to get through the back door, and it would appear his strategy is meant to tie up our forest producers in a lengthy, costly fight, which I'm confident we will win in the end. However, this time, many producers may not be able to withstand this latest frivolous attack by Mr. Trump.

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Premier, what are you prepared to do in order to help our producers survive as we fight back this frivolous attempt to hurt our industry?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I thank the member for the question that's certainly on everybody's mind today about our softwood sector. I want to reassure everybody in the House that Ontario is standing shoulder to shoulder with our forestry industry in order to protect their workers at this time of economic uncertainty. We cannot let

the unpredictability of our southern neighbour affect the jobs and well-being of Ontario.

I want to reassure everybody that Ontario has been looking to things that we can do in the meantime. We've been aware that this has been coming for some time.

We also know that the 20% tariffs on our lumber are unfair, and we are going to be stepping forward with a number of things. We have been working very closely with our federal partners. We have called on our federal government to provide a loan guarantee program to help in the meantime.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Listen, you've come pretty late to the game. We've known that this has been coming for some time. You just now start to react. We've already heard from BC. We've already heard from Quebec. And your response is to say, "We're going to depend on Ottawa to be able to fix this problem for us." This industry in Ontario is unique and specific to our—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. My resolve has not changed from earlier.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Premier could have been warned there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not helpful either.

Please put your question.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: As I said, the industry in Ontario is pretty specific to Ontario. We have a system that is probably the best in the world. It is not subsidized. We have a competitive tariff system based on price. Ontario should be taking a position to make sure that we do what's right for this province. If that means we do what Quebec did and provide our own loan guarantee program, so be it.

So could you assure us and assure the 57,000 people who work in this industry we're not going to diddle as we watch Ottawa do nothing?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: Again, I want to say that this is a federal issue and it's up to our federal partnership to negotiate this.

In saying that, we have come forward on new initiatives. For instance, we're providing \$10 million in new funding to the forestry industry to reimburse costs for road construction and maintenance on public access roads. We have announced just today that we have \$74 million from this government to assist with the forest access road program that helps to have public access, connecting some of our northern remote communities. We hired a chief negotiator, the former federal trade minister Jim Peterson, who is on board to help to negotiate this deal. We've been meeting with our industry partners. They have asked for these things.

We are going to be continuing to work with our federal partnership to ask for that federal loan guarantee program.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. Han Dong: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Speaker, our government is a proud supporter of Ontario's culture sector. Because of the great work being done by our artists, musicians, writers, teachers and curators, culture is one of Ontario's fastest-growing sectors. In my riding of Trinity–Spadina and across Ontario, our government's support for culture continues to bring people together, build Ontario's identity, and create jobs and grow our economy.

I am pleased to ask the minister about an announcement she made recently at the Ryerson Image Centre. The minister announced this year's spring and summer recipients of the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund, which is a fund designed to increase cultural tourism and support events that foster economic growth and contribute to job creation.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can she tell the members of this House more about the OCAF fund and how it will impact arts organizations across our province?

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I want to thank the member from Trinity–Spadina for his question and for his steadfast support of the vibrant arts and culture organizations in his riding.

As the member mentioned, I was at Ryerson Image Centre last month to announce support for festivals such as the Scotiabank CONTACT photography which will kick off at the Image Centre on Friday.

While there, I announced that this spring and summer season, 45 arts and culture organizations will receive over \$2.8 million in support through the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund. These include—and they're across our province—Franco-Fête, in Ottawa; A Taste of Greece, in London; and the eight-day Stars and Thunder international fireworks and music festival in Timmins. This year's recipients include events that will commemorate Ontario's 150th anniversary.

Our support helps communities and organizations to attract business through tourism and economic development. I look forward to adding more in the supplementary.

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

Mr. Han Dong: I want to thank the minister for her response. Many festivals and events—like the Hot Docs film festival in my riding, which begins tomorrow night; it is the world's largest documentary film festival—are having a positive impact on the tourism and culture scene in Ontario.

Our government continues to work closely with our partners to build a stronger culture sector. Last year, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport introduced Ontario's first culture strategy. The four goals of the culture strategy are: promoting cultural engagement and inclusion; strengthening culture in communities; fuelling the creative economy; and promoting the value of the arts throughout the government.

The culture strategy envisions an Ontario where every person has an opportunity for creative expression and cultural participation, and where the diversity of our stories and communities is reflected, valued and celebrated.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can she tell this House about the economic impact, and how our support for culture impacts Ontario?

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you again to the member for his question.

Speaker, we're very proud of the Hot Docs festival. It's something that, as a government, we're enormously proud of. They have a global reach and a global impact. We're absolutely thrilled to see them, because they're doing amazing work.

We understand, as a government, that arts and artists play an important role, not just in bringing joy into our lives, but they contribute very much to our economy as well. It's why we're proud of our education system. When I hear from organizations from around the world why they're investing in Ontario, they speak loudly and clearly about the quality of our graduates, our education and our school system.

But culture is not just about joy—which is also important. It's about jobs, to the tune of \$25 billion to our economy, and over 280,000 jobs. These are critically important to the vitality of not just our arts and culture sector but our economy.

We are enormously proud of our arts and our artists for the global recognition that they're getting.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mrs. Gila Martow: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. A report came out yesterday that details horrific outcomes for youth who exit the foster care system. Typically, their lives involve low academic achievement, unemployment, underemployment and poverty, homelessness and housing insecurity, criminal justice system involvement, early parenthood, poor physical and mental health, and, of course, loneliness. If the child welfare system was a parent, it may well have its kids taken away.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister tell us what he is doing to ensure that Ontario's most vulnerable youth have the same future as that which we plan for our own children?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member for the question. As the member knows, over the last several months, we've been working on a new act here in the province of Ontario to better protect children, youth and families.

In fact, recently a report came out called One Vision One Voice, which looks at black youth here in the province of Ontario, specifically in Toronto, where there's a huge overrepresentation of black youth in our child protection system.

To go even beyond that, within that report, there was a call to collect good data. The Anti-Racism Directorate is working to look at how race, when we talk about black and indigenous youth, who are overrepresented—in fact,

in Toronto it's over 50%, if you combine the indigenous and black youth together.

We're working with advocates within the child care system to look for ways to better position young people for success here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Gila Martow: The minister is legally the parent of approximately 1,000 youth who age out of the system every year in Ontario. Their life outcomes are horrific and compromise talented people who could be thriving in our society.

We must have higher expectations for the child welfare system that parents these youth in their most formative years. After all, the new legislation pays a lot of attention to accountability, but there's a big miss. What's missing are checks and balances to determine if our system is an effective parent.

Presently, no one is systematically studying the outcomes for youth aging out of Ontario. If the minister does not measure youth outcomes after care in any way, how does he know if anything he has been implementing is actually working?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I don't want to politicize this issue, but when we talk about "a big miss" here in the Legislature, not once has anyone from that side of the House asked me about the overrepresentation of indigenous and black children in the child welfare system. I think that's a big miss here in the province of Ontario, especially in this Legislature.

We've set up the Anti-Racism Directorate. We're looking at reform of the act within child welfare. We are looking for ways to better position for success. In fact, those young people—we refer to them sometimes as NEET youth; they're not employed, in education or in some type of training. There are 173,000 of them. We have a strategy here in the province of Ontario to look for ways to provide more opportunities.

The very fact that this is a government that for the first time will look at 16- and 17-year-olds and how to bring them into protection—I think this government should be very proud of the work that it's doing.

DEFERRED VOTES

ANTI-RACISM ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 CONTRE LE RACISME

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

Bill 114, An Act to provide for Anti-Racism Measures / Projet de loi 114, Loi prévoyant des mesures contre le racisme.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 114, An Act to provide for Anti-Racism Measures.

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

The division bells rang from 1211 to 1216.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On April 6, 2017, Mr. Coteau moved second reading of Bill 114, An Act to Provide for Anti-Racism Measures. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	French, Jennifer K.	Moridi, Reza
Anderson, Granville	Gates, Wayne	Murray, Glen R.
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gélinas, France	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Naqvi, Yasir
Bailey, Robert	Hatfield, Percy	Natyshak, Taras
Baker, Yvan	Hoggarth, Ann	Nicholls, Rick
Ballard, Chris	Hoskins, Eric	Pettapiece, Randy
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hunter, Mitzie	Potts, Arthur
Bisson, Gilles	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Jones, Sylvia	Rinaldi, Lou
Brown, Patrick	Kiwala, Sophie	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Lalonde, Marie-France	Scott, Laurie
Chiarelli, Bob	Leal, Jeff	Singh, Jagmeet
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Tabuns, Peter
Coe, Lorne	Malhi, Harinder	Takhar, Harinder S.
Colle, Mike	Mangat, Amrit	Taylor, Monique
Coteau, Michael	Mantha, Michael	Thibeault, Glenn
Crack, Grant	Martins, Cristina	Thompson, Lisa M.
Damerla, Dipika	Martow, Gila	Vanthof, John
Del Duca, Steven	Matthews, Deborah	Vernile, Daiene
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Walker, Bill
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	McDonnell, Jim	Wilson, Jim
Dhillon, Vic	McGarry, Kathryn	Wong, Soo
Dickson, Joe	McMahon, Eleanor	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dong, Han	McMeekin, Ted	Yakabuski, John
Fife, Catherine	Milczyn, Peter Z.	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Miller, Norm	
Fraser, John	Miller, Paul	

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 85; the nays are 0.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Michael Coteau: General government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So ordered.

VAISAKHI

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

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: Mr. Speaker, we are celebrating the Vaisakhi function and doing prayer in the Legislature today, so I wanted to take this opportunity to invite all members of the Legislature and the guests to join us in room 247 from now until 1:30. Everyone is welcome.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Brampton–Springdale on a point of order.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: My aunt and uncle were here visiting me from India and they were in the gallery a little

bit earlier today, so I did want to take an opportunity to introduce them: Mrs. Surjit Gil and Mr. Joginder Gil.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to welcome the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards to Queen's Park today and welcome everyone in the House to their reception in room 247 at 5 p.m.

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

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1221 to 1500.

WEARING OF SCARVES

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to wear the red-and-yellow freedom scarves in the House today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from York–Simcoe is seeking unanimous consent to wear the scarves. Do we agree? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'd ask all members to please help me welcome to the chamber the following guests: Senator Ngo and his wife; the president of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Ontario, Mr. Minh Dong; and the president of Voice Canada, Mr. Kyanh Do, as well as representatives from a number of Vietnamese community organizations in Ontario: the Vietnamese Community Centre of Mississauga, the Kitchener Vietnamese Association, the Canadian Vietnamese Network, and many others.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome, and we're glad you're with us today.

Further introductions? Last call for introductions? I would like to recognize the member if she were in her seat. I will wait for just a moment if the member from Thornhill has an introduction.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for your help as well. I just want to welcome Miriam Ku, who comes to so many events with me and is from York region as well. Welcome, Miriam. You have to come visit us more often. Thank you for being here.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JOURNEY TO FREEDOM DAY

Mrs. Julia Munro: I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak about April 30, Journey to Freedom Day. First introduced two years ago in Canada's Senate by Senator Ngo, Journey to Freedom Day is a day to commemorate the exodus of Vietnamese refugees and celebrate their acceptance into Canada 42 years ago.

It is a day that acknowledges those refugees who were lost to illness, malfeasance or the cruelty of the turbulent ocean. It is also a day with a deep sense of hope for those who became Canadian and with a strong sense of pride for those who helped make that happen.

It is an honour to have all MPPs for the second time wearing the scarves representing Vietnamese freedom and heritage. The scarf was designed based on the Vietnamese heritage and freedom flag, which symbolizes the enduring strength of the Vietnamese people.

This Saturday, April 29, we will be raising the freedom flag here at Queen's Park for the first time ever at a provincial Legislature. The community is very much looking forward to it. Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleagues from all parties will join me in celebrating Journey to Freedom Day.

CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Workers at the Canadian Hearing Society are now entering their seventh week off the job. That's seven weeks that people who are deaf or hard of hearing are not getting the support that they need to thrive. While this Liberal government constantly passes the buck on their responsibilities to protect workers and vulnerable populations, they have done nothing to rein in executive salaries at taxpayer-funded organizations.

The CHS receives more than \$20 million for services from the province each year. Unfortunately, a large portion of this has gone to exorbitant wage increases for top executives, including a 75% increase for the CEO in just three years. All the while, front-line staff, many of whom are deaf or hard of hearing themselves, haven't had a wage increase since their contract expired four years ago. They've gone four years without a contract before choosing to go on strike.

Speaker, it's time for this government to rein in CEO salaries and time for the Liberals to help the employer and the union, through a third party, to get these issues dealt with and let these workers get back to work serving a vulnerable community. It's time for a fair contract now.

INSURANCE COVERAGE

Mr. Mike Colle: Later this afternoon, I'm going to be introducing a bill called the Innocent Persons Insurance Recovery Act. This bill essentially tries to get rid of a punitive, very harmful clause that exists in everybody's insurance contract. That is that if your partner or spouse burns down your house or does damage to your home or property, you, as the spouse, are not eligible to claim any award. Therefore, you are without compensation, even though you are co-insured and you're the victim of a criminal act.

With me today in the Legislature, I had Terri-lynn Robinson from Collingwood, who had her home burned down. She was denied insurance because of this exemption clause that exists in Ontario.

I also had Wendy Soczek from Mississauga. She was personally lit on fire by her husband seven years ago,

tragically, went through legal wrangling for seven years, and was awarded zero compensation because she was on the policy with her husband.

This has got to change. Ontario is one of the few provinces that allow this punitive clause. Hopefully, my bill will be passed to get rid of this punishment that usually ends up being a double victimization for victims of domestic abuse.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Many families and groups took buses to assemble outside of Queen's Park this afternoon. They brought attention to a situation affecting people from all over Ontario, including my home riding of Nipissing.

School closures have devastating impacts on our communities, and hurt the education of our youth. They decrease the overall quality of and access to proper education in Ontario. The government's recently revised Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline is clearly flawed and needs to be immediately rewritten to accommodate smaller communities in Ontario.

