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Jeudi
11 mai 2017

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Thursday 11 May 2017

Jeudi 11 mai 2017

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2017 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 8, 2017, on the amendment to the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's a real honour today to stand to talk about the budget, government motion number 20. Mr. Speaker, I am so proud to be a part of this government, which has brought forward what I believe is probably the best budget that I have seen in the almost six years that I've been here in the Legislature. When we look right across the country, North America and around the world, Ontario is a jurisdiction that is positioned for real success.

This is the first balanced budget since 2008. We know what happened back in 2008-09. We had the worst economic recession since the Great Depression here in Canada. We had to make a strategic decision as a government. We had to decide if we were going to follow other governments around the world and make cuts and go to austerity measures, or to make massive investments.

I just want to say, I will be sharing some of my time today with the Minister of Housing.

We made a decision back in 2008-09 to position ourselves for success in the future by making the right types of investments into things like infrastructure, making investments into education, both JK to 12 and also post-secondary, and really investing into our economy.

Without question, we're seeing the rewards of those investments a decade later. The unemployment rate here in Ontario is at 5.8%. This is the lowest since 2001. Our economy has grown substantially. We're outpacing G7 nations. It's actually quite interesting; if we look at the average annual per cent in real GDP growth from 2014-16 and compare ourselves to Italy, Japan, France, all of Canada, Germany, the US, the UK—Ontario is at 2.6%. Our closest competitor on that list is the UK at 2.4%. So we've done quite well. We've built our economy. We've built the base necessary to continue to grow. If you look around the province, you don't have to be an economist

to understand that there's growth here in Ontario. You can see it all around us.

Our employment numbers are up. Since the recession, Ontarians have created almost 700,000 new jobs. This is quite remarkable. If you compare what's happening here in Ontario to other jurisdictions, there is no question that we've outperformed most jurisdictions in North America and around the world.

We've made a strategic decision to continue to invest—into health care, into education, into infrastructure—because we know that this is a good place for us to make those types of investments. And I just have to say—and this is an important piece—we could have made a decision to make cuts and to cut back in health care, to cut back in education. We decided not to do that.

If you compare our track record to other governments like the Harper government that made massive cuts—I was involved in the literacy and basic skills sector. The first cut was about \$17 million across the country in literacy and basic skills. When you think about literacy and basic skills, that's one of the areas that you need to invest more into, to make sure that people have the right types of skill sets in order to embrace the new economy.

Even though the Harper government went into massive debt—I believe it was a \$54-billion deficit—they continued to make cuts in many, many areas. They weren't investing in the right places. When you look at, for example, our track record as a government in comparison to previous governments, even during the worst of times we made the right types of investments in order to help continue to grow the economy, and we've seen many rewards from that.

So, with a balanced budget, we now have the opportunity to make even more investments into the areas that Ontarians value, areas that align with their value sets, like health care and education. We're going to make an additional investment into health care, an \$11.5-billion investment into health care over the next three years. When I was in my community and talking about the budget—the member from Willowdale and myself did a budget breakfast—this was an area that people were so proud of: the fact that, as Ontarians, we could make the right types of investments into health care. This was something that I was very proud to present to my community.

Within that health care investment, there is an area of investment that is particularly focused on young people. I know many people have called my office to talk to me about this investment because they see it as something that's good, and it's gotten a lot of media. I still need to

mention it because I believe that this is probably one of the proudest investments I look at, as a government, that we've made in the last few years.

As the Minister of Children and Youth Services here in the province of Ontario and as a former school board trustee, but also as a father, as an uncle and as a neighbour to many families that have children—the fact that we've made this historical investment into providing medicine for young people 24 and under. To me, it's one of those things that you do as a politician, and one day we'll all walk out of this building and we'll leave this behind. It's one of those things that I could look back at and be proud of as a government, as a politician, to make those types of investments, because it speaks to my value set as a Canadian. I'm hoping that we could leverage this and continue to build a national pharmacare system here in this country that's aligned with our universal health care system so all people have access to medicine.

This actual investment will cover over 4,400 drugs for young people. Imagine, you have a young person—I grew up and I had a pretty severe case of asthma. My father and my mother were both blue-collar workers. My mother cleaned buildings; my father fixed washing machines. That type of medicine can add up. If you don't have medical coverage, you can have inhalers that are over \$100. Imagine a jurisdiction in the world where a young person can walk into a pharmacy with a prescription in one hand—obviously with their parents with them—and their OHIP card in the other and get that prescription at no cost.

0910

This is something that I hope the NDP, who have always stood up for the little guy—they're always there saying that they're standing up for the little guy. I hope when this budget comes forward in this House and it's voted upon, that they will stand with us to make sure young people here in the province of Ontario have the opportunity to get the medicine that they need and they deserve so they can live long healthy lives and contribute back to society and reach their full potential, because we know if you don't have the right type of medicine, how can you perform well in school. How can you perform well in life? I'm calling on the NDP to support this budget this year because of this big game-changer. It is a huge game-changer. This is something that is going to change the status quo not only here in Ontario, but I think is going to set a bar that other provinces and territories may look at to try to achieve.

I don't know if the Conservatives will be supporting this. I'm not sure if they're very supportive of this. I haven't heard their public position on this. I'd be very interested to hear what the leader of the official opposition thinks of this particular piece within the budget. But if the Progressive Conservative Party here in Ontario believes in supporting young people, believes in supporting families, believes in building the type of Ontario that we can all be proud of, I call on them to support this budget, because this is, again, a game-changer.

We're going to make more investments into health care. We've got an Ontario dementia strategy. We have a

strategy to help people live at home longer and improvements in maternal care.

But in addition to those great health care investments, we're going to make more investments into education. As a former school board trustee—and you know, what I love about this side of the House is that you've got school board trustees all around. I've got a lot of school board trustees around me. The President of the Treasury Board is a former school board trustee. The member from Guelph is a former school board trustee, and of course, we have—

Hon. Liz Sandals: The Premier.

Hon. Michael Coteau: —the Premier of Ontario. Madam Speaker, I'm not going to pull you into this debate, but I just need to mention that you and I served at the Toronto District School Board, and we know how important it is to continue to invest in education.