Last month, the Ontario PC Party brought forward a motion to end the closures being carried out under these new guidelines. But instead, the government chose not to listen and voted us down. They continue to try to balance their books on the backs of students.

The closure of these schools is a short-term, money-saving move that, in the end, does nothing but disenfranchise our young men and women. Therefore, I'm again calling on the government to put an end to these closures and immediately enact a moratorium on school closures throughout Ontario. Speaker, if they don't, then in one year, one month and 11 days, Patrick Brown and the PC Party will.

DAIRY INDUSTRY

Mr. John Vanthof: Last Saturday, I had the pleasure of spending the day at one of my favourite events, and that's the Earlton Farm Show. That's where farmers from northeastern Ontario gather and look at the latest equipment and talk about their operations. A lot of consumers come to the Earlton Farm Show too.

Last Saturday, one of the biggest topics of discussion was supply management because of Donald Trump's comments regarding his views on the Canadian dairy industry. It came to my attention that a lot of people don't understand basic facts about the Canadian dairy industry, both from a consumer perspective and from a producer perspective.

From a consumer perspective, one thing very few people know is that from the minute the milk comes from the cow to the time it's in the store, the temperature of that milk is always recorded. The temperature of the water to wash the utensils is always recorded. Each load of milk is thoroughly tested for any contaminant. We have one of the safest supplies of milk in the world, and that's something a lot of people don't know.

From the producer side, I was surprised that even a lot of producers don't know that dairy farmers pool their costs and pool their markets. So if there is something going wrong in a market in one part of the country, everyone takes a hit through their quota. It's not one farm or 70 farms or 100 farms that are jeopardized. That's something that's unique to our system, and something we have to work to protect.

HARRY JEROME AWARDS

Mr. Granville Anderson: This past weekend, I had the pleasure of attending the Black Business and Professional Association's Harry Jerome Awards 35th anniversary celebration. The BBPA Harry Jerome Awards are recognized as the most prestigious national award gala in the African Canadian community.

The awards are an annual celebration that pays tribute to outstanding and inspirational African Canadians and were established in the memory of Harry Jerome, an African Canadian Olympic athlete, scholar and social advocate.

1510

It was an honour to have the Prime Minister, the Honourable Justin Trudeau, as the keynote speaker, accompanied by my colleague the Honourable Mitzie Hunter.

This year's theme was "Beyond Excellence." The recipients received awards in the fields of academics, arts, athletics, leadership, business, entertainment, professional excellence, health science, social advocacy, technology and innovation; lifetime achievement, trailblazer, president, diversity, volunteer, public advocacy, youth advancement and community service.

Each Harry Jerome Award recipient was recognized for their individual, unique accomplishments in their field of work. Olympian Andre De Grasse was among the 18 outstanding individuals who were honoured at the ceremony.

It was such a wonderful opportunity to attend this award celebration and honour so many wonderful individuals who strive beyond excellence.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Bill Walker: It seemed not long ago when this government and the Premier herself pledged to be the education government and to build, not tear down, schools in communities. After witnessing the loss of local schools in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and across our entire province, one thing is clear: This government doesn't care about the devastating consequences of their faulty education policies on the thousands of students who will be displaced and the communities they will destroy as a result of school closures.

According to the ministry's own documents, when they formed government in 2003, rural Ontario had 670 schools. But after succumbing to the fate of their waste and faulty funding formula, 300 of them have closed. That's a sweeping 40% cut, described by the school administrator at Chesley District Community School,

Joni Lang, as "a quick sweep under the rug and 100 years of history no more."

The students who attend Chesley and the workers who are still employed there are calling the education minister's inaction on mass school closures "cruel" and "insensitive." Many of them, including Tess and Malcolm Bainborough, were at Queen's Park today and spoke passionately in protest of this minister's and the Liberal government's failure to act to save rural schools.

With 300 already gone and possibly 600 more schools doomed to fall across our province, the minister surely can't continue to support this shameful record. It's no secret: Students will now spend more time being bused around rural Ontario than engaging in valuable educational and extracurricular programs. I think it's a horrific trade-off for students whom the education minister is trying to comfort with a promise that closures are a compromise for their access to better school programming.

Since the minister has the power and privilege to do the right thing, I sincerely hope she will:

- (1) put a moratorium on school closures;
- (2) fix the funding formula; and
- (3) reinstate the community impact component for future accommodation reviews.

If she won't, then she needs to take personal responsibility for the mass closures under her watch.

BLOOD DONATION

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: According to Canadian Blood Services, fewer than 400,000 Canadians actively donate blood. One in two Canadians can donate; however, only one in 60 does. Despite not being able to donate myself, I wanted to change these figures and motivate my community to come out and give blood, so I adopted a blood clinic last week.

The clinic was a great success and was 80% pre-booked, thanks to the efforts of all who shared their support. I also want to encourage everyone, especially young males, to register in OneMatch to donate stem cells and to check if you are registered. You should also check with beadonor.ca.

Many thanks to Debbi Barfoot and her incredible team at our local chapter for their work in organizing this event and the life-saving services that they offer every single day.

None of this success, however, would be possible without the support of our community's blood donors. Everyday heroes have saved countless lives by not only giving blood, but in their advocacy and volunteerism as well.

I want to thank everyone for making this day such an absolutely memorable event. As Canadian Blood Services says, "When you give blood, you are giving someone else another day and another chance." It is with this sentiment that I encourage everyone to support their local blood bank by rolling up your sleeves, raising awareness and supporting your local chapter whenever you can.

DENTIST DAY

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm pleased to rise today to highlight the Ontario Dental Association's 150th anniversary. I'm also pleased to mention that, in celebration of 150 years of the Ontario Dental Association, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario has proclaimed that today, April 26, officially be known as Ontario Dentist Day.

It's interesting to note that Ontario was the first jurisdiction in the world to enact legislation to grant self-regulation for dentists. In fact, the industry was regulated in 1867—the same year, of course, that Canada became a country—thanks to a man named Dr. Barnabas Day. Dr. Day was one of the most respected dentists of his time. He gathered his colleagues from across the province to ask Parliament to license their profession for the sake of patients' oral health care.

Once the profession became licensed, a code of ethics was made, misleading ads were banned, there were education and public awareness campaigns on the benefits of oral health, and special care for the poor, who were unable to afford care. The first dental school in Ontario opened in 1875.

Since the Ontario Dental Association was created, dentists have been champions of oral health and patient advocates for over a century and a half. I know our member from Leeds–Grenville, Steve Clark, has been a champion of dentists for all Legislatures in this province. The Ontario Dental Association currently represents over 9,000 members, which is nine tenths of all Ontario dentists.

I'd like to thank the Ontario Dental Association and dentists who are here today from across the province and who continue to advocate for sustainable access to oral health care.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ROY WILSON REAL ESTATE INC.
ACT, 2017

Mr. Hillier moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr62, An Act to revive Roy Wilson Real Estate 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): Pursuant to standing order 86, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

EAST YORK FOUNDATION ACT, 2017

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr63, An Act respecting The East York Foundation.

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): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

INNOCENT PERSONS
INSURANCE RECOVERY ACT, 2017
LOI DE 2017 SUR LE RECOUVREMENT
DE SOMMES ASSURÉES
PAR DES PERSONNES INNOCENTES

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 125, An Act to amend the Insurance Act with respect to recovery by innocent persons / Projet de loi 125, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les assurances en ce qui concerne l'obtention d'un recouvrement par des personnes innocentes.

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. Mike Colle: The bill amends the Insurance Act to limit the ability of insurance contracts to prevent recovery for loss or damage to property by certain innocent persons if the loss or damage was caused by an act of omission by another person.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Motions? The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 96, An Act to enact the Human Trafficking Awareness Day Act, 2017, and the Prevention of and Remedies for Human Trafficking Act, 2017.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka seeks unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? I heard a no.

Motions? The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: On a point of order: I would like to seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 96, An Act to enact the Human Trafficking Awareness Day Act, 2017. This is a serious issue. Every single—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. First of all, it's not a motion, but I am entertaining unanimous consents.

1520

The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? I heard a no.

The member from Prince Edward–Hastings on a point of order.

Mr. Todd Smith: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 96, An Act to enact the Human Trafficking—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? I heard a no.

PETITIONS

DENTAL CARE

Mr. Todd Smith: This comes from the Gateway Community Health Centre in beautiful Tweed, 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 agree with this, will sign it and send it to the table with Matt.

PHARMACARE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition entitled “Universal Pharmacare for All Ontarians.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas prescription medications are a part of health care and people shouldn’t have to empty their wallets or rack up credit card bills to get the medications they need;

“Whereas over 2.2 million Ontarians don’t have any prescription drug coverage and one in four Ontarians don’t take their medications as prescribed because they cannot afford the cost;

“Whereas taking medication as prescribed can save lives and help people live better; and

“Whereas Canada urgently needs universal and comprehensive national pharmacare;

“We, the undersigned, express our support for a universal provincial pharmacare plan for all Ontarians.”

I agree, I’ll sign it and send it up with Gracin.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. James J. Bradley: “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.”

DENTAL CARE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have here a petition to the Legislative Assembly signed by a great number of my constituents, and it’s particularly appropriate today as the visit from the dental association was this morning.

“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 to this petition, Mr. Speaker.

WATER EXTRACTION

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition is called “Protect Water as a Public Good.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas groundwater is a public good, not a commodity; and

“Whereas local ecosystems must be preserved for the well-being of future generations; and

“Whereas the United Nations recognizes access to clean drinking water as a human right; and

“Whereas the duty to consult indigenous communities regarding water-taking within traditional territories is often neglected, resulting in a disproportionate burden on systemically marginalized communities during a period of reconciliation; and

“Whereas a poll commissioned by the Wellington Water Watchers found that two thirds of respondents support phasing out bottled water in Ontario over the course of a decade; and

“Whereas a trend towards prioritizing the expansion of for-profit water bottling corporations over the needs of municipalities will negatively impact Ontario’s growing communities;

“Therefore we, the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change to prioritize public ownership and control of water over corporate interests and fund the accessibility of free drinking water in public spaces across the province.”

It’s my pleasure to affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Iman.

NANJING MASSACRE

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly.

“Whereas the events in Asian countries during World War II are not well-known;

“Whereas Ontarians have not had an opportunity for a thorough discussion and examination of the World War II atrocities in Asia...;

“Whereas Ontario is recognized as an inclusive society;

“Whereas Ontario is the home to one of the largest Asian populations in Canada, with over 2.6 million in 2011;

“Whereas some Ontarians have direct relationships with victims and survivors of the Nanjing Massacre, whose stories are untold;

“Whereas the Nanjing Massacre was an atrocity with over 200,000 Chinese civilians and soldiers alike were indiscriminately killed, and tens of thousands of women were sexually assaulted, in the Japanese capture of the city;

“Whereas December 13, 2017, marks the 80th anniversary of the Nanjing Massacre;

“Whereas designating December 13th in each year as the Nanjing Massacre Commemorative Day in Ontario will provide an opportunity for all Ontarians, especially the Asian community, to gather, remember, and honour the victims and families affected by the Nanjing Massacre;

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, urge the members of the Ontario Legislature to pass Bill 79, declaring Dec. 13 as the Nanjing Massacre Commemorative Day.”

I have 7,000 signatures today to submit to the desk. I’ll give it to Jeremi to take to the desk.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas in Ontario there is a shortage of housing for adults with developmental disabilities;

“Whereas in locations across Ontario there are long lists of individuals waiting for housing. Due to the lack of residential supports compared to the ever-growing list of adults with developmental disabilities waiting to access the housing units available, the wait time for these individuals can be months or even years long;

“Whereas Ontario requires more housing spaces for this section of vulnerable individuals so they can take the steps necessary to realize their full potential;

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

“To take immediate action to address the housing situation for adults with developmental disabilities.”

I agree with this, sign my name and give it to page Peter.

1530

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I’d like to thank the Ontario Alliance Against School Closures for collecting hundreds of signatures on a petition that reads as follows:

“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 an immediate 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 support this petition, affix my name to it and will give it to page Maddison to take to the table.

GO TRANSIT

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

“Whereas the residents of Cambridge and the Waterloo region believe that they would be well-served by commuter rail transit that connects the region to the Milton line, and that this infrastructure would have positive, tangible economic benefits to the province of Ontario;

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

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

I fully support the petition. I give my petition to page Emma.

DENTAL CARE

Mr. Rick Nicholls: “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 approve of this petition.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: “Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

“Whereas community water fluoridation is a safe, effective and scientifically proven means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas recent experience in such Canadian cities as Dorval, Calgary and Windsor that have removed fluoride from drinking water has shown a dramatic increase in dental decay; and

“Whereas the continued use of fluoride in community drinking water is at risk in Ontario cities representing more than 10% of Ontario’s population, including the region of Peel; and

“Whereas the Ontario Legislature has twice voted unanimously in favour of the benefits of community water fluoridation, and the Ontario Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care and Municipal Affairs and Housing urge support for amending the Health Protection and Promotion Act and other applicable legislation to ensure community water fluoridation is mandatory and to remove provisions allowing Ontario municipalities to cease drinking water fluoridation, or fail to start drinking water fluoridation, from the Ontario Municipal Act;

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

“That the Premier of Ontario direct the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Health and Long-Term Care to introduce legislation amending the Health Protection and Promotion Act and make changes to other applicable legislation and regulations to make the

fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

As a dental assistant, I fully support this petition, will sign it and send it to the table with page Kaitlin.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RENTAL FAIRNESS ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ EN LOCATION IMMOBILIÈRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 25, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 124, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 / Projet de loi 124, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Will this be your lead, or will this just be normal? Is this your lead? Thank you.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 124. I just want to explain why both my leadoff speech and that of the NDP critic for municipal affairs and housing were delayed.

As you know, Bill 68, the Modernizing Ontario's Municipal Legislation Act, is currently in clause-by-clause at committee. There are over 130 pages of amendments, based on a large number of concerns that stakeholders have raised. So on Monday and Tuesday afternoons, until we are finished, the NDP critic and I will be in the social policy committee, working to try to make that legislation better.

Knowing that we are in committee on that bill, the government still scheduled leadoffs for this bill for Tuesday afternoon. Our House leader's office explained this to the Liberal House leader's office, but apparently they're not willing to work with us at all. We could have started debate yesterday morning instead of the afternoon. We could have delayed the committee. We could have looked at other options, but the government refused to work with us. I hope this isn't a sign of how they're going to approach this issue and this bill.

We've offered to work with them repeatedly. We offered when we raised this issue in the Legislature over the last few years, and we made the offer again a few weeks ago when we wrote to the Minister of Finance about the measures we wanted to see addressed on housing affordability in the upcoming budget.

We're willing to work with them because we want good, affordable apartments for Ontario's tenants, because we know that the Residential Tenancies Act needs to be better balanced to protect both good tenants and good landlords. We know that red tape in the building process has left us short of supply. We recognize Ontario is facing a housing crisis.

What we are not willing to do is allow this government to use the people facing housing hardships to justify political gains. We're not willing to accept the Minister

of Finance's focus on name-calling instead of gathering the data needed to make evidence-based decisions. The people of Ontario deserve better than that. Tenants deserve better than that. The people who are struggling because of the housing crisis deserve better than that—and, Mr. Speaker, it is a housing crisis.

Toronto shelters are at 97% capacity, far above the 90% the city aims for. Peel region opened a youth shelter in Brampton, and it was filled to capacity the very first day. The waiting list for affordable housing in Ontario is 171,000 families, 45,000 more than when this government was elected. Toronto Community Housing is closing an average of a unit a day because they can't afford to maintain them to a livable standard.

Toronto's rental vacancy rate is just above a 1% supply. Supply is so low that there are bidding wars for apartments. A regional economist from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. said, "An improved provincial economy, eroding ownership affordability, and rising international immigration drove the Ontario vacancy rate to the lowest level since 2001." Housing prices in the GTA have increased by 33% over the last year. In Durham region, they have increased by 42.5%, and in Oakville, by 47.7%.

1540

The increases are no longer limited to the GTA, Mr. Speaker. In my riding, Woodstock and Ingersoll saw a 20% increase. Tillsonburg reported a 25% increase in housing prices from March 2016 to March 2017. In Barrie, they increased 32.9%; in Guelph, 36.1%; and in Cambridge, 28.6%.

Young people across southern Ontario are seeing the dream of home ownership move further and further out of reach. One person reported that for every week she was house hunting, it seemed that the cost of houses would increase by another \$50,000. Young people are saving, with the hopes of buying a home, but are seeing the prices increase faster than they can save.

We have seen record low levels of supply. At the end of January 2007, there were 18,400 new ground-oriented homes available for purchase in builders' inventory. Ten years later, at the end of January 2017, there were only 1,524 new ground-oriented homes available for inventory—from 18,000 to 1,500.

This has led to people camping out at sales offices for the right to buy one of the new homes. At one development in Waterloo, potential buyers camped out for a week. The months of inventory, or length of time that it would take to sell the remaining numbers of properties on the market if no new listings came onto the market, has dropped by 55% from 2007 to 2016, from three months to one month.

In my riding, Woodstock-Ingersoll and District Real Estate Board reported there was just one month of inventory at the end of March 2017, down from 1.9 months a year earlier. The Tillsonburg District Real Estate Board reported that inventory dropped over the year from 2.8 months to just 1.4 months.

The low supply is leading to rapidly increasing prices and bidding wars. In fact, just yesterday, the Centre for

Urban Research and Land Development released a report which found that since 2006, supply factors have been the primary cause of rising ground-related housing prices in the GTA. Study after study reports excessive red tape and lengthy delays in the building process, adding to the cost of new houses and leaving us short of supply.

Last week, the government finally acknowledged this crisis. But we didn't arrive at this point last week. The problem has been growing under their watch for years, and they didn't do anything to stop it. For years, they promised to reform the Residential Tenancies Act to deal with professional tenants. They did nothing. The Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association's published annual report shows large increases in the wait-lists for affordable housing, and they ignored the warnings. Building industry experts warned them about the red tape and low housing supply, and they ignored it. Economists warned them about the housing prices, and they ignored the warnings.

We warned them over and over that life in Ontario was becoming unaffordable, and they ignored us. In fact, over the last three years alone, I have raised affordable housing and housing affordability in this House 139 times, so anyone who says we haven't been talking about this issue clearly hasn't been listening.

Mr. Speaker, weeks ago, our leader and I met with Juan Rojas, who has been trying to buy a new house for his growing family. He and his wife have a three-year-old daughter and are expecting another child. They put in offer after offer on homes, and every time, they are outbid. They raised their efforts to match the price that homes were selling for the week before, but prices are increasing so fast, they just couldn't keep up.

That day, the leader and I sent a letter to Minister Sousa, outlining five actions that we wanted to see in the upcoming budget to address the housing affordability crisis, such as a commitment to address supply, including reducing red tape and regulatory burden, which both limits the supply of new housing and increases carrying costs, which are passed on to the consumer.

I'm disappointed that the government seems to be making no real progress to address this issue. In fact, this government has done far more than ignore the problem. They have implemented policy after policy that helped create the housing crisis.

The first, of course, is the cost of hydro, which has resulted in dramatically higher costs for homeowners, renters and landlords across Ontario.

In 2004, this government passed the Strong Communities Act, which increased municipal review times for planning applications, delaying the building of new housing and rental supply.

The review times for amendments and approvals went from 90 days to 180 days, zoning and holding bylaws went from 90 to 120 days, and consent applications went from 60 to 90 days. All of this led to delays in the process and increased carrying costs, which were passed on to the consumer. This is just one example of the red tape that has been added onto the building industry. It

seems every piece of legislation adds more, and there are constantly new regulations, all of which leads to longer and longer delays getting shovels into the ground.

In 2006, through the City of Toronto Act, this government gave the city of Toronto the right to add a second land transfer tax. For the average-priced home in Toronto, that additional land transfer tax would add \$14,464 to the cost of the home.

In 2012, the government amended the Residential Tenancies Act because they had based the rent control cap on the consumer price index. The problem was that the cost of living in Ontario was increasing so quickly that the annual consumer price index increase was too high, and people were complaining about the amount of the allowable rent increases.

I want to take a minute to explain that for everyone watching at home. The consumer price index is designed to measure changes in the real cost of living over time by comparing the cost of the same group of goods and services. In Ontario, as most people know, our cost of living was increasing rapidly due in part to the cost of energy. Rather than actually dealing with these increased costs, which impact all Ontarians, the government simply capped the rent increases at 2.5%. That means Ontario homeowners can still see their costs increase by 5% to 10% in a year. It also means that landlords can still see their costs increase by 5% to 10% a year. In fact, until two months ago, the most frequent calls I received in my office from tenants were not about rent control exemption, but about above-guideline increases. These are increases in rent where the landlord has to go to the Landlord and Tenant Board and prove that they have additional increased costs that the rent won't cover. The government hasn't actually solved this problem, and until they do, we aren't going to see real solutions on affordability for homeowners or the increased supply for renters and purchasers that we desperately need.

When I spoke to this bill in 2012, I told the government that it was ignoring the real problem. I warned them that it was like taking a car in to the mechanic because the engine is making a strange noise, and the mechanic recommends simply turning up the radio so you can't hear it. It's also like implementing rent control because the shortage of supply is causing rents to increase: It helps tenants today, but it just hides the fact, and the problem continues to grow.

In 2015, the government further restricted land availability. I want to be completely clear, Mr. Speaker: We are not proposing building on the greenbelt. We understand the importance of protecting environmentally sensitive areas and agricultural land. But we also have to acknowledge that this government's land use restrictions have come at a cost to homeowners and renters.

Just last year, they passed a bill allowing inclusionary zoning. That means new homeowners would pay the cost of providing affordable housing for their neighbours. The Ontario Home Builders' Association warned them about the impact of adding this new cost onto housing, and again the government ignored it. They increased de-

velopment charges, which put more costs on new housing and new rentals. And now the government is proposing net-zero-carbon homes, another cost which is estimated to be significant.

Some of these items have value, but taken together they have added up to huge increases in costs on Ontario's homeowners and renters. This government continues to burden Ontario homeowners and renters with new cost after new cost, without considering the overall impact.

They have also ignored the impact of what they say. Over the last six weeks, the Premier and her cabinet minister publicly mused about expanding rent control. We warned them that their wild speculation and constant stream of policy rumours was affecting the rental market and hurting people. Every time they mused about rent control in the weeks before the announcement, landlords would increase rents in case it was their last opportunity. This bill is only retroactive to the day of the Liberal announcement, meaning that people who saw large increases as a result of the government's musing are out of luck.

1550

For instance, Joshua and his girlfriend got a notice on April 15 that their rent would be going up \$300 a month as of August 1. They emailed the CBC with a question of whether that rent increase would still be allowed. The CBC checked with the Minister of Housing who confirmed that, yes, it would. Mr. Speaker, that is this government's track record of housing affordability.

Last fall, they finally started to acknowledge that we might have a problem, but instead of addressing the housing shortage and working to increase supply, they actually increased demand by doubling the maximum land transfer tax refund, something they now seem to regret, as last week the federal and provincial Ministers of Finance and the mayor of Toronto all came out and promised no more measures that would increase demand.

The Premier says that if she had a crystal ball; she might have done something different. What this government needs, Mr. Speaker, is not a crystal ball, it's research and evidence-based decision-making; that's how you look into the future and see the impact of your decisions. Yet, last week the government once again charged ahead with no research and no idea of what the impact of their decision will be.

Mr. Speaker, people trying to buy a house in Ontario are no better off today than they were last week before that announcement. There were no immediate measures to deal with our problem of supply. The announcement didn't cut a single piece of red tape. It didn't make a single change to the bidding wars for homes.

Scotiabank described the plan as multiple measures with uncertain impact. Jan De Silva, CEO of the Toronto Region Board of Trade, said, "We have mixed feelings about what was announced. This is because we have continued to lobby all levels of government that its solution is about more supply." James Craig, the president of the Kitchener-Waterloo Association of Realtors

said, "What we really wanted to see is how do you get more units into the marketplace. Increasing the amount of supply I think was key and I don't think we saw enough of it."

A Globe and Mail article from Monday said, "The result is frustratingly predictable. The so-called 'fair housing plan' will at best do nothing to address the underlying supply issues affecting affordability and at worst further distort the housing market.

"A real solution would be for provincial and municipal politicians to look at the extent to which their own policies—particularly around zoning and development—are contributing to Toronto's housing affordability challenges."

One of the measures announced last week was a foreign homebuyers' tax. At the announcement, the Minister of Finance was asked how many foreign homebuyers there were in Ontario. He said, "We know that the degree of non-resident investment in Ontario, or in this region, hovers around 8%." What's interesting is that he was asked on Friday, one day later, by a different reporter, how many foreign homebuyers there were in Ontario and he said 5%. So I hope the minister can answer this question to us today: How many foreign homebuyers are there in Ontario and what percentage of the market do they make up?

If they had done their work to prove that this new tax will actually address the cost of housing in Ontario and help stabilize the market, then I ask them to prove it. Table the research on this tax in the Legislature today. Table the documents that show how many foreign homebuyers there are. Table the impact studies.

Already, people are warning that a similar tax has not worked in British Columbia, and that prices are rising again. A report from the Centre for Urban Research and Land Development released yesterday concluded that removing speculative-type purchasers from the market is not a solution to long-term affordability of ground-related housing in the GTA.

Mortgage Professionals Canada called the tax un-Canadian and warned that "a foreign buyers' tax has not improved affordability and has instead simply reduced housing activity." Scotiabank, in their research report, said, "Vancouver home sales and prices have begun to edge up in recent months, which implies that the tax may not have had a sustained cooling impact on demand." They also pointed out that "the lack of solid data on the number of foreign buyers in Ontario prevents any evidence-based assessment of the potential extent of the impact." If the government has done their research and has studies to show the impact of the tax, it is time to share that with the Legislature and the people of Ontario.

The Liberals have had 14 years in government to collect data to determine whether this is a real problem and what impact the tax will have. We have been warned for years about affordability, it has been almost 10 months since British Columbia implemented the tax; at this point, there is very little excuse for not at least having some data on the problem.

Without the data, there's very little to explain why they changed their position from October—just six months ago—when the Premier said, “We’re not going to go down the road that British Columbia has gone down.” She went on to say, “I’m not interested in doing something that would have an unintended consequence in Ontario—something that was designed for a totally different market,” and November when Minister Sousa said, “The market mix is different than it is in British Columbia, so we want to take the appropriate steps to address the matter without then negatively impacting other regions around the GTA.”

There's one thing we do know is different between British Columbia and Ontario: In British Columbia, they announced that the revenue from the foreign homebuyers' tax will go towards providing affordable housing; in Ontario, the government is already proposing to put the money into the general revenues, despite calls from organizations like the Co-operative Housing Federation that the proceeds of the new tax be directed to new affordable rental housing supply.

Not only are there questions about whether the British Columbia foreign homebuyers' tax has achieved the goal; it is also now the subject of a lawsuit before the BC Supreme Court. According to newspaper reports, the lawsuit argues that the foreign buyers' tax is unconstitutional because it violates equality rights by making an arbitrary distinction between those who are citizens and permanent residents of Canada and those who are not. The lawsuit is quoted as saying, “The disadvantage perpetuates prejudice and stereotyping on the basis of national origin.”

Mr. Speaker, implementing a tax should not be a knee-jerk reaction. First, there should be extensive research and consultation, including people like Frank Scarpitti, the mayor of Markham, who said after the announcement last week that he had not seen any signs that vacant homes were a significant problem in Markham, and that a tax on foreign buyers won't necessarily cool the region's red-hot market. He went on to say, “I am not sure that the non-resident tax is going to cool the market to a point where all of a sudden homes are going to be that much more affordable for young families to buy.”