I'm so proud that we're going to continue to invest in schools; we're going to build more schools. You constantly hear the opposition talk about how we're closing schools; we're closing schools; we're closing schools. Then the Minister of Education, who sits right here, has constantly reminded them that we've built over 800 schools since we've been in power. There's an additional \$16 billion over the next 10 years that will be invested into building schools—\$1.2 billion for school repairs and renewal over the next two years as well.

There's more work to be done. Yesterday I was in Timmins, Ontario. I met with the chiefs from the First Nations that are part of northern Ontario. I listened to them, and one of the issues that came up was education. We have \$200 million that will be invested into indigenous education over the next three years.

We're going to continue to reduce class sizes. People will forget that this was the government that reduced class sizes, that invested in full-day kindergarten—which on average saves a family, if they have one kid in full-day kindergarten, over \$7,000 in child care. So we're the government that keeps investing into education.

The Conservatives stand in this House like they're the defenders of education. Well, I'll tell you this. If you want the best indicator to compare our success with their success when it comes to education: We're at the highest graduation level in the history of this province, over 85%. When the Conservatives were in power, do you know what that number was? One in three young people in this province did not graduate high school. Now, think about that. Think about that for one second. One in three young people in this province didn't graduate high school. How do you expect to build a strong economy—the Conservatives always talk about building a strong economy—here in the province of Ontario if young people are not even getting the skills they need to move forward?

This is why we have many school board trustees on this side of the Legislature. The Premier talks about this all the time, that Mike Harris, his policies and his attack on education activated something deep in the hearts of Ontarians that spoke to the values of Ontarians. It got people like Liz Sandals, the member from Guelph; the Premier; myself—and I'm not going to bring you into the

debate, Madam Speaker—but someone like yourself to get involved in public education. I'm so happy that we're going to make that investment.

Now, I'm going to talk about one more thing when it comes to investments in education before I turn it over to the Minister of Housing, because I'm taking up all the time; there are only a few more minutes left. Do you remember when I talked about being able to walk out of this Legislature one day and reflect back on what I was a part of? One of the key pieces for me as a politician, as the member responsible for Don Valley East, but also as a parent, an uncle, a neighbour and someone who believes we need to empower young people in this province in order to continue to build a strong province is knowing that the investment we make into the young people in this province is the best investment we could make as leaders here in the Legislature.

The investments we're making into post-secondary education and the initiatives that we have—we started with 30% off tuition because we listened to people. They said that the cost of tuition was becoming a deterrent to people actually attending school. So what we did is we said, "Okay, we're going to cut it by 30%." We did this a couple of years ago.

But we went further than that. Last year, we announced that starting this September—so this September will be the first group of young people entering post-secondary education without paying the tuition fee. The government of Ontario—I should say the people of Ontario will be investing in those young people, because those are the young people who will drive innovation in the future and will continue to build this province up. I believe the number, and I may be wrong, is roughly 200,000 young people this year—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's 210,000.

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's 210,000 young people this year alone who will benefit from the free tuition and the changes we've made in the tuition program.

Hon. Chris Ballard: That changes lives.

Hon. Michael Coteau: It does change lives. Again, being able to walk out and leave this Legislature—not that I'm not leaving soon; I plan to stick around for a while. But to leave the Legislature and to be able to say, "I am so proud of the fact that we introduced such a game-changer, a substantial change in post-secondary education, a free tuition initiative and to make tuition affordable." It's scaled up, because it's \$50,000 and under, but it does scale based on income.

To be able to walk away from this Legislature and say to myself, "Michael, you were part of a government, under the leadership of Kathleen Wynne, our Premier, and to sit on this side of the House and to be able to say that we transformed post-secondary education, we transformed the health care system to benefit young people," is something I will always be proud of. It makes me feel like my time here in this Legislature is not going to waste.

I just want to end with that, and say, again, as the Minister of Children and Youth Services, this is a budget

that I am proud of. We'll continue to make the right investments to support young people here in the province so they can have the opportunity that they deserve to reach their full potential and they can continue to grow and help support themselves and support this province to continue to be the best jurisdiction to live in anywhere in the world.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the Minister of Housing.

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you to the speaker before me because he touched on so many important reasons about why this budget is so important to Ontario.

I'll just make a bit of a personal anecdote to begin. I never really ever thought that I would be an MPP here in Toronto at Queen's Park. I didn't have any plans to do that. But when I started out as a town councillor, people started saying to me, "You'd make a good MPP." I said no a number of times, until I met Premier Kathleen Wynne. She talked about her vision for this province and, frankly, got me very excited about the potential of what this place could do for the people of Ontario from all walks of life, of all ages. I'm here because the people in my riding agree with her vision, and our vision, of where Ontario should go.

0920

That's why I'm so delighted with this budget. This is the seminal budget, I would say, of my time here at Queen's Park.

The speaker before me touched on so many things, and I'm in absolute agreement with him on all of those. I'll just touch on two things that impacted my residents.

The first is the OHIP+, the pharmacare for youth and children. Speaker, there has never been an issue in my riding where I have not been contacted, phoned, stopped on the street—I was in my local drugstore just last Saturday, and I had a druggist who I hadn't met. One of the pharmacists actually got out from behind the counter and chased me down before I could leave, to tell me how fantastic this program was, because the worst part of her job was watching people hear the price of some drugs for their child—or youth, of some drugs that they had to pay for—and they walk away because they can't afford it. That is changed with this legislation, provided that it goes through. I'm assured that it is such good legislation that all three parties, obviously, will support it and we'll get it through.

Now, I am the Minister of Housing, and there are a lot of provisions around housing here. We've spent a lot of time talking about the affordable housing act. I know that one of the things we hear constantly is around rent control, and that's good.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Good morning. I'm pleased to enter the debate this morning. I come to it from a background as a regional councillor in the region of Durham for 13 years, but particularly from chairing the health and social services committee and as a long-term advocate of child care.

So I listened with interest to the Minister of Children and Youth Services extolling the virtues of the Ontario budget, particularly as it related to child care.

Speaker, as you'll know—and I've spoken on this topic before—in the 296 pages of the Ontario budget, there is not one reference to Grandview Children's Centre. This is despite Grandview Children's Centre waiting for nine years for this particular Liberal government to stand up with some investment. That's despite Grandview Children's Centre raising \$8 million themselves, acquiring the land through the city of Ajax, and building into that a wide base of support. As recently as this past weekend, I attended an event and we discussed some of the challenges that exist within Grandview Children's Centre.