The number of foreign investors is not the only area where government is missing data. If there is a vacant house on your street, is it possible that it is owned not by a foreign investor but by the Ontario government? No one seems to know how many properties the government owns, including how many houses in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area they own that are currently sitting vacant. I filed an order paper question asking about that almost a month ago and have not yet received a response.

The government owns land all over Ontario that has been purchased or obtained by the government for different reasons, such as all the houses that were purchased for the planned Spadina Expressway or land for the towns of Townsend and Seaton. In fact, Infrastructure Ontario alone manages over 5,000 buildings and 130,000 acres of land. Just yesterday, it was reported that Metrolinx has already started buying up properties along the proposed Hamilton LRT route.

Beyond those properties the government bought, there are those that have been escheated or forfeited to the government—properties that defaulted to the government because a corporation dissolved or a person passed away with no heirs and no will. It's ironic that the government has given municipalities the ability to tax these vacant properties, while at the exact same time they have brought forward Bill 68 which contains a clause specifically exempting properties that have been escheated or forfeited to the government from municipal property tax. With one hand they giveth; the next hand they taketh back.

We believe that the government should lead by example and determine how many vacant properties they own and release them for sale or rent. They should also lead by example by following the legislative requirement to report their own data.

As I will explain further in a few minutes, this government has banned landlords from applying for above-guideline increases due to extraordinary energy costs. This raises the question of how many above-guideline increases were actually applied for last year. We don't know because this government has failed to table the annual report for Social Justice Tribunals Ontario that would contain that information.

1600

The legislative requirement for that report is that it be submitted to the Attorney General within 90 days after the fiscal year-end, and he is required to table it within 60 days after that, meaning the report was due on August 28 of this year.

I raised this in the Legislature on March 20 and still no annual report.

Since the Attorney General is also the government House leader, perhaps his staff are listening and will be able to look into that and report back to the House.

Mr. Speaker, we believe in the importance of data and listening to the experts. As you know, I tabled a motion calling on the government to create a housing affordability panel. This panel would include people who plan houses, people who build them and people who live in them. It would include non-profit housing representatives, an environmental organization and a young person who would want to be a homeowner.

We all know that the housing market is complex, and if we don't do the proper research and consultation there will be unintended consequences. Having all the experts on this panel would allow them to work together to develop real ideas to address housing affordability, supply and red tape. It would ensure that ideas are reviewed and evaluated from different perspectives.

My proposal has tight timelines and clear goals. The panel would be required to report within three months, and the minister would have to table the report within 15 days after receiving it.

Instead, the government is proposing to hold a single meeting with industry once every three months. To put that in perspective, that means when our panel has completed their work and provided their detailed report

on increasing supply, reducing red tape on housing and addressing affordability for first-time homebuyers and stabilizing the real estate market in both the short and long term, the government will be about ready to hold their second meeting.

Mr. Speaker, as we look at this bill, there is a number of measures that don't seem to have had much, if any, consultation, such as the new mandatory standard lease. I haven't heard from tenants or landlords that this is a problem. In fact, it looks like it may just create new ones and end up being another red tape burden.

The first concern that we heard is that there is no way to create a template lease that covers all the possible scenarios for tenants. Does the landlord pay the utility, or does the tenant? Is there an extra charge for air conditioners? Is there shared storage space? Are there laundry facilities included? The ministry says the standard lease is needed because people had added additional clauses in the lease that weren't appropriate, but they will not acknowledge that there is no way to have a one-size-fits-all lease, so there will need to be space on the standard lease to add additional clauses. That means we're going through all the effort and all the extra work for good landlords and tenants just to have the same problem of people adding clauses into their lease that they don't realize are inappropriate.

The problem gets worse when you look at the rules for existing tenants under this bill. There is nothing in this bill that allows landlords to switch to the new standard lease, but if a tenant requests it, the landlord must provide the signed copy of the lease for the tenant's signature within 21 days. If the landlord doesn't, the tenant can withhold one month's rent. If the landlord doesn't provide the lease within another 30 days after that, the tenant gets to keep the money and break the lease. But the new rules go even further than that. If the landlord provides the lease within 21 days as requested and the tenant chooses not to sign it, they can still use that as the reason to break their lease.

The minister may have intended this for cases where there are disputes, but there is nothing in the legislation that prevents a tenant who already has a written lease, but simply wants out, of using this clause to break that lease. The landlord has followed the rules and has no choice in the lease, and yet this government wants to punish them for the fact that the tenant chose not to sign it.

We need rules that provide balance between tenants and landlords. We need rules that would create fair rental systems for everyone and encourage more supply, and yet despite the dramatically low vacancy rate here in Toronto and in other parts of the province, the government is pushing ahead with changes that will have the opposite effect.

One of these is the fact that landlords will no longer be able to apply for above-guideline increases for utility costs, including hydro and water. We've all heard the horror stories of hydro increases in Ontario over the past few years. We've heard about people choosing between buying food and paying for hydro to heat their homes.

We've heard from seniors who were forced out of their homes because they could no longer afford the hydro bills.

Those same costs apply to landlords. That's why they were applying for above-guideline rent increases and able to prove to the Landlord and Tenant Board that these increases were indeed needed due to extraordinary costs. Rent increases of 1.5% a year just don't cover hydro bills that are doubling. This is another case where the government is burying the problem instead of dealing with it.

All of these additional costs on landlords make it less attractive to build in Ontario and more difficult for them to get financing to do so. As the developers say, they will still build rental units; they just won't build them in Ontario. We desperately need those units here in Ontario. The shortage of supply is why we have bidding wars for apartments. That's why we have large rent increases. That's why we have vacancy rates in Toronto at about 1%. In fact, lineups for showings of apartments have been common, and people are offering \$100 or more above the rent to get good apartments. That shows the housing and rental shortages we're facing.

We have real concerns about the impact of rent control on our rental housing supply, and it will actually make our housing prices worse, leading to tenants having more difficulty finding apartments, more bidding wars and higher rents.

The 1991 exemption was created because rent control had stopped the construction of new rental units. In fact, one of this government's former Ministers of Municipal Affairs and Housing said, "The proposed legislation would also encourage investment in the rental housing market by continuing to exempt units built after 1991 from rent controls. These provisions are and remain significant contributors to a favourable investment climate that would foster the renewal of Ontario's rental housing supply."

We understand why there was a concern. When this government was elected, there were only about 10 years of new builds that were covered by that exemption. Today, buildings more than 25 years old fall under that exemption.

There are numerous options that the government could have chosen to update the exemption. They could have moved the date forward so only buildings built in the last few years were exempt. They could have introduced legislation to continue to move that exemption date forward each year. Or they could have said that everything from today backwards is covered, but kept an incentive for new builds. Instead, they have chosen the option that will create the biggest chill on building in the rental market.

Imagine you are a developer who completed and rented a purpose-built rental building just a week or two before the government's announcement. You based your loans and your rent increases on 4% or even 3% annually. Now, without warning, the government decided you can only get half of that, possibly not even enough to cover your increased costs. How likely is it that that

landlord is going to be building another building in Ontario?

We are not the only ones who have concerns about the impact of rent controls. About six months ago, during a debate in this Legislature, the member from Beaches–East York said, “She also talked about rent control being a gaping hole in this legislation. Let’s not kid ourselves. The rent controls that were brought in by the previous NDP government under Bob Rae decimated the affordable housing market in Toronto and other communities in Ontario because it didn’t allow the private sector to continue to build. They wouldn’t; the returns weren’t there. And they weren’t able to keep upkeep. So the housing stock went into a dismal state of repair, which is why it had to be reversed, as it was. Rent controls continue on the previous suites and don’t exist now. I would resist, tremendously, any amendment to this legislation which would bring back rent control.”

I’m waiting to hear from the member from Beaches–East York. I look forward to hearing his thoughts on this bill, which is exactly doing that.

Robert Kavcic, senior economist with the Bank of Montreal, said of rent control, “The concern here is that this fans longer-term excess demand in the rental market, when vacancy rates are already barely more than 1%. That is, less incentive to bring supply to market in a timely fashion, and more incentive to stay put in an increasingly underpriced unit (landlord own-use eviction rules will be tightened to boot). Note that chronic underbuilding came to a swift end in the late 1990s when rent controls were removed. From an investors’ perspective, buyers will have to adjust their rental growth assumptions accordingly.”

I’ve already received multiple emails from small landlords that are worried about the fact that rent increases will be limited to 2.5%, while their other costs are increased at a much more rapid rate.

1610

One quote said, “Mortgages and management fees are the main cost of keeping a condo. We, as the small landlord, have to consider the cost into the new rent. When the government has no control about the mortgage rate, the management fee and the extra management fee, the government should not control our small landlord about the rental rate. Please understand the difficulty being a small landlord.”

I was copied on an email to the Minister of Environment from a small landlord who owns a property in his riding. The person said that under rent controls, “I will be forced to raise rent each year by the maximum amount allowed because I won’t be able to do so if interest rates or condo fees increase suddenly. I would not have done this without rent control or a financial reason to do so, as I know how difficult it is to attract a quality tenant and, in parallel, evict a non-quality tenant. Comparatively, there is no subsidy for landlords to compensate them for future rental losses if interest rates or condo fees increase.”

He went on to say, “I will not invest in a further rental property. I would not have invested in a pre-construction

condo had I known of these proposals. There are other asset classes that I can put my hard-earned savings in without such restrictions.”

He finished with, “While I have been a Liberal Party voter, I strongly disagree with the above points. I will not be voting for the Liberal Party in the next provincial election without valid changes to the above proposed rules. I will also encourage the same of other small-scale landlords, as a significant amount of our savings have been invested in real estate.”

I received another email from a small landlord in Cambridge, who purchased a condominium to rent out in 2015. He was disappointed by the measures that were missing from this bill and said, “Any proposed rental housing legislation must provide protection for landlords as well as tenants. Failing to do so will force investors like me to quit this business altogether. You will remove a way for working people like me to participate in an investment strategy that also provides decent housing for renters.”

It seems that this legislation has missed the mark. It is discouraging current and potential landlords at a time when we desperately need them. It doesn’t address red tape and it won’t increase housing supply.

People in all parts of the housing industry have voiced that same concern. Jim Murphy, CEO of the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario, said that “rent control will have a detrimental effect on all of these planned developments that our members want built.” He also said that “today’s announcement by the Wynne government will put thousands of units and millions of dollars in provincial revenues at risk. It is a rash, politically motivated decision, which will hurt, not help generations of Ontario renters.”

The Federation of Metro Tenants’ Associations said, “While the FMTA is very happy to see protections extended to millions of tenants, the housing crisis will not be solved today. Increased investment in housing development is needed either directly or through well-tested government incentives. Hundreds of low-income government units are being shuttered.”

Toronto developer Brad Lamb said that the province didn’t do anything to boost supply in the province and vowed to cancel the rental projects that were already in his pipeline. He said, “Everything is stopping on the dime. I had nine apartment buildings in my pipeline. I can tell you as of this announcement I will not do any of them.”

Mr. Speaker, he was describing projects in the Toronto central core, in the suburbs and in Hamilton, all areas where we need supply.

Before the government’s announcement, the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario surveyed their members and found that 14 of the 15 respondents were planning purpose-built rentals, an investment of \$2.7 billion. It was a good-news story, but now all we hear about is cancellations.

Victor Menasce, president of the Ottawa Real Estate Investors Organization, said, “I think it’s a terribly mis-

guided initiative. It's actually going to hurt the people it's supposed to protect."

Benjamin Tal, an economist with the CIBC, said: "The move on rent control will help current renters, but the resulting lack of supply and lower turnover also means that future renters will face higher rent and less choice."

A report from Urbanation released earlier this week predicted that rent control will cause condo investors to stop renting units, as their condo costs will increase more rapidly than the 2.5% rent control guideline. The report said, "The bigger issue is that rent control will eventually cause condo investors to begin to shy away from making new purchases, effectively slowing new development (condos represent 60% of all new home sales in the GTA) and choking off the market's key source of new rental supply as new purpose-built development levels off or declines...."

Joe Vaccaro, the CEO of the Ontario Home Builders' Association, said, "OHBA is always concerned that new taxes and regulatory controls may potentially impact housing prices and future housing supply. The existing housing market has served an important role in providing new rental stock, and our industry is concerned that new rent controls will dampen consumer confidence and potentially have negative impacts on future rental supply."

Mayor John Tory said, "I worry this will choke off those developments and people will stop building rental apartment buildings."

Bob Finnigan, president and CEO of the Canadian Home Builders' Association, said, "We have agreed strongly that it's a supply issue here and really none of the actions will increase the housing supply."

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that those quotes represent realtors, builders, economists, municipal officials and tenant groups, and they all share our concern that this government's actions are going to create further problems for the housing supply.

The supply issue isn't just in Toronto. The CMHC report on the city of Guelph stated, "New listings have not kept pace with the growth in sales. Sales have increased due to more first-time buyers and buyers from the GTA, and these sales do not come with a listing."

Earlier this year, while speaking in Barrie, Ontario Real Estate Association CEO Tim Hudak predicted another strong year for the city's housing market. He said, "The big problem is we don't have enough supply."

Mr. Speaker, as I've said, the supply problem isn't just with rentals. Shelters are full to overflowing. Every year, the affordable housing wait-list gets longer and longer. There are spiralling housing prices. There are bidding wars for both apartments and houses, and people fight over limited supply. The housing spectrum is all connected. As a principal of market analysis at CMHC said, "Rising costs of home ownership keep more people in rental."

I heard from one frustrated young person who is watching prices go further and further out of reach. If he had been in the same financial position two years ago that he is today, he and his girlfriend would have been

able to buy the house with the backyard that they want in Burlington, and think about a wedding and starting a family. Instead, he is stuck in an apartment, with no space for kids. He wants to know how long he is supposed to keep his life on hold. He was watching the Liberal announcement last week, hoping there was something in it for him, but there wasn't.

The announcement last week did not cut a single piece of red tape. It took no actual steps to reduce the time it takes to build a house or an apartment building in Ontario. In fact, in the announcement, they said they have put the same staff who created our current red tape in charge of finding the red tape. How much do you think they're going to be willing to cut when they are the ones who created it?

We hear from developers that it takes years to get a project through the approvals and get actual shovels in the ground. That is a project with no major rezoning or issues. Rezoning can add another year and significant costs to the project. A report released in October found that the process can be especially costly to home building in cities where most new builds require rezoning, such as Toronto and Pickering. In fact, it said that the typical cost of navigating the approval process in Toronto was more than \$46,000 a unit.

If a project has gone to the OMB, it can mean another year of delay simply to get to the hearing. To be clear, that is not the hearing itself; that is just waiting for the hearing, because the government is so behind in appointing adjudicators. That certainly isn't fair to community groups if they take issues to the Ontario Municipal Board, and it causes unnecessary delays for building needed housing.

Another challenge is the lack of serviced land. We've heard from a number of developers who have the approvals in place, but they can't build because they can't get water. So, 169 townhouses, 235 detached homes—these projects add up.

Although rent control may be the most significant fact when determining whether or not to build a new rental building, developers have been telling the government for years that their policies have been discouraging investment. The red tape; increasing development charges and other fees; uncertainty about rent controls; shortage of serviced land—all of these have discouraged building of new rental units.

Now the government is introducing new policies to discourage people from creating second units in their home, after telling us for years that it is a big part of the solution. Under this bill, people who rent a unit in their home and need the space for personal use will be forced to compensate tenants by paying them a fee equivalent to one month's rent. Even after giving the proper notice, this bill would penalize homeowners who need to move a child, an aging parent, or even a caregiver that they need for themselves into an apartment in their home.

1620

Let's be clear: These are not large corporations. These are not people who are trying to raise the rent. These are

people who have been renting part of their home and need the space. These are people who are giving tenants proper notice and are still being penalized.

Imagine young people who rented a basement apartment so they could afford their first home. Now they're expecting their first child and need extra space. At a time when money is already tight, this government wants them to pay a cash penalty to use a part of their own home.

Imagine the senior on a fixed income who is considering renting out part of her home to help with the expenses. She may not rent it if she is concerned that she will have to pay a penalty if she needs a caregiver to move in. That means she loses badly needed income, and we lose another badly needed apartment.

After reading this bill, I feel compelled to remind the Minister of Housing that renting a basement apartment does not make you a bad person. This bill is written from the perspective that all landlords are bad. That simply isn't true. There are good landlords and good tenants in Ontario. This bill and the Residential Tenancies Act should be about balance and making the system work for both groups. That is the only way that we will increase supply in the rental market, to ensure tenants have good apartments at affordable rates.

Mr. Speaker, there are ways to encourage more rentals in Ontario. In fact, the government consulted on proposals to encourage small landlords. In the consultation document they released just last year, the government stated, "The government values the contribution of small landlords in the rental housing market. Small landlords play an important role in providing affordable rental options, including secondary units, for low and moderate-income households. For example, landlords renting out a basement apartment in their home, a second property, or units in a triplex can increase choices available to tenants, and support a wider range and mix of housing in Ontario communities. In addition, small landlords who rent secondary units can earn additional income, allowing homeownership to be more affordable."

Just one year later, they have introduced a bill that ignores that consultation and instead introduces new policies that would discourage small landlords.

In that document, they raised a number of issues that discourage people from renting second units or becoming small landlords. For instance, the document pointed out that in cases where the utilities are paid by the tenant directly, the landlord may have to bear the cost if the tenant fails to pay.

The document went on to say, "For example, a landlord may incur costs if the tenant fails to reimburse the landlord for making the utility payments. The landlord could also incur costs related to the shut-off and reconnection of utility services resulting from the non-payment of utility bills. In addition, the Municipal Act, 2001 enables municipalities to add tenants' arrears for municipal public utilities (e.g., water) to the owner's property taxes.

"Non-payment of utility arrears may cause significant financial hardship for small landlords with limited

resources. To recover utility arrears, landlords generally need to file a claim in the Small Claims Court, rather than seeking compensation at the Landlord and Tenant Board. "This is because the Landlord and Tenant Board "currently has no jurisdiction to order or collect payments for utility arrears.

"It is proposed that, if a tenant is responsible for paying for utilities separately from rent, but fails to make the payment and the landlord has paid the outstanding amount, the landlord could apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board "for remedies."

Mr. Speaker, that's a very detailed proposal that would help good landlords and prevent bad tenants from taking advantage of them, yet the proposal doesn't appear in the bill.

The consultation document also puts forward proposals to help tenants and landlords work together to resolve issues without terminating tenancy. The government consultation document stated: "Under the RTA, a landlord may apply to the board "to terminate a tenancy for certain reasons, such as interfering with reasonable enjoyment or causing undue damage to the rental unit. This could include situations where tenants are hoarding or disturbing neighbours.

"However, some landlords—particularly social or supportive housing landlords—may prefer to work with the tenant to resolve the issue rather than evict the tenant.

"The government is proposing to allow landlords to apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board "to resolve landlord-tenant issues, without serving a termination notice. This approach to conflict resolution could support stronger landlord-tenant relationships."

The Premier claims she is all about conversations and working together, but when it comes time to put it in legislation, the government ignores it.

Another proposal that has been requested by both landlords and tenants is the ability to have smoke-free environments. A 2010 Ipsos Reid study found that 80% of Ontarians would prefer to live in a smoke-free environment. The government consultation document stated, "Landlords and some tenants have advocated for enhanced rules that would provide for completely smoke-free environments. Small landlords, especially those providing a second unit in their home, may have a particular interest in having better means to enforce no-smoking rules to accommodate their families' and tenants' preference for a smoke-free environment.

"The government is exploring whether to allow to landlords to terminate a tenancy if a tenant violates a no-smoking agreement. In these cases, landlords would not be required to prove that smoke has caused damage, impaired safety, or interfered with reasonable enjoyment. This would better support landlords to provide for smoke-free environments."

This would be a benefit to potential small landlords who have asthma and other health concerns. It would help eliminate fears that prevent potential landlords from renting. It would also help other tenants. I heard from one landlord who rents out two units in her home. One tenant

complained that the tenant in the other unit was smoking indoors and the smell was bothering them. The landlord felt there was nothing they could really do other than to ask the tenant nicely to stop. It's ironic that the government is actually funding an organization called Smoke-Free Housing Ontario while at the same time rejecting this proposal.

Another proposal the government put forward was allowing pet-free environments in small buildings where the landlord lives in the same building as their tenant. As the government proposal stated, "Some landlords and tenants have advocated for enhanced rules that would allow pet-free environments. This may be particularly important for small landlords concerned about allergies, pet odours, or damage, and any resulting cost implications.

"The government is exploring whether to allow landlords to prohibit the keeping of pets in small buildings where the landlord also resides."

Mr. Speaker, the proposal to allow small landlords who live in the same building as their tenants to determine whether they want to allow pets would allow people with allergies to still become landlords, and yet the government has chosen to ignore it.

The government also chose to ignore their proposal which would have allowed tenants and landlords to agree that certain notices could be delivered electronically. As their consultation document said, "Currently under the RTA, landlords and tenants must deliver notices either by hand or by post. Other methods of delivery, such as email, are only sufficient where it can be proven that the contents of the notice actually came to the attention of the recipient.

"The government is proposing to allow consenting landlords and tenants to deliver certain notices electronically (e.g., notices of entry or rent increase). This could provide for a faster and more effective means of delivering notices, and modernize communication and business practices. For example, email use makes it easier for landlords who live far from their rental properties to deliver timely notices to their tenants, rather than travelling long distances, or having to allocate additional time for postal services."

Instead of these measures to encourage more small landlords and second units, the government has instead put forward legislation that tips the balance toward tenants and will result in less landlords. When the government made their housing announcement, developers immediately said they were cancelling planned rental projects.

When the government introduced this bill, I heard from a small landlord who immediately said she wanted to stop renting her upstairs apartment. How many more small landlords are there who will make that same decision? How many people are considering a second unit who are going to decide that it's just too big a risk?

Among the 16 measures that the government announced to address housing affordability were new standards on elevators—this is an interesting one. Among

the 16 measures the government announced to address housing affordability was a new standard on elevator maintenance and repairs. I understand that this is a quality-of-life issue, but I fail to understand how it relates to housing affordability. Perhaps the minister could explain to us how he thinks that a functioning elevator will make an apartment or house cheaper, because I asked this question in the briefing and no one really could explain it.

As the Globe and Mail article on Monday concluded, "The Ontario government's plan is thus inadequate and bound to be ineffectual because it overlooks the question of supply. A real, effective plan to address the province's housing affordability challenges," particularly in the greater Toronto area, "will require that policymakers see their own role in creating the problem and now fixing it."

1630

I couldn't agree more with any statement than that one. The biggest challenge that the industry faces is the impediments they have put on the development, and unless we fix those, the problem will not be fixed. We need to cut red tape to increase supply, collect proper data and consult with experts. We want good, affordable apartments for tenants, and we want young people in Ontario to once again be able to save and buy a home. The only way to accomplish that is if the government will listen to us and, instead of focusing on a short-term fix, actually address the real cause of the problem, which is the supply, or the lack thereof, in our total housing industry.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this bill this afternoon. We look forward to the questions and comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to join the debate today on Bill 124, the Rental Fairness Act. I'd like to say thank you very much to the member from Oxford for doing 55-plus minutes on this very important issue. If we get housing right, many other things fall into place in the province of Ontario. It was good to hear him talk about the advocacy for renters and also the advocacy for landlords, because there is obviously a great divide between those two issues.

I'd like to piggyback on the issue of renters who feel vulnerable in the province of Ontario, which the member mentioned. One of my constituents, a renter in Waterloo, said:

"Here is the problem. The test to determine if the notice is legitimate is a 'good faith,' 'balance of probabilities' and at the issuance of the eviction order.

"We were renting a place for \$1,895. I have a son, and my wife is pregnant. We got told that our place was needed for the mother of the landlord for March 1. We moved out, and had to take a place for \$2,750, because of location and other factors.

"Within two weeks of us moving out (Feb. 1) the house was sold. And it sold for more than asking. They claimed that because they have a new child and business

ventures, they wanted to simplify life. We then got' cheated. He said that he had to borrow \$7,500 from a friend.

When he takes this landlord to the Landlord and Tenant Board, "all the landlords will have to say is, 'At the time it's what we thought we wanted, but we changed our mind.' And that is it."

He goes on to say that with the increase of Airbnb and huge increases in prices, there is going to be no rental inventory, making it impossible for people to find affordable housing. And he goes on to say that anything that he can do to lend credence to this debate—he wants to be part of that.

We have a serious issue in the province of Ontario, and I can tell you that Bill 124 does not solve it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Chris Ballard: I'm pleased that I've been able to listen to most of the discussion and the debate today from the opposition, and I've certainly heard the comments from the third party.

We recognize, Speaker, that housing costs are rising dramatically in Ontario and that there aren't enough affordable rental options to meet people's needs. As I've said many times, I can't even walk to my local community mailbox without having a discussion with my neighbours, who say two things: They're aghast at what a house has sold for on the street—because we all recognize that if we were to do the same, we'd have to move somewhere, so it's a bit of a trapped asset that we live in. And the second thing that we talk about is, where will our children live? With a lack of affordable rental options, a lack of affordable housing, where will our children live? It's a real concern and, quite frankly, overshadows so much of the discussion that we hear about affordable housing.

I just want to touch on a few of the key things. What we're attempting to do with this bill, what we will be doing with this bill is—there has to be balance. I know a lot of the challenges that municipalities and developers face when they want to bring new properties to the market. There are a lot of challenges there. At the same time, it's absolutely untenable that so many tenants face shocking, dramatic increases to their rents. We just can't have that. So we need to make sure that we bring forward a bill that's balanced—I think we do this—balancing the rights of tenants, the importance of tenant protection, with some stimulus to see that there is purpose-built rental accommodation going forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I really appreciate the comments from the member. It was quite stunning to hear some of the facts that you had. I mean, I lay the housing crisis completely at the feet of the Liberal government. Taking from what you said, they've created this problem. When you increase municipal review times from 90 to 100 days, when you take development times—and you're now, in Toronto, at 17 months and, in Ajax, at 19

months. We met with developers who told us that, from the time they drive down the highway and see a farm and make that first knock on the door to the time that a subdivision is built there and the first toilet ever flushes, it can be 16 years to 20 years. That's the rule. So all of the red tape and all of the regulation that this government has put in: That's the issue. At least one of the key issues is the fact that there is strangling red tape and regulation from this government, that they have put in.

Another issue that the member from Oxford brought up was the way this government blundered into their rent control. Again, it's a housing crisis that they created, but now they've put a chill on new building of rental units. When you telegraphed your intentions the way they did, it not only put a chill on new development, but it allowed the landlords—as we heard from the member from Oxford—to raise the rents before the laws were announced.

Again, this government has blundered into these things and now are looking for some kind of excuse.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'd like to thank the member from Oxford for his hour lead on Bill 124.

He touched on social housing—which is interesting, coming from the Conservatives, but he did talk about social housing. So I would like to read a piece by Jennifer Pagliaro that was in today's Toronto Star. This is talking about Toronto—so the Liberal stronghold—but this is across the province. It's happening in my community, it's happening in your community, and it's happening in communities across the province.

The article reads, "Toronto Community Housing" Corp., TCHC, "the largest social housing provider in Canada, is planning to close 400 homes next year because of a lack of repair money.

"Those closures, on top of 600 units to be boarded this year, would bring the total number of shuttered homes to 1,000 by the end of 2018." This is social housing. This is for some of our lowest-income earners, the most vulnerable people in this province, and they're going to lose their housing while the government is talking about affordable housing for tenants.

"There are now more than 181,000 people on the wait-list for subsidized housing." Again, it's important to note this is only in Toronto. The number would be a lot larger across the province.