Turning to child care and another aspect—and this is an important one—the majority of the Liberal government's promises for new child care spots won't take effect until 2022, which is, of course, long after the 2018 election.

I also want to turn to health care. I know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is going to be in my riding tomorrow at the Ontario Shores mental health centre to make a funding announcement. It's important to note, Minister, that the facility, previous to today, had its budget frozen for four years.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's a privilege for me to rise on the budget, but I want to be clear on something: I am never going to support a budget that sells Hydro One.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Shame on you.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Give me a chance to talk here. I hate being heckled first thing in the morning.

I want to say very clearly that selling Hydro One is the biggest mistake that's going to go down in history. You talk about history on pharmacare for young people. Hydro One is going to be your legacy, and it's the biggest mistake. My job is to listen to the residents, listen to Ontarians: 85% are saying it's a mistake, and they are right.

I went to Hydro One yesterday to do a video making fun of Hydro One. Mayo Schmidt is making \$4.5 million—\$4.5 million—as CEO of that corporation. You know what? He said that he feels our pain. Now think about that. Single moms, single dads, small manufacturers, manufacturers, small businesses: They've got to pay a hydro bill that they can't afford. They're laying off workers. They're having to work longer hours in small businesses.

When you talk about your budget and how it's going to help young people—I hope he's listening. I hope he's listening right now—who did the presentation—because he talked about young people. We all care about our young people. But selling Hydro One is going to cost us \$40 billion in interest. You know who's going to pay for that interest? Does anybody know? Our children, our grandchildren and babies that are not even born yet are going to have to pay for that debt. How can you stand up

here and say, “We're defending young people”? Then stop the sale of Hydro One. Stop it immediately. You want people to support your budget? Do the right thing.

On pharmacare—somebody talked about pharma, saying how excited they were that young people are going to get their drugs. What are you going to say to the guy who is 25 and needs those same drugs, who doesn't have a job and can't afford to get the medicine to make him better so he can go get a job? We have to have pharmacare, and we have to have it for everybody.

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

Hon. David Zimmer: I've been a member of this Legislature since 2003. After reflecting on the budget, I have to say that this is the budget I am the most proud of. Why do I say that? Well, there's everything in the budget that the Minister of Finance has referred to and so on. But I do, on behalf of my constituents and myself, have some, if you will, personal favourites.

My first personal favourite is the core fact that the budget is balanced. The Premier made a commitment four years ago, when she became the Premier, that the challenge was going to be to balance the budget. Why was that such a huge challenge? Because not until we get the budget balanced are we able to spend on matters that perhaps we were having some difficulty with because of the financial constraints. We balanced the budget, notwithstanding that financial constraint of a deficit. We balanced it in a fair way, over a period of years, without slash and burn. We preserved essential services. We added items that the public expected and needed. But at the same time, we drove towards the target of a balanced budget and we achieved that. Now that we're in balance and the handcuffs are off, so to speak, we have a little more flexibility in what we can do.

The other personal favourite, on behalf of the ministry that I represent, the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, is the \$200 million over three years that will be spent on First Nation, Métis and Inuit education. Of particular importance is the funding for the nine aboriginal institutes that are throughout the province.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House and represent the fine constituents of Niagara West—Glanbrook.

I must say that it's absolutely fascinating for me, as the youngest member of the Legislature, to sit here in opposition and hear the government and their sanctimonious prattling about youth, their self-righteous speeches that fail to recognize the negative impact—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay. It's never too early to warn people. The next time I stand up, someone will be warned.

I'm going to return to the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I fear that the members opposite suffer from—how shall I put it? Terminological

inexactitude, perhaps, is the phrase that they suffer from. Because the reality is that when they speak about this balanced budget, when they speak about this budget that they're so proud about, it's enough to make one nauseous.

As a youth myself, as part of a generation that is recognizing the realities of entering the job market, recognizing the realities of the difficulty of acquiring a first home, when they sit there and they speak about this balanced budget—that we know, frankly, isn't balanced, that we know is only the result of years and years of debt, of years and years of deficits, of years and years of interest payments that my generation will have to pay back for the foreseeable future—quite frankly, it frustrates me. To hear them speak about their so-called investments in education when we see school closures across the province, and when they speak about health care yet again when they failed to build the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital, quite frankly, I see nothing but duplicity from across the aisle, and unfortunately, that seems to be indicative of their policies—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. I return back to the Minister of Housing to wrap up.

0930

Hon. Chris Ballard: Just a couple of minutes to wrap up.

I agree with the ministers who have spoken before me about the importance of this bill. I'll say again that this is a seminal bill and it's one that makes me exceptionally happy. It touches on all the progressive things that need to happen in this province, Speaker. It deals with balancing a budget not just this year but in years ahead. It deals with pharmacare and it deals with something that is near and dear to all of our hearts, and that is around affordable housing, especially for those who rent their property.

Over the 10 or 11 months that I have been Minister of Housing, I have heard from many people, renters in Toronto—but beyond Toronto, Speaker, because it's a problem that goes right across the province when it comes to renters who feel that they are being abused, who are facing economic eviction, who feel that certain clauses of the Residential Tenancies Act are being used to evict them so the landlord can jack rates up.

It's so important when it comes to housing, it's so important when it comes to rental accommodation, that we have provisions in place. We have provisions that this budget will put in place that really help young folks and young families be able to find a neighbourhood that they want to live in, be able to find secure tenancy, be able to put down roots and begin to become part of the community. That, Speaker, is how you build stronger communities.

As I said—and I'll finish with what I started talking about at the very beginning—in my riding, what I'm hearing an awful lot about is around the affordable housing provisions within this budget. They are making people very happy. But one of the big game-changers—I'll end with this—is OHIP+. Pharmacare for youth and children will change lives.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: I'm pleased to speak to this motion. Unfortunately, it is a motion the Ontario PC Party cannot support.

It is said that a Liberal is a Liberal: They always go back to their old ways. For 14 years, this Liberal government has made life harder for Ontario families.