"The fact that hundreds more people will lose their homes was outlined to board members at a meeting Tuesday, just days ahead of a provincial budget announcement that has left city officials seriously concerned the city will be short-changed on social housing."

I know I'm running out of time, so I'd like to—there was a piece here about the Premier: "Unveiling her government's fair housing plan last week, the Premier made no mention of social housing." Then it goes on to say, "Housing minister Chris Ballard's office offered no details when asked about the issue by the Star this week.

"Canada's new government agrees with Ontario that there is a need to invest in housing and infrastructure. We

are ready to strengthen our partnership with the federal government to ensure that our most vulnerable people are not left behind.” And yet, they are not investing in social housing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Oxford: two minutes.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the members from Kitchener–Waterloo and Nipissing for their kind comments.

Obviously, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo was on, the same vein as my presentation was on, that the issue is supply—and, I think, everyone that we talk to. It doesn’t matter what type of housing: It’s the issue of supply.

The member from Windsor West was pointing out the challenge we face in social housing in Toronto when, in fact, in my notes, one part of it was that on average one unit from Toronto housing closes because of the lack of repair. It’s no longer fit for someone to live in. The only reason it’s not being repaired is because they can’t afford to fix it.

1640

I want to make a comment—and I appreciate the comments from the minister. I think we all realized, even in the presentation and the announcement I went to, that the number one issue, again, was supply. When we look at one of the main things that we’ve been talking about here, and that was talked about there, it was changing the rent control. The rent control issue is very important, but that isn’t the problem. We don’t have enough units. It doesn’t matter how much they’re paying. We don’t have enough units for people who need units, whether it’s rental or whether it’s the social housing or whether it’s the regular housing stock.

I want to point out that dealing with rent control in the way that they did goes back to a predecessor to the minister—it was, in fact, a former Minister of Housing for the Liberal government:

“The proposed legislation would also encourage investment in the rental housing market by continuing to exempt units built after 1991 from rent controls. These provisions are and remain significant contributors to a favourable investment climate that would foster the renewal of Ontario’s rental housing supply.”

That’s what the minister said then. That’s the reason he wasn’t doing this. Now the shortage is even worse, and now we’re doing just that, to stop the building altogether.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It’s a pleasure for me to follow my good friend from Oxford in his hour-long lead on this bill. The member from Oxford and I have been in committee Monday and Tuesday going clause-by-clause on a municipal bill, and now we’re doing our lead on a bill that was introduced yesterday by the housing minister.

It is a great honour for me to stand today and comment on this proposed new bill, Bill 124, what the Liberals are calling the Rental Fairness Act. Let me say, right off the

top, provisions in the bill, some of them, are going to make some people very happy, especially those who rent condos and apartments and who don’t see themselves as being able to buy a home any time in the near future. We’re going to finally see an end to the two-tier, unfair rental system in Ontario, where only a minority of tenants were covered under rent control.

My constituents in Windsor–Tecumseh have been waiting for 14 years for the Liberals to keep their promises on aspects of this bill. That being said, I know they’ll be as surprised as I am that after 14 years of inactivity, the Liberals are now in high gear, hyper-speed, full speed ahead. It has taken a coalition of tenants groups, poverty activists—strong-minded people who never gave up—to force this new Liberal awakening. I say thank you to those tenants and their supporters for bringing this pressure on the government and never letting up, even though it’s taken 14 years.

I suppose we can forgive the critics who suggest that the Wynne Liberals needed something to change the dial on that “all hydro all the time” provincial parliamentary channel before they fell even further down the rabbit hole that the pollsters seem to have them in these days. I mean, after all, Speaker, there’s only, what, 16 months until the next provincial election? So now they do something. They had to do something to catch up to the private member’s bill introduced by the NDP member from Toronto–Danforth, bringing in rent control for all tenants. So there was no time to waste in the Liberal campaign box office at party headquarters.

Speaker, you may recall—I’m not sure, but you may recall—a really funny play that was turned into a movie back in the 1960s. The title was *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. It was a comedy. Actually, it was a farce. I can’t help but see some similarities with this bill: its timing, the cast of characters and, of course, the plot.

For a moment, just a moment, let’s think of Bill 124 as “a funny thing happened on the way to the 2018 provincial election.” Of course, the subtitle in brackets could well be “the Wynne Liberals start acting like they’re New Democrats all over again.” It’s only acting, Speaker; Don’t be alarmed. Don’t take it too seriously and don’t try this at home because these are professional actors in the Liberal cast of characters. They’re professionals. They’ve done this before.

They’ve made a career out of running from the left and governing from the right: selling public assets faster than the Conservatives; deleting computer hard drives; tearing up teacher contracts; being charged, going to court and losing; violating the Election Act, supposedly, and being charged again; and, of course, they’ll be facing a couple of more court cases and likely losing again later this year.

So *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum: A farce about wooing the girl next door*. In this case, we’ll change that to “wooing the voters next door.” And what’s a farce without a case of mistaken identity? In this case, the Liberals, with this Bill 124, are hoping

the voters next door will mistake them for New Democrats. On the progressive left of the political spectrum, even though the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals have been governing from the right for the past 14 years, all dressed up in the very finest Conservative Bay Street designer blue—and I don't mean blue suede, Speaker, so don't be swayed.

The farce *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* has the cast members slamming a lot of doors. I guess in this case, the actors in the Liberal cast are hoping the voters won't slam as many doors in their faces when they go door-to-door in the next provincial election.

And, of course, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* has a lot of satirical commentary about social class. So I guess it's fair to suggest that this new, left-leaning Liberal cast of actors has tired of hanging out with their banker buddies and their most generous donors within the rental property sector. They've taken their money, but now they've slammed the door on their donors, and they're trying to reintroduce themselves to the very people they've shunned for the past 14 years: the tenants, those not so fortunate to be in the upper class, those not invited to all of those backstage-pass parties the Liberal actors were hosting for their very most generous donors, the landlords, for the past 14 years.

Back in the early 1960s, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* was produced on Broadway. It won several Tony Awards, best actor, best supporting actor, best director among them. I'm no theatre critic, obviously; I'm just a critic for municipal affairs and housing on behalf of the New Democratic Party of Ontario, but I'm predicting Bill 124, otherwise known as "a funny thing happened on the way to the 2018 election," will be in the running for very similar off-Bay Street awards. I can see Premier Wynne being nominated for best actor, pretending to be a New Democrat at election time; the housing minister may very well win a nomination for best supporting actor, pretending to be a New Democrat at election time; and Pat Sorbara, the Liberal Party 2018 campaign director, as best Liberal director of an election while acting as a New Democrat. Of course, Pat may have to fight for the best director award because Finance Minister Charles Sousa could also be nominated. He must have had some input. He must have given some direction, some change of direction in any event—a misdirection, perhaps. The jury may still be out on Minister Sousa's role but, Speaker, just so you know, I'll get back to Minister Sousa later on.

1650

Regardless, I can see it now, Speaker: They really have had their own red carpet. It's all ready for these awards shows. They can go skipping down the red carpet, arm in arm, entering from stage left—not stage right—hoping there's a real magical wizard behind those curtains, pulling those levers, changing the hydro channel, hoping the voters have all come down with short-term memory loss.

Of course, what's a political satire without a good pun? One of the characters in the original play was called

Erronius. I'd say the Liberal actors have erred here. It's erroneous to think that the voters next door will be fooled by this Liberal cast of characters trying to change their identities at this stage of the play. They've been on stage in their backroom political theatre just off Bay Street for 14 years, acting as Conservatives. No one is seriously going to believe that they're now running as New Democrats. They're playacting, Speaker.

This Bill 124 is a weak attempt at pulling the wool over the eyes of the voter next door, but they might as well pull the curtain down on this little play. Fourteen years has been long enough and June 2018 can't come soon enough for many people in this province—people who have been gouged by their greedy landlords since the 1990s, under the Liberals and the Conservatives. Many of them have been forced out of their homes, forced out of their apartments, because they could no longer pay the increased rents the landlords were demanding. Tenants have been ignored by these Liberal and Conservative political actors forever.

There's really been only one party standing firmly shoulder to shoulder with the tenants in this province; obviously that's the New Democrats. You know that, Speaker, just as I, our leader and our caucus, especially those from the greater Toronto area where tenants have been gouged time and time again, know it. They've been the only ones on top of this issue in coordination with, in conjunction with tenants' groups and social activists, of course. It's no secret that we have been the only party fighting for tenants' rights—the only party fighting for tenants' rights—the only party calling for an end to the two-tier class system among renters in Ontario: those living in apartments built before 1991, who had protection, and the vast majority of tenants in dwellings built since then, who were not covered by rent controls.

Speaker, you may very well recall Premier Bill Davis; I know you do. He had a minority government in 1975. He wanted nothing to do with rent controls or rent review boards, but Stephen Lewis and the New Democrats began growing in the polls, surging in the polls, coming into an election, especially here in Toronto and especially among tenants. Kicking and screaming, Brampton Billy Davis finally flip-flopped. He changed his mind, even though his housing minister at the time, John Rhodes, during that 1975 campaign was quoted as saying, when he was commenting on rent control and rent review boards, "Just because something is said during an election campaign doesn't mean there isn't anything else."

Gee, Speaker, I guess it isn't just the Liberals who pretend to be momentarily progressive heading into an election; the Conservatives have their own history, as we well know.

Speaker, change came about after amendments to something called the unconscionable transactions act—the unconscionable transactions act. This allowed rent review boards to take court action against landlords who were gouging their tenants. So thank you, Stephen Lewis. Thank you, champions in the tenants' rights groups. Thank you, New Democrats, the true political champions

of tenants' rights in Ontario, the only party proven over time, over these many years, to fight for tenants, to stand up to the landlords. The unconscionable transactions act: "unconscionable," a word that could apply here in so many ways.

Let me say here that not all landlords are bad. Not all developers are bad, or all investors. But the bad apples in the industry have certainly opened the door to this action, to this bill, Bill 124. Greed has led to their downfall. Poverty is no crime, but it's criminal to force people into poverty, into homelessness, into shelters, into soup kitchens, onto the streets because you can get away with raising the rent for no reason other than to pad your own pockets. That is criminal. Rent should be affordable, in the same way as child care in not-for-profit centres should be affordable.

As legislators, we should be working with landlords and developers, the development industry, to find more solutions to housing affordability. We can't do this without them as equal partners. They have to know they're not being made scapegoats by us for inaction by successive Liberal and Conservative governments on the housing file.

Speaker, as you very well know, the Liberals have been in power for the past 14 years. During those 14 years, they've had 12 Ministers of Housing or Ministers of Municipal Affairs and Housing. In fact, it was the last cabinet appointment on Premier Wynne's climb up the leadership ladder. Fourteen ministers in 12 years: To me, that's not a good thing. There has been no stability. The way I see it, the Liberals have not made housing a priority for their 14 years in office, and now they're struggling to find ways to patch over the weaknesses, the very problems that they've created.

Don't get me wrong, Speaker. They may have had—and I know they've had—good ministers serving in that portfolio on and off over those 14 years, men and women who may have wanted to fix some of the problems. But the industry, the landlords, the developers were just too powerful, too rich, too generous. They had too many friends at party headquarters and in the Premier's office. Ministers were shuffled in and out of that portfolio before they could get a handle on just how bad the problems were.

I don't get it. Housing should be a right in Ontario. Housing should be a right in Canada. Safe, clean, affordable housing should be a right in this great province, in this fantastic country of ours with all of its riches, just like safe, clean drinking water should be a right for us all no matter where we live in Ontario. Yet successive Conservative and Liberal governments have let us down on so many fronts. During the years that the Mike Harris and Ernie Eves Conservatives were in power, there were six housing ministers in eight years: a total of 18 Conservative and Liberal housing ministers in 22 years. Nothing to be proud of. Nothing to boast about. Who was looking after the rights of tenants? Where were the rent controls for all? Where were our federal partners? Where are they now?

Speaker, we need a national housing policy, and we've needed one for a very, very long time. Homelessness emerged as a highly visible problem in Canada back in the 1990s. Here in Ontario, a critical factor, according to those who make a living researching such issues—people such as Carey Doberstein and Alison Smith—a critical factor was when the Harris Conservatives declared war on the welfare system, just as the Liberals in Ottawa were cutting long-standing affordable housing programs.

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Just so you know, Speaker, in Canada, more than a quarter of a million of us experience homelessness each and every year. More than 35,000 people are homeless on any given night. That's even with 600,000 units of social housing here in Canada. Of course, the vast majority of that housing stock dates back to the years following the Second World War and up until the 1990s.

Speaker, again, just so you know, when my friend Mr. Brown, the leader of Ontario's official opposition, was a federal member of Parliament, his leader, Stephen Harper, allocated \$119 million to a homelessness partnering strategy—\$119 million.

But before my Conservative friends hurt themselves by patting themselves on the back too vigorously, they should know that, at the same time as he doled out less than \$120 million for the homeless, Mr. Harper—I'm sure with the blessing of Mr. Brown and the Conservative caucus—was spending on an annual basis \$268 million on the communications staff for the Prime Minister's office—\$268 million on communications staff. Almost \$120 million for the homelessness, almost \$270 million on the communications staff—you talk about a miscommunication. What's wrong with that picture? We know the priorities of the Conservatives on the housing file. Let us not be fooled by them either.

Only New Democrats have been consistent in standing shoulder to shoulder with tenants in Ontario, with the homeless in Ontario. So here's a big shout-out to the member from Toronto—Danforth, Mr. Tabuns. He no sooner introduced a private member's bill calling for an immediate end to the two-tiered rent control system for tenants in Ontario than the Liberals tripped over themselves—some maybe even spraining their ankles—pasting this bill together. They were missing in action for 14 years, invisible on rent control for 14 years, and then—bada bing bada boom—we have Bill 124.

Thank you, Peter Tabuns. Thank you for working with the tenants and listening to the tenants and bringing their concerns, their hopes and their fears here to the floor of the Ontario Legislature. Thank you for scaring these Liberal actors into finally doing something about rent control in Ontario.

This bill, Bill 124, has created a buzz in the provincial media, along with other ideas—and there's lots of ideas, and I welcome ideas from the Liberals on the housing file and the rent control file. The Liberals are considering a deal with the crisis in affordable housing, so with your permission—I know there are lots of ideas—allow me to enter into the record a few comments made by your close

friend, Speaker, Martin Regg Cohn, the Queen's Park columnist for the Toronto Star. It was in the Star this past Saturday with the headline-grabbing "Papa Bear Wakes Up from Housing Hibernation." It caught my attention.

Speaker, I've been telling you this afternoon how the Liberals were asleep at the switch for 14 years on the housing file. As I mentioned, I would be returning to Mr. Sousa's starring role. Here is how Martin Regg Cohn tells it:

"While Toronto burned, Queen's Park slept.

"Rather than douse the flames of our overheated housing market, Ontario's lumbering bear of a treasurer, Charles Sousa, went into hibernation.

"Nine months ago, as British Columbia sprang into action with a tax targeting foreign buyers, Sousa retreated into his ministerial lair. And chilled."

In the interests of time, I will edit portions of the column which speak to the 15% tax in BC that stopped foreign buyers in their tracks.

We continue with:

"Sousa periodically emerged from his slumber, rubbed his eyes, scratched his ears, yawned his yawn and pronounced from his ministerial mount:

"Not enough data. Can't say for sure. Will give it a think. Let me lay down awhile. Will reassess when I wake up."

So now, the bear has introduced not a foreign buyer tax but a non-resident speculation tax. I guess we're going to hear about it tomorrow, Speaker. I wait with bated breath, as I know you do as well.

The Star columnist wonders why it took so long: "Last summer, Toronto homes were up a mere 18%.... Now, they are up 33%" and the market in Vancouver has cooled. Now, when public opinion polls show Liberal support declining in inverse relation to housing prices, Martin Regg Cohn writes, "Perhaps the Liberals were too terrified, to the point of paralysis, of bringing in another pre-election tax? Remember the retreat on road tolls?....

"Even Tim Hudak," Cohn writes, "heaped praise on Sousa's plans this week."

Mr. Hudak, Speaker, in case you've forgotten, was the former leader of the Ontario Conservatives until Mr. Brown left Mr. Harper's side to oust him and take over as leader of the official opposition. I tell you, the Conservatives and the Liberals are joined at the hip.

"Foreign speculators be damned and banned," says the Star. Meanwhile, domestic speculators can carry on as before, or, as Cohn puts it, "give us another few seasons of hibernating, procrastinating and pontificating until we sort that one out."

It wasn't that long ago—and I'm sure you've read the same stuff that I've been reading on housing. What I was reading in the local media was that the jump in housing prices in Toronto was more of a problem because of domestic speculators than foreign buyers. I recall that vividly. So I'm a bit confused with the way the Liberal plan is unfolding on this point.

Not so is Martin Regg Cohn, however. He says, "All that said, this is more than a mere Band-Aid. It buys us

time, breathing room and manoeuvring room, in hopes that an overheated market will cool down enough, and calm down enough, to heal itself, as Vancouver did."

But Speaker, here is the part of the column that I really like:

"The same cannot be said for rent control, the other part of the shelter equation targeted by the Liberal government this week. Fearing the opposition NDP would gain traction from recurring stories of tenants being hosed by heartless landlords amid low vacancy rates, Papa Bear responded by crying Uncle Bear.

"Henceforth, landlords holding post-1991 apartments—exempted until now from rent control—will also be restricted to inflationary increases (unless they petition for repair money from a tribunal)."

I say to Mr. Tabuns again, the member for Toronto-Danforth, thank you. Thank you to each and every one of the tenants' rights groups in this province and my fellow New Democrats. The Liberals couldn't risk standing by and watching the NDP get the credit for standing up for tenants' rights. Fiddling while Rome burned over there; indeed, A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum and on the way to the next provincial election.

I had a conversation, right here, as a matter of fact, last June—it could have been the end of May—with the former Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Mr. McMeekin, just a few days before he stepped down from cabinet. We were discussing the 1991 cut-off on rent control, and we were tossing around ideas—not creating back-hallway policy or anything like that, just two guys, two friends, kicking around ideas. We sort of thought the very least that could be done would be to update the 1991 control date to 2001, and every year after that, add another year to it. So the following year would be rent control for buildings built after 2002, 2003 and so on.

1710

Like I say, that would have been the very least that should have been done after, at that time, 13 years of inactivity on the Liberal housing file. So imagine my surprise when last week, I heard the surprising but very welcoming news that rent control would now cover every unit in Ontario. I have to ask: What led to the ministry, what prompted the minister, what motivated the Premier after 14 years to finally have the Liberals get serious about tenants' rights? That's the \$64,000 question—oh, wait a minute; I've dated myself. There are going to be people in here who don't know about that old game show on the black-and-white TV. Some of us do; some of us don't. Whatever answer you come up with, the bottom line in this part of the bill will be an exceptional gain for those who rent apartments and condos in the province.

When you look at the media coverage on the rents and the affordable housing over the past few years, it's nothing but doom and gloom, headlines such as "Waiting list for affordable housing hits an all-time high—more than 165,000 families." The time spent on the waiting lists: in Peel, more than eight years; 7.5 years in York; and 6.7 in Toronto.

As we've heard already from the member from Windsor West, the subsidized units of social housing

owned by the city of Toronto need more than \$2.5 billion in repairs. The city doesn't have the money. They will be closing more than 400 of the units in the worst condition this year. They may have to shut down 7,500 units in the next few years. They have 180,000 people on the waiting list for subsidized housing. In Toronto, there are 180,000 people on the waiting list. The population of Prince Edward Island is only 146,000—146,000 in the entire province of Prince Edward Island, and 180,000 on the waiting list for subsidized housing in the city of Toronto.

We are in a housing crisis. We've been in a housing crisis in this province for a very, very long time. The Liberals have been in power for a very, very long time: the past 14 years.

In 2013, Speaker—I know you're not going to enjoy this—the Wynne Liberals, these very same Wynne Liberals, cut \$129 million in annual funding for Toronto's social housing program. And they wonder why—they actually wonder why—we're in an affordable housing crisis in Toronto and in Ontario.

By the way, as much as I like the bill, there is nothing in here to increase the supply of affordable housing. It does nothing to reduce the ever-growing waiting list for affordable housing. It does nothing to prevent the loss of social housing units in need of immediate repair.

The rent control portion of Bill 124 is great, absolutely great, but it is but one piece in a complicated puzzle in the crisis of affordable housing in Ontario, a puzzle that has been compounded by 14 years of Liberal inactivity on the housing file. It doesn't do anything for those people who were hit by huge rent increases up until last Thursday, when the Premier first announced her intentions to table this bill.

Speaker, as you know, I represent one of the Windsor ridings. Ms. Gretzky represents Windsor West; I represent Windsor–Tecumseh. Our housing prices jumped 8.5% over the past year—nothing like Toronto. Windsor and Essex county is one of Ontario's best-kept affordable housing secrets. Our average homes are now selling for \$190,000—nothing like Toronto. The average condo in Windsor goes for \$160,000. Our prices are among the lowest in Canada. Compare that to London, where the aggregate price for a home was just under \$315,000, up more than 12% from a year ago.

But in this part of the province, Whitby prices were up by 19%, more than 23% in Markham, nearly 26% in Vaughan, 28% in Oshawa and going on 32% in Richmond Hill.

Speaker, I met an amazing woman here in Toronto last weekend. Her name is Bonnie Briggs. She lives in Parkdale–High Park. Bonnie has been championing the Toronto Tiny Houses Project. She says, and I agree with her 100%, that everyone has the basic human right to a safe, secure and affordable home. She is concentrating on the homeless population. Bonnie knows that Toronto could use as many as 15 new homeless shelters, so her alternative is a tiny house: small, simple, compact. It could be as small as 65 square feet or as large as 400. She says to put them in laneways, put them in alleys, put

them in parking lots—it doesn't matter. She says you could even put them on wheels. Bonnie says these tiny homes would get people off the streets and out of the shelters. They would empower the homeless and restore their dignity. The homeless would have their own independence and live in a safe, clean, secure home of their own.

I say we all could take a lesson from Bonnie Briggs. This Liberal government would do well to listen to Bonnie and anyone else with ideas on how we put more pieces of this affordable housing puzzle together.

Housing prices haven't been the only issue causing the Liberals to have fits this year. As we've talked about time and time again, rents in the Toronto area have been jumping every which way.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mostly up.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Yes, mostly up and up and up—going up by 30%, 60% and nearly 100%. This was at the same time that the average price of a single-family home was going through the roof, smashing new records every month. Those 14 years of dithering on the housing file were coming to a head. It demanded a huge policy shift. It couldn't be ignored anymore, especially since Mr. Tabuns was out in front calling for fairness in rent controls on behalf of the tenants.

The media hasn't been nice to the Liberals for a long time on the housing file. In the *Globe and Mail* last October, Margaret Wenté laid the blame at the front door of Queen's Park. In her writing, she said, "The high cost of housing is a huge issue for young families. Population pressures, foreign investors, land shortages and greedy developers usually get the blame. But there's another culprit: government. The affordability crisis in the greater Toronto area is a direct result of provincial government policy. To put it bluntly, the Liberals at Queen's Park—the vast majority of whom already have nice houses—are shafting the millennials." Margaret Wenté, *Globe and Mail*, last October.

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Comments such as those brought the Liberals to a slow boil. Finally, after 14 years, rent controls and the crisis in affordable housing had made it from the front door to the front burner here at Queen's Park.

To fit this puzzle together, we need another bunch of options. We have to engage the co-operative housing sector in a major way. We need to create more affordable housing, and one way of making sure the pieces to this puzzle fit better together is to follow the tested and proven co-op approach to affordable housing.

Again, Speaker, we need to engage the federal government in this discussion. How often have we heard in this House, time and time again, the Premier saying that they didn't get anywhere under the old Conservative government in Ottawa, that they didn't have a willing partner, a co-operative partner? But then she said that now that we have a new government in Ottawa, a new federal government, led by a friend of the Ontario government, somebody she helped get elected in Ontario. We have a new partnership, a new working relationship.

We are still waiting to see the results of that, because we need federal help. We need federal partners. We need a federal, a national as well as a provincial housing strategy, and the time for that is now.

The feds need to renew their subsidy programs to the co-ops, or we are going to see more and more people forced from their homes and into homeless shelters—if there's any room in the shelters, because they're already overcrowded as we stand here today. We need more shelters until we find all the answers, until we fit all the pieces. We find all the solutions to this crisis in affordable housing.

Rent controls are a good start. Thank you. Liberals, for Bill 124, but we also need more money for housing co-ops, more money and new money and new opportunities for organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, for tiny homes—I told you, Speaker, what Bonnie Briggs has been saying about tiny homes—and whatever other good ideas come along.

Speaker, let's explore Bill 124, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act. Mr. Ballard, the housing minister, introduced the bill here in the House on Monday afternoon. I must say that that really doesn't give us a lot of time to examine it before we have to speak to it, but it is what it is. After all, God bless, the Liberals took 14 years to paste it together, then gave us a day or two for us to tell them what a great job they've done. So hey, you guys, you did okay.

I think it is great that the voices of the tenants have finally been heard, that no units, regardless of how new the building is, will be exempted from rent control. This bill will put an end to the unconscionable gouging by greedy landlords and investors.

Speaker, when it comes to opinion polls, as you well know, when people are asked how they rate professional occupations, usually reporters and politicians are ranked right down near the bottom, just barely above greedy, rent-gouging landlords.

I've said it before: Not all landlords are like that. Mine certainly isn't. I have a great landlord. He has invested in a condo at Yonge and Bloor. I've lived there for four years, and I have no complaints. He listens to what I have to say. We discuss his request for an annual increase based on inflation. Once, because of problems with a scarcity of hot water from time to time and the elevators being out of service from time to time, he agreed with me that for one year we'd remain at the previous year's level. I know that doesn't happen very much. I don't expect it will happen again, to be honest with you. Just because it happened once doesn't mean it's going to happen again. But I have been fortunate. Like I said, I have a great landlord.

Unfortunately, I am an exception. Many other people have been hit with outrageous rent increases because of supply and demand. Vacancies are low, demand is high and too many greedy landlords have jacked up their rents knowing if their current tenants can't pay, they'll have to move and then they can jack up the rates even more and someone else will eventually pay the new rates—unconscionable.

Bill 124 seems to put an end to that. Rent hikes will be pegged at the annual rate of inflation and capped at 2.5%. If landlords wish to charge more, they first have to do major renovations on their units. Everyone is going to have to sign a written lease, a standard document, easy to understand. My existing written lease is grandfathered, but new leases will be standardized and easily understood.

More scrutiny will be paid to eviction cases. As we know, as we have seen, some landlords force people out under one pretense or another. We heard it from the member from Kitchener–Waterloo earlier today, talking about somebody who wrote her a letter saying, “They said the family was going to move in; you have to move out,” and then, lo and behold, the family didn't move in. They sold it—sold the place.

These landlords, when they get you out, have an empty unit. They jack up that rent as high as the market will sustain. That practice, by the way, is called vacancy decontrol. As a matter of fact, my very good friend Mr. Tabuns, the member from Toronto–Danforth, spoke to that issue in the House just yesterday. Mr. Tabuns, as we all should recognize, is the in-house expert on rental matters. He warned about the practice. He suggested it is something that should have been addressed in Bill 124 and it hasn't been, at least not yet. I hope the minister is listening. I hope when this bill gets to committee, we will close some of the loopholes.

In Toronto–Danforth, Mr. Tabuns said tenants report that they deal with landlords who cut services, consistently push for above-guideline rent increases and carry on incredibly disruptive construction as a way of demoralizing tenants, discouraging them and getting them to move out. Unfortunately, the member for Toronto–Danforth reported, these tactics have proven successful in his riding. People say the units their friends and families used to live in are now being rented out to new people at 30% to 40% above what the rents used to be.