We see the proof in every corner of the province. Our hospitals are being starved of funding. Just yesterday, I was in North Bay hearing about, unfortunately, hundreds of health care workers who have been fired, nurses saying they can't cope anymore because of all these cuts.

Hundreds of schools are on the chopping block. Everywhere I go, I hear about new schools being closed. Yesterday I was speaking to the northern municipal conference, and across northern Ontario we're seeing communities having their heart taken out because of schools being closed: 600 schools closed on the watch of this Liberal government.

The dream of home ownership remains out of reach for so many because of skyrocketing housing prices, and families continue to struggle with unaffordable hydro rates. This is the legacy of this government.

Now, getting close to a year before the next election and being very low in the polls, this government is desperate. Madam Speaker, this budget is only about one thing: It's a desperate plea to get re-elected. They've tabled a so-called balanced budget, which suggests all is right. But that is completely wrong.

Let's be clear; let's be perfectly clear: This is not a balanced budget. The government is hiding a more than \$5-billion deficit. This budget shows the province's numbers are all in decline. Economic growth is forecast to fall from 2.7% to 2.3% this year and down to 1.7% in 2020. Even the government's own indicators suggest that we are a province that is, unfortunately, hurting.

Employment growth is falling to 0.9% in 2020, job creation will fall from 94,000 next year to 66,000 in 2020—and that is their own estimates. As you just heard, housing construction starts are scheduled to fall from 75,000 in 2016 down to 68,500 in 2018, meaning the issue of supply will be even more acute.

They have resorted to these one-time revenue sources to beef up their revenue. They're taking money through their cap-and-trade cash grab. They sold off Hydro One in a fire sale. They've undermined the Auditor General's authority on pension assets, counting millions towards their books. They're receiving one-time and unusual revenue from government buildings and lands, and infrastructure funding from the federal government.

To summarize, Mr. Speaker, this budget is all about optics. It's a shell game and, frankly, it doesn't add up.

You get to the issue of the debt. I think the debt speaks to the entire shell game that the Minister of Finance is propagating. In 14 short years, since this government has been in charge of the province, they've doubled the province's debt to \$312 billion. Can you imagine a legacy like that? These are massive numbers. To put it into perspec-

tive, every person in Ontario, including your kids and grandkids, now owes \$22,300 plus interest to Ontario lenders. What a burden to put on the next generation of Ontarians. That's about double from 2004, when it was \$11,000. That's the Liberal record: putting an enormous, enormous weight on the backs of the next generation.

We will also pay nearly \$12 billion each year in debt-servicing costs—\$12 billion. That's roughly \$1 billion a month in interest costs despite historic low rates. We're spending more servicing the debt each year than we're spending on all transit and provincial highways; more than we're spending on the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, which includes autism services for our children and youth; more than on care for our seniors; more than investments in our post-secondary education system. We spend more on interest than supporting our northern communities, and that was very apparent yesterday at the northern mayors' conference. We spend more interest than on our vulnerable indigenous populations, and that's not right. The debt erodes the very services that Ontario families depend on, and places a burden on future generations that they don't deserve. And when rates rise, our debt-servicing costs will rise even higher. It's not ideology that bankrupts governments; it's the math of rising interest costs, and this government has been oblivious to that.

Basic economic principles teach us to borrow in bad times and save in good times. We are in the ninth year of economic recovery, but Ontario has kept borrowing. This is a government that has an addiction to debt, an addiction to borrowing. There is no new policy they look at where they don't say, "How can I borrow more? How can I get more debt on the backs of Ontarians?"

British Columbia and Quebec have balanced their budgets for several years and have set aside funds to pay down debt. Meanwhile, Ontario has used increased revenues and increased spending to record highs rather than deal with debt. It's sad.

Once again, these calculated decisions are going to be a tremendous burden on the next generation of Ontarians. This is a government that is out of sight, out of mind, and they think that Ontarians don't notice. But when you are the most indebted subnational government in the world, people start noticing. We owe more in Ontario than any other province or state. Imagine that.

Unfortunately for Ontarians, the Liberal government does not have a credible plan in the short term, medium term or long term to deal with debt. This was our first request for the Wynne Liberals to include in the budget: a plan for debt. And they didn't have any plan, any notion this needs to be addressed.

Life will continue to get harder and more unaffordable with this budget, Madam Speaker. The Liberals always find a way to leave hard-working Ontarians with less.

We asked the government to finally get control of the hydro crisis they created. Remember, on the watch of this government, hydro rates have skyrocketed 400%. Instead, their hydro scheme is a band-aid solution that does nothing, that punts the problem down the road. Borrow-

ing is not a plan. Borrowing money on the backs of ratepayers is not a plan, and this does nothing to address the root causes of the crisis.

The day after the Wynne hydro announcement—their borrowing plan—they pushed ahead with signing even more expensive green contracts. They're borrowing money to pay for their old bad contracts. And what do they do the next day? They sign more contracts. It's unbelievable, absolutely unbelievable.

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The Wynne Liberals continue to plow ahead with the fire sale of Hydro One. One thing I hear all across the province is, "Why are they doing this?" Over 200 municipalities have passed resolutions saying that this is short-sighted. The Financial Accountability Officer has said it's short-sighted. At the northern conference yesterday, northern municipalities were saying that this is not in the best interest of northern Ontario.

Yet, they keep on plowing ahead. It doesn't matter about public opinion. It doesn't matter what the legislative oversight is saying. It doesn't matter what leaders across Ontario are saying. It's the Liberal way or the highway. They're actually burying, hiding the costs of their so-called fair hydro plan in OPG's budget, so they don't have to include it in the books this year.

What we see in this budget is that this is all about the election cycle, pushing the problems down the road. Are they dealing with any of the structural issues: the bad contracts, the over-generation, the excessive salaries? Absolutely not. I have been up many times in this Legislature saying, how is it possible that we're paying the Hydro One CEO over \$4.5 million, when everywhere else in Canada you have hydro CEOs that make one tenth of that?

In Quebec, they have hydro rates one third the rate of Ontario, and their CEO gets \$450,000, but this government, this out-of-touch Liberal government, thinks it's okay to have executive salaries that are completely out of whack. They're not watching the dollars. And no wonder they're not watching the millions and the billions, because they're oblivious to what this means for ratepayers. They just keep on passing it on, signing more bad contracts, giving out more huge salaries to executives—and they pass it off to ratepayers.

That's on the issue of hydro. It was very disappointing that the budget didn't address any of the structural issues.

This budget also didn't address the real crisis we have in housing. I don't know why this budget—many Ontarians held out hope that they might address the housing crisis, because this is just another example of the Liberals only willing to talk about band-aid solutions.

Sean Speer, a Munk senior fellow at the Macdonald-Laurier Institute, said the scheme "will at best do nothing to address the underlying supply issues affecting affordability and at worst ... distort the housing market." That's in reference to the Liberals' housing scheme.

In fact, they don't even think the housing supply is a problem. In October 2016, Premier Wynne called the housing supply problem a myth—a myth. How out of

touch are they? Their own budget shows that they're actually reducing supply. The budget shows that housing construction starts are projected to go down next year by almost 10%.

Hon. David Zimmer: When's your plan coming out?

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: I hear the other side heckling because they're embarrassed of their record on this. They're embarrassed, and when they hear those words of their own leader, Premier Wynne, saying that it's a myth, and that's offside with everyone looking at this housing crisis and those young families that can't afford a home—they're out to lunch on this. They're out of touch with Ontarians.

The reality is—I think the reason why they actually don't want to act on housing and why they've ignored the problem and tried to do solutions that are more about optics and press releases rather than tangible action is because they're benefiting from higher housing resale prices. They're collecting more, and not just a little bit: in the hundreds of millions of dollars more on the land transfer tax. They don't want to address the housing crisis because they're benefiting. The one thing we can guarantee that Liberals appreciate is more taxes. One thing the Liberals appreciate is more money for their pet projects.

We have seen no evidence-based policy to support their scheme. It's only about more taxes. And the one thing that I try to stress to the Liberals is that the solution to every problem isn't a new tax. Earlier this month, the Toronto Real Estate Board released research that shows the number of buyers with a mailing address outside of Canada is well below 1%. It also shows that most of these buyers have a mailing address in the US. This is in direct conflict with what Chef Sousa said in the housing announcement, when he said that the number hovers around 8%. Clearly, evidence and facts are in contradiction to what this Liberal government is pushing out there.

A day later, the chef told reporters that it was 5%. They keep on switching their numbers—left, right and centre. It is clear this government, once again, wrote this plan on the back of a napkin with no real data, and that's typical. Any time there's a political crisis where the public is concerned that this government is out of touch, and when there are newspaper headlines criticizing the government, they scurry and they write a plan on a napkin, and there's no factual evidence to support the direction they're taking. Sadly, every time they do this, it ends up hurting Ontarians. Ontarians have to pay more and they get less in return.

The other thing I wanted to talk about in this budget is cap-and-trade because we all know this is a revenue grab. They refuse to make cap-and-trade revenue-neutral. If it was really about the environment, why does it need to be a revenue grab for government?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Tax grab. It's a tax grab.

Mr. Patrick Brown: This is nothing more than a tax grab. They're taking advantage of Ontarians' goodwill on

the environment, goodwill on wanting to act on climate change, and they're making it a revenue tool for government. It is a giant, \$1.9-billion cash grab. They will rake in billions from hard-working families.

The Liberal scheme does nothing to actually help the environment in Ontario. If you look at where the independent legislative assessment says there will be emission reductions, it's in California. It's bad enough they've got the Green Energy Act that is sending billions in free electricity to our competitors in the US, now they've got cap-and-trade, which is going to be sending Ontarians' hard-working funds. We have to buy green credits from California—\$200 million by 2020; by 2030, \$2.3 billion. We don't need small towns in Ontario and their hard-working businesses subsidizing businesses in Beverly Hills, but they have signed Ontario into that scheme, and it's going to hurt Ontario. It's going to hurt our ability to be competitive, but once again, they are oblivious to that fact, and they continue to make this province less competitive.

I want to get back to the issue of school closures. As I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks, this government has failed communities and families across the province. We put forward a budget request for a moratorium on school closures. When you hear the number of 600 schools and 300 more on the chopping block—and the government is clever with their lines. They said in the budget, "We're going to open 94 new schools." But then you read the fine print: They've got 300 on the chopping block, so nothing is happening to keep our schools open. I have to say, Madam Speaker, it is heartbreaking going to a community and hearing the community leaders say, "You take the school out of our town, you're going to depopulate our town. You're giving up on small-town Ontario."

When you hear what's happening in small-town Ontario—and I can say it's not just small-town Ontario. The government is ripping schools out of communities across the province. In my hometown of Barrie, they closed Barrie Central—in a city that has 6% population growth. So it's not just small towns. They're closing a school in Vaughan; they're closing a school in Burlington. They are trying to pay for their scandals, their waste, their mismanagement by closing schools, and that's not right.

That's why this is yet another budget request that this government has turned down: a very basic principle that said, "Put a moratorium on school closures." I expected this from our Premier—I expected our Premier at least to have some sympathy for that request. After all, Premier Wynne got into politics, and she said that her purpose for getting into politics was to stop school closures. Well, she has now closed 100 more schools than the previous two Premiers combined. Can you imagine that? This Liberal government has an embarrassing legacy on school closures.

Interjections.

Mr. Patrick Brown: And they can heckle and they can complain, but no government has closed more schools than this government. They are closing schools.

Now, they're heckling because the reality is the stats—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I already mentioned earlier, the next time I stand up, someone is going to be warned, so I'm going to warn the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

I return to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The reality is, you wouldn't see hundreds and hundreds of families and children protesting the government outside Queen's Park if they weren't closing their schools. The reality is that the facts speak for themselves. You go to any community in Ontario and you will hear a community complaining about school closures. This alternate reality that they pitch in saying that there's going to be new schools—families aren't buying that; students aren't buying that. They wouldn't be here protesting if that wasn't the case.

I also want to talk briefly about health care, because the government promised record investment, and what we've seen is the exact opposite. They've cut services to our doctors by \$815 million. They've fired an appalling 1,600 nurses. I've gone to hospitals this week, visiting nurses, thanking them for their tireless, selfless work. And what I can't believe is that at every single hospital I go to, the nurses talk about the nursing cuts, saying they never expected this. This was a government that promised they were going to invest in health care, and what we've seen is record numbers of nurses fired. This is their legacy. Because of their debt, their waste and mismanagement, they've had to make cuts in areas like education and health care. And now the only investments they're making in health care are in the wrong areas—more bloated administration. They're going to hire 84 new LHIN vice-presidents, more executive paper-pushers. When will they realize we need front-line care, not more administrators? They've got it all backwards.

0950

The last issue I wanted to get to before I wrap up is the issue of northern Ontario. I was really disappointed, and I know a lot of northerners were really disappointed that this budget was a real rejection of northern Ontario. Northern Ontario has so much potential, and yet in this budget they cut the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines by \$70 million—\$70 million. Then they took out any reference to the Ring of Fire, a \$60-billion project that has got a generational opportunity for northern Ontario. I don't understand why they give up on northern Ontario. I don't understand why they don't appreciate that a strong, prosperous northern Ontario means a strong, prosperous Ontario. When you create jobs in northern Ontario, it helps all of the province. I just don't understand why this government is so out of touch with the needs of northern Ontario.

Madam Speaker, the Liberals' budget has presented a number of shiny pitches for Ontarians to win votes, but Ontario families will not be fooled. This budget is nothing more than a patchwork attempt for a government

to fix the mess they created, and they're making it worse. A Liberal is a Liberal. If they win the next election, this house of cards will fall apart because this is all a sales pitch. It is all misleading numbers. It is the government cooking the books. The reality is, they continue to prioritize Liberal elites over hard-working Ontario families. Ontario will continue to be the most indebted province and state in the world. Debt continues to go up. As much as they say they've got a balanced budget, we're going to see \$34 billion in new debt over the next three years. We cannot accept this. We cannot accept the fact, our caucus cannot accept the fact that they will continue to make life harder for Ontarians.

We need to get this province back on track. That's why I am proud to vote against this budget. This budget hurts Ontario, this budget sets Ontario back, and I can't support it. Our caucus will be voting against this budget.

Interjections.

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

Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I don't always have a lot in common with the Leader of the Opposition, but I do when it comes to schools.

I wanted to read this letter into the record:

"A constituent in my riding has reached out" to me "with concerns about the situation her local public school, Levack Public School, is facing. Over the last several years, the Rainbow District School Board has cut student services such as supports for children with disabilities and recently, the French immersion program at this school was discontinued. My constituent is upset by the impact this has, and will continue to have, on her community" of Levack.

"She recognizes that schools are an essential part of our communities by providing a learning environment necessary for our children to succeed in life. Schools are also a hub for socialization and opportunities that add to quality of life. She is worried that the closure of French immersion will decrease the number of students at the school and increase the risk that they will lose this school, like so many other schools" in my riding.

The Rainbow school board has informed the community that they have applied to the ministry to demolish part of Levack Public School in order to right-size the school building. The community doesn't want this to happen. We want to know what criteria the ministry used to approve right-sizing of a school.

Does the Rainbow school board "have to consider community partnerships before it is allowed to carry out the partial demolition? If a community has a viable alternative with community partners"—such as the possibility of satellite community police services, a daycare, a post office—"which would create a revenue-generating new use for school space, what avenues does a community have if the school board is pushing for right-sizing demolition instead?"

I wanted to read this into the record because the member made it clear that we have seen 600 schools close

under this government, most of them in northern rural areas. This is unacceptable.

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: It was really disappointing, hearing what the Leader of the Opposition had to say. To me, that demonstrates that he's just not ready to govern.

My background is in finance, it's in business. I have two business degrees. I've advised companies on how to invest their money. I've studied accounting. I've studied economics. I know a balanced budget when I see one. This is a balanced budget. The fact that the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues can't recognize that demonstrates that they're struggling with facts and they're struggling with finance, and they're not ready to govern.

In their arguments for why we haven't balanced the budget, they argue that we're using the cap-and-trade proceeds to balance. Nothing could be further than the truth. There's no double-counting of those carbon allowance proceeds. We're not using those to balance the budget.

They talked about the pension assets. There was a disagreement between the civil servants in the government and the Auditor General. We brought in blue-chip experts, and they advised us that the civil servants had advised us correctly on the accounting of pension assets. That too is a false claim.

They also say we're balancing using Hydro One proceeds. That is not correct. It is common for governments year after year to sell and buy assets, and through that, there are accounting treatments that we've used that every other government in this province has used for decades. We've done nothing different. We're not using Hydro One to balance the budget. Those proceeds are going towards infrastructure.

The Leader of the Opposition talked about paying down debt. My question to him is, what would he cut? What would he cut? Would he cut the health care investment? Would he cut the OHIP+ program? Would he cut the new money for hospitals? Would he cut the new money for schools?

Interjections: Yes.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Yes? What else would he cut? Would he cut the money for social services and kids? What would he cut?

When he was in Ottawa, he was part of a government that ran the largest deficits in Canadian history. He added over \$100 billion to the Canadian debt, and he's standing here lecturing this government about deficits and debt? He should look at himself in the mirror.

I want to ask the Leader of the Opposition to come back out and tell us which Patrick Brown is going to stand up. Is it the Patrick Brown who is going to cut and slash, who is going to run on 100,000 job cuts and slash and burn like the Mike Harris years, or he coming in and investing? Will the real Patrick Brown please stand up?

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I must say that I wasn't aware that the member from Etobicoke Centre had two business degrees. Well, good for him, but he must have forgotten to tell you about the other degree he must have, which is one in fictional story writing, because that's what we heard from him this morning: complete fiction.

The reality is that this is not a balanced budget, and they know it's not a balanced budget. For the member to say that the Hydro One sale isn't about balancing the books—he knows that that is not the truth at all. He knows that to be wrong. He knows that to be wrong, and the Minister of Finance, who's there, knows that to be wrong as well.

They like to talk about the federal government having the largest deficit—and they did through that crisis in 2008-09. But they also went on to balance their budget after the biggest deficit in history, which this government has failed to do since that crisis of 2008-09—not a single balanced budget after the financial crisis of 2008-09. The federal government, under the leadership of Stephen Harper and the late Jim Flaherty, were able to do that. They were able to do that because they were determined to do the right things, whereas this government has always been about their political future, not the future of Ontario—versus the Harper government, which was standing up for Canada. This government? Every single thing they've done and everything in this budget is directed at trying to send out a shiny message to the people: “We want your vote in 2018,” even if it means that life is going to get harder for Ontarians down the road.

All you have to do is look at the numbers—and I say that to the member from Etobicoke Centre—an additional \$30 billion added to the debt by 2021. Some \$30 billion: Where is that money going to come from but future generations?

This government doesn't care about this generation and it certainly doesn't care about future generations. The only thing it cares about is getting re-elected, and they're doing that on false—

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: This is the second time that I was able to stand up and talk on the budget this morning. I'm pleased by that.

I'll start with hydro so there's no confusion around hydro. There seems to be confusion here this morning. The NDP has been very clear that we were not going to sell Hydro One. We opposed it. We continue to oppose it. I've done presentations at those 200 municipalities where we said, “This is the wrong thing to do.” I've been very honest and open about that. I say it's the biggest mistake in Ontario. People can agree with me, they can disagree with me, but that's how I personally feel on that issue.

1000

The Liberals said they want to sell 60%. I think it's a mistake, and I've told them it's a mistake. I've stood up here over and over and said, “Don't do it. Don't do it. We have better ways to get infrastructure funded.” That's my opinion.

The Conservatives, in the last election, with a white paper that was signed off by Vic Fedeli—his picture is actually on the white paper—said, “We’re going to sell 100% of Hydro One.” Stand up and say what you’re going to do. When you stand up and go after Hydro One, let’s be honest about it. We’re the only party that said we’re not going to sell it.

Then they talked about CEO salaries. Our party brought forward a bill in 2015 to cap CEO salaries, which I think is a good thing. People can agree or disagree. I don’t think the CEO of Hydro should make \$5 million a year. You know what? They voted against it. They voted against our bill. It didn’t make any sense.

Then they talked about protests. I get a kick out of this. I’ve been in the labour movement for over 35 years, and I’m proud to say I’ve come to Queen’s Park to protest. I’ve gone to lots of protests. I’ve stood in front of my members to support fair wages for workers.

Do you remember, when Mike Harris was in government, how many protests there were? I was going every other week. I was in London; I was in Windsor; I was in Hamilton. In Hamilton, they had 100,000 people protesting.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It’s always an honour to be able to stand in the House and represent the good people of Timiskaming–Cochrane, and today, as always, represent the NDP caucus, and spend a bit of time talking about the budget motion.

Before I get into the real comments about the budget motion, I have to make one comment—I’ll make a couple further on—regarding the remarks from the leader of the official opposition, Mr. Brown, about northern Ontario and how this government is ignoring northern Ontario.

I think that has been a habit of previous governments as well. I was a councillor in a township in northern Ontario when the roads were downloaded by a Progressive Conservative government, under Mr. Harris—and not just the roads. But the roads really hurt, because we have got small municipalities now having to support huge road structure systems. We like to blame things on the Wynne government, but that one was a total Conservative idea. They balanced the books on the backs of people in rural Ontario.

But I think one of the biggest regarding the current Liberal budget—I’ve heard it described as the best budget in history. I don’t like using big words in the Legislature, but that’s hyperbole at best. There’s another word for it; there’s a word that I’d rather use. I don’t blame the government for trying to put the best light on things, but saying it’s the best budget in history is stretching it.

We’ll give an example of where our differences lie specifically. The member from Niagara Falls touched on it, and I will expand on it a bit: Hydro One. The sale of Hydro One, to us, is a mistake, and not only a political mistake but a mistake that will hurt Ontarians for generations to come if it’s not stopped.

The government likes to equate it with the sale of the 407 by the Conservatives, which was also a huge mistake. I get a kick out of this. The Conservatives will counter, “But we didn’t sell it. We leased it for 99 years.” Well, that’s not much of an argument.

But getting back to Hydro One, we have always opposed the sale of Hydro One. We have always opposed the sale of an essential service, our power system. We’ve always opposed that because we truly believe that essential services like hydro can be and should be delivered by the public, through the public. In the end, it’s much more efficient, and it’s much cheaper for people who buy the power.

Our examples are Quebec and Manitoba, and we used to have that. But successive governments have sold off pieces to raise one-time funds. Once you sell it once, you lose the ability to use the dividends for the future. That’s what this government is doing with the sale of Hydro One. They are selling Hydro One to make their books look better, which is a huge mistake because you’re selling a profit-generating asset.

Interestingly, several times the Minister of Finance has said that any new debt that the government accumulates will go towards infrastructure; it won’t go to operating, which—I don’t have two business degrees, but I ran a business for a long time—makes sense. But by the same token, you shouldn’t be able to sell infrastructure and put that towards your operating, which the government is doing in this budget. You can’t have it both ways.

Not only is selling Hydro One a huge mistake for the people; they’re playing both sides of the coin, saying that new debt will only be on infrastructure, but they are selling infrastructure to balance their books. That’s a problem.

That’s why we are pushing so hard. We have always been opposed to the sale of Hydro One. That’s why we have put forward a plan to regain control of Hydro One, for exactly the same reasons that we said before, because we believe that, in the long term, it’s better for people of Ontario.

Do you know what, Speaker? The people of Ontario agree with us. There have been polls, and 85% of the people of Ontario agree with us. A majority of municipalities agree with us that losing the power of control of Hydro One, in the long term, will cost people money.

Furthermore, coming from rural Ontario, coming from northern Ontario, there’s another reason why we’re very concerned about the sale of Hydro One, because private corporations have a different role and goal than public corporations. I don’t blame them for it. Private corporations centre on making profits for their shareholders. That’s what they are there for. So private corporations tend not to focus on areas that don’t make money. Providing an essential service in rural Ontario is not going to be their profit centre and, as a result, they’re not going to focus on it. They shouldn’t, as a private corporation. That’s why essential services need to stay public.

We have got an example of that as we speak, Speaker. The Liberal government tried to close down the Ontario

Northland Transportation Commission. The people of northern Ontario and throughout Ontario rallied to stop that. But they did sell off a vital portion of it. They sold off Ontera. Ontera is the communications division of the ONTC. Ontera provided Internet service in areas where for private providers it didn't make sense. They couldn't make a profit doing it.

The government sold Ontera to Bell Aliant, but everything was going to stay the same. They were going to provide the same level of service because, they were telling us, "It's not true that private will not service the same as public." Well, guess what, Speaker? If you want to get a new Internet account in a place served by Ontera/Bell Aliant, you can't get it. You can't get it. They sold a public entity to a private corporation, and now people in rural Ontario who were served by that same name can't get the service, and that is what we're very frightened of in rural Ontario regarding Hydro One. That is a huge issue.

The difference is, we believe in public power. I have always believed in it. In previous Parliaments, we had friends who believed in public power. When the Conservatives tried to—

Mr. Wayne Gates: Sell it.

Mr. John Vanthof: When they broke up Ontario Hydro and tried to sell it, the Liberals were also believing in public power, it seemed. But the Liberals have actually never really believed in public power, because they kept saying, "The Green Energy Act"—people criticize the Green Energy Act. What's wrong with the Green Energy Act is the privatization of green energy. That's what is wrong with the Green Energy Act. But now they are selling off Hydro One because, deep down, they don't believe in public power.

But the most interesting dynamic regarding Hydro One right now, I find, in this Parliament is the official opposition, who are opposed to the sale of Hydro One. They're opposed to the Wynne Liberals selling Hydro One. But we really don't know why, because they are in favour of privatization and have always been. That is one of their mantras. That is one of the reasons why you should vote for Conservatives, because Conservatives believe that the private sector is always better. Yet they're not in favour of the sale of Hydro One.

1010

Mr. Wayne Gates: Now.

Mr. John Vanthof: Now. They were before; they're not now. And that leaves a question. We're talking about the Liberal budget. There are big portions of the Liberal budget we don't agree with, especially Hydro One and a few others.

The Tories don't agree, and they don't want to sell Hydro One. You have to wonder if they're hoping that if they form the next government, there will still be some left for them to sell. You have to wonder, Speaker, if that's the plan. They're just angry that the Liberals got to sell it first.

To end this portion of my discussion: As far as I can tell, the only party in this House that has consistently

pushed to keep power public and will consistently push to keep power public and has put a plan forward to start reining it back to public control, where possible, is the NDP, because we believe in public power.

I don't know how much time I have left—a couple of minutes. We're going to go into the second issue, regarding public sector salaries. We pushed very hard to rein in public sector salaries, because the people we represent are having a hard time making ends meet. If you look across the economy, a lot of people haven't had an actual wage increase in years and years when you think of inflation and when you think of cost increases. And when we see some people in the administration part of the public sector, specifically the very high-level administration, getting large compensation increases, we oppose that.

The Liberals responded, "Yes, we're concerned, and we're developing a strategy." The government is developing a strategy. When I listen to them saying they're developing a strategy, in a way, that's code for either, "We don't know what we're going to do," or "We're really"—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Killing time.

Mr. John Vanthof: Killing time. Thank you, member for Nickel Belt.

As an opposition party, we put forward a private member's bill to push this issue along, to cap public sector salaries at—I believe, and I'm just going off the top of my head, that the level is at twice the pay of the Premier. We don't believe anyone in public administration should have more than twice the level of Premier, and that's still a pretty good buck.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: And how many doctors are you going to lose? Because there are many who make four or five times that.

Mr. John Vanthof: The Minister of the Environment brings up a good point. Our rule is in administration. Doctors aren't administrators. They have a high level of skill that is different from an administrator. And there very well may be individual cases that we'll have, but as a guideline.

So the government is developing a strategy. Again, I hear the Conservative Party talking—ranting—about public sector salaries. Yet when we put forward that bill in 2015, with the current Leader of the Opposition, they voted against capping public sector salaries. On this side, in our corner of the world, it's very confusing.

Specifically, as we go towards an election cycle, we have principles that we've always fought for, values. The Liberals, the government: We disagree vehemently with some of the things that they've put forward, specifically the sale of Hydro One and others which I don't have time for. But there is one section that doesn't seem to have any direction at all—

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

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing as it is 10:15, I will recess the House until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Please help me welcome three constituents of mine from the great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham: Samantha Heiydt, who was a legislative page 20 years ago, along with her children Sydney Heiydt and Kira Heiydt. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Je voudrais annoncer mes beaux-parents, Lynne et Rich Aylsworth, qui sont les grands-parents de page captain Maggie Yurek.

And, to redeem myself, my beautiful, lovely wife Jennifer is here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Redemption is like a fine wine. Well delivered.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I am very pleased to introduce our new constituency assistant in our Mississauga–Streetsville constituency office, who is visiting Queen’s Park for her first time. Would everyone please welcome Grace Zhou.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It is my pleasure to welcome page Rishi Thurairajah’s parents and grandparents—his parent, Vamathy Thurairajah, and his grandparents, Kandiah Kanagalingam and Vijaya Kanagalingam. Please join me in welcoming them.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: There is a large group of Ontario professional planners with us today for this afternoon’s debate on Bill 22. With us today: Bruce Curtis, Cheryl Horrobin, Tracey Ehl, Adam Wright, Ann Joyner, Paul Stagl, Ian Lord, Ron Keeble, Tony Usher, Mary Lou Tanner, Lynn Morrow, Scott Plante, Mary Ann Rangam, Brian Brophey, Loretta Ryan, Sarah Snowdon, Rupendra Pant, Olivia Lintern, John Narvali and Jennifer Keesmaat. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am thrilled to welcome two guests from London today: Emily Bradford, my daughter, who is a student at McMaster University, and Aislinn Adams, who is a student at Western University. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I am pleased to introduce, along with the Minister of Labour, from Loraxian Inc., a company based in Oakville, the founder and CEO, Roland Kielbasiewicz—hopefully I said your name correctly—along with co-founders Albert Ferrer and Cary Kokkonen; also today, Frank Huang, president of SAS Sunrise Inc., a Taiwanese company. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted to welcome two interns here. Zoe Ritchie and Sydney Reis will be spending the summer in my minister’s office.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: No one else has done this, so allow me to say that this the seventh annual Peterborough Day at Queen’s Park. There’s a reception in committee