This is a huge loophole in Bill 124. It needs to be closed. It should be closed immediately, otherwise we'll see more and more tenants being pushed out as landlords jump on this opportunity. Mr. Tabuns makes a very good point, as he always does. We all know there's a real estate bonanza going on in the greater Toronto area. Some people call it the Wild, Wild West when it comes to greedy landlords and speculators.

Mr. Tabuns has been working with several tenant groups on these issues, and he's been doing that, Speaker, as you well know, for many, many years. When Mr. Tabuns speaks on these issues, we in this House do well to listen to what he has to say. This loophole needs to be plugged. There's no excuse not to do it. The fight for real rent control is not over. It won't be over until the Wynne Liberals close this loophole that Mr. Tabuns has brought to our attention.

We can't afford to sit back and dither and wait another 14 years. Tenants deserve to know that their legislators, each and every one of us, have their backs. Tenants shouldn't come second best to landlords out to make a

financial killing in the rental markets. Change it. Do the right thing. Announce that change is under way. Give vulnerable tenants something to hang on to: an ironclad promise that change is on the way.

1730

I was reading a story yesterday that someone sent me, from an outlet called the Parkdale Villager. It's a story written by Hilary Caton. It's about a rent strike that frustrated tenants have organized for the 1st of May. It seems there's a company, a landlord, called MetCap Living. They manage nine or more apartment buildings in the Parkdale neighbourhood of Toronto. Rents there are scheduled to go up in five of those buildings, but the tenants in those buildings have been complaining for years about their deteriorating living conditions, and apparently little has been done about them, according to the story I was reading. The story claims that for the past four years tenants in these buildings have been fighting bedbugs, mice, roaches, and have put up with constant construction, and the water has been shut off frequently. There was a bit of a repair blitz, and now the cost of those renovations is being passed on to the tenants. The landlord gave notice that rents would be going up 3%, on top of the 1.5% that was allowed back when the notice was issued a little while ago. Many of the tenants are fighting back by saying they'll be withholding their rent—a rent strike, if you will.

Speaker, apparently the neighbourhood is undergoing some gentrification and younger people are moving in. This has displaced some of the older, long-time residents who are forced out because of the increases in their rent. Some tenants call this corporate tyranny, according to this story in the Parkdale Villager.

The renovations didn't resolve all of the complaints. Some people still complain about the conditions in the buildings and say that not only are they living in inhumane conditions, but they're being charged more to live in them—unbelievable.

It will be interesting to see what happens on the 1st of May. Until then, as the saying goes, we'll have to wait and see if the rent strike succeeds. If that rent strike succeeds and the word gets out about it, I wonder, would it spread to other neighbourhoods in the Toronto area or elsewhere in the province of Ontario?

Bill 124: I believe that landlords with only a handful of units will benefit from all of these changes. The big boys, of course, have teams of lawyers who already know the ins and outs of the landlord and tenant act.

I expect we'll hear—in fact, if I have time, I'll read you some of the responses to the bill already—a flood of criticism from the big landlords, their minions and their paid economists. We'll hear doom-and-gloom predictions. But at the end of the day, tenants will be protected, rents will stabilize, and people won't be forced from their homes in the neighbourhoods they choose to live in. At least on paper, that's the plan.

No doubt the developers and the landlords and their friends will be writing letters to the editor and hiring economists, as I say, to say what a terrible idea rent

control is. But you won't convince the tenants who will be protected under this legislation. You won't convince those who had no protection at all before this legislation. Is it a perfect solution? Maybe not. Will it help? I think it will.

There was an editorial in the Toronto Star on the 20th of March. The headline was "Renters Need Protection." I'll read from that editorial.

"Bidding wars. Lineups around the block for viewings. Prices doubling.

"No, we're not talking about the hot housing market, but a renter's nightmare.

"How tight is the rental market in the Toronto area? It's so tight that some landlords are making use of the so-called 1991 'loophole' in the Residential Tenancies Act to hike rents by hundreds of dollars a month, forcing tenants out of their homes.

"Happily, relief may be in sight. New Democrat MPP Peter Tabuns plans to introduce a private member's bill at Queen's Park on Monday that would close the loophole, which exempts landlords who own units in any buildings constructed after 1991 from annual rent-control guidelines.

"Even better, housing minister Chris Ballard says he, too, plans to 'address unfair rises in rental costs by delivering substantive rent control reform in Ontario'"—which brings us to Bill 124.

"It's about time," the editorial says. "The loophole should have been closed long ago. It has created an unfair two-tier rental market for tenants for decades"—of course, it doesn't say this, but under Liberal and Conservative governments. "For example, landlords who own units in buildings constructed before 1991 can raise rents by only 1.5% this year.

"For owners of units in buildings constructed after 1991, it's the Wild West. That's because the overall vacancy rate is only 1.3%, the lowest in seven years, giving tenants little choice but to pay up.

"How bad is it? One senior living on a fixed income saw her rent jump by \$400 a month. A millennial saw her rent for a one-bedroom condo jump by \$1,000 a month.

"Ironically, the loophole was introduced by the Mike Harris government in 1996," according to this Star editorial "ostensibly to encourage developers to build rental units. It didn't work. Last year, for example, 18,000 condo units were built while only 1,700 rental units were put on the market.

"Closing the 1991 loophole will help tenants in the short run, but in the long term consumers need the government to create other incentives for developers to build more rental units....

Indeed, in Toronto developers are building 27,812 rental units, almost triple the number a year ago....

Government can do more to encourage rental unit construction. For example, municipal property taxes for apartment buildings have already been frozen and the province now requires municipalities to allow homeowners to build secondary suites.

“There are other possible incentives that would encourage the construction of rental units. Cities could forgo certain fees through the approval process, for example, or provide builders with tax breaks to construct purpose-built rental units.

“Of course, even if these measures are implemented it will take time to get new rental stock on the market. But closing the 1991 loophole can provide immediate relief. Premier Kathleen Wynne’s government should support Tabuns’s bill or bring in its own to protect all tenants”—which, of course, as you know, is why we’re here. It’s Bill 124. Thank you again for bringing that bill forward, prompted, of course, by Mr. Tabuns, the New Democrat from Toronto–Danforth.

I’ll probably close, Speaker; I know I’m running out of time. I’ll try to get more of another column by Martin Regg Cohn. This one is from March 22. “The debate over rent control is a perennial in Ontario politics, as predictable as the election cycle. In today’s tight housing market, with a close political contest looming, history is about to repeat itself.

“For better or for worse.

“Overheated housing markets reduce the turnover from families that would typically move up to starter homes, freezing out future tenants. That’s when the news cycle, the political cycle, and economic cycles come into play.

1740

“Reclaiming the moral high ground, the NDP has proposed a law to level the rental playing field: It wants to close a so-called loophole that exempts any post-1991 apartments from controls, arguing that tenants in newer rental stock are vulnerable to extortion from rapacious landlords.

“Defending their political turf, the governing Liberals insist they get it—and claim they’re on it.”

Speaker, they are on it. We have Bill 124. If it works—and I hope it does—we’ll see all renters in Ontario treated fairly, treated equally—no more two tiers; no more second class. It has taken them 14 years. It has taken the private member’s bill of the member from Toronto–Danforth, Mr. Tabuns, to get them motivated, to get them in tune with what the editorial writers have been saying, what the tenants in Ontario have been calling for, forever—it seems like forever—ever since that 1991 clause was inserted.

People have expected equal treatment. They expected that their legislators, the government of the day, the Liberals, would have been listening to them. They were disappointed, seriously disappointed, for the past 14 years.

But now it’s here. It’s a bill we should all support. It’s a bill that is a long time in coming, but it’s a bill that brings with it fairness for the tenants. They’re not going to make a lot of friends in the development industry. They’re going to lose some of their friends in the rental providers industry, in the sector—the landlords—those who build apartments, who have donated to the campaigns.

But, hey, the bill is here. I say, let’s support it.

Thank you for your time this afternoon, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Chris Ballard: I’m delighted to hear the member of the third party, first of all, thanking us for Bill 124 and saying that his party would be supporting it—really interesting remarks, especially the satirical opening about bears and things like that. I was thinking that it should be perhaps nominated for a Giller, perhaps under “fiction.” I’m not too sure.

I’m glad that the member was talking about the Star editorial, because it highlights something that I wanted to highlight, to talk about too.

Simply closing the so-called 1991 rent loophole was not enough for us, and it hasn’t been. When I became minister in June, one of the first conversations I had with staff was around revising the whole Residential Tenancies Act—a more robust picture. But I also asked them to look at closing that loophole.

We toured Ontario, talking to tenants, to landlords, to builders, to municipal partners, to get a better sense of what was required as we updated the Residential Tenancies Act. I can tell you some of the highlights, in the final 40 seconds.

We will align property tax rates for purpose-built rentals with other residential properties like condos and houses. We’ve already offered provincially owned lands. We’ll be offering provincially owned lands for affordable housing; incentivizing builders to build new rental units—the Premier mentioned two major pieces of property here in Ontario, and I know there are others outside of the area; a targeted \$125-million, five-year program to target municipal development charge rebates; and setting up a dedicated team to work with developers and municipalities to remove barriers to development.

Mr. Speaker, there’s a lot more to this bill than removing the 1991 cap.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: It’s my pleasure to have the opportunity to comment on Bill 124, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, and on the speech from the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

When it comes to rental affordability, it really all comes down to supply and demand. If there’s not enough supply, the prices go up too much and there is not enough vacancy, so it makes for a very tight market.

I think back to when I was at Ryerson. My favourite professor there was an economics professor, W.H. Pope—Harry Pope—who twice ran for the NDP, I mention to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, in his youth, when he was very idealistic. By the time he got to teaching us, I still remember that rent control was a big deal. The Davis government, in a minority situation, had brought in rent controls. He was showing us, through supply and demand, how rent control just made the situation worse. It created a tighter market and made the whole situation worse. He was right. As well intentioned

as rent control might be, as has already been proven many times, it just makes the situation worse. It took many years for rent controls from those days to create a very tight supply that has taken many years to get out of.

So as well intentioned as the member is in wanting to maintain low increases for tenants, this will simply restrict supply and make the situation worse. I think we've learned that in the past, and we're about to repeat that again with this legislation that's going to make, especially in my riding, landlords with one or two units just not want to get into the business, not want to rent accommodations, and tighten the supply even further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I want to commend the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for an excellent lead on this issue, the Rental Fairness Act. Ironically, as we are debating Bill 124 here in this place at this time, city council, not very far away from here, is debating and discussing the needed closure of 134 townhome units at Firgrove. Jennifer Pagliaro, who is a reporter, is reporting that city council must now close these homes, 134 units, because they are beyond repair, following years of underfunding by this government. So when the minister stands in his place and says they didn't think closing the rental loophole was important enough for 14 years and criticizes us for the investments that we made in 1990 around affordable housing, it strikes one as being truly and utterly hypocritical.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: You can't say that. Withdraw.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): No, you'll sit down first.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo will withdraw.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I withdraw.

It stands to reason, though, as city council is closing 134 townhomes because of underfunding by this government—Toronto Community Housing manager Sheila Penny has stated that they will be slated for revitalization, except there isn't any money for revitalization. There hasn't been any money from this government to maintain the current housing stock in the province of Ontario or to address the affordable housing crisis in this province.

I think it is incredible that as 181,000 people—over 14 years, that list has only grown. This minister now comes in with a piece of legislation that does not address the needed supply of affordable housing in the province of Ontario—so disconnected from the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: I'm happy to rise to join the debate. I want to thank the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for his entertaining and very informative speech for more than an hour.

I want to just mention a couple of things. Since I was elected for Ottawa–Vanier, I've had the privilege of working with the Ministry of Housing and the Minister of

Housing, and I was impressed with the fact that we are looking at a range of options to respond to the housing issue in its complexity. There have been many investments to support social housing, and there will continue to be.

There are also a lot of new policies about inclusionary zoning that have been put forward. When they're good ideas, we should put them forward.

Finally, I think this bill which is now in front of us is the one that we must absolutely support because it does provide a needed solution for people who are facing a real crisis in rent increase. That's the reason why this bill does propose to extend rent control to the units that were not covered previously. We must remember that the exemptions that were proposed in 1991 did not lead to an increase of investment in rental units. Indeed, it did not at all. We now have only about one million units that are covered by rent control and 250,000 that are not. The point of this bill is to make sure that all tenants are treated equally.

The bill also deals with security of tenure and many of the irritants that have come up in the conversation for both landlords and tenants. It's a bill that proposes a way to the future, responding to some irritants that currently affect tenants, and it should be supported.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Windsor–Tecumseh has two minutes.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I want to thank all of those who just spoke to what I had to say for the past hour.

The housing minister said, when he took office a year ago, he wanted this loophole closed. Well, since the ministry has dithered for the past year—let alone the past 14 years—we've seen millennials hit with \$1,000-a-month rent increases. We've seen seniors hit with \$300- or \$400-a-month rent increases for the past year since he's been minister, and nothing has been done to close this loophole.

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka talked about supply and demand and how you should be able to charge whatever you can get, which is unconscionable to some people. If you're going to charge so much that you're going to force people out onto the streets or into homeless shelters, that is not what you should be doing.

I think he quoted a former economist that he went to school with who said he once supported the NDP. I know my good friend the labour minister once supported the NDP. I mean, people do evolve in their political thinking. I expect you'll be back here with us one day, and I hope it is not in the not-too-distant future, sir.

My good friend from Kitchener–Waterloo reminded us about what's going on at the city of Toronto today. They're talking about closing—as I stand here in the House right now, they're talking about closing 129 units—townhomes. One of the reasons: The Wynne Liberals, the Premier, in 2013, cut \$129 million that used to go to Toronto to help subsidize social housing. She cut it out of their budget. She doesn't do that anymore. That's why they're closing the homes over there.

My good friend from Ottawa–Vanier: thank you. You mentioned inclusionary zoning. Unfortunately, it's a poison pill. They've got it in there. You either do inclusionary zoning or section 37. Toronto won't touch it. They need section 37. Thank you all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.
Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: No.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1753.

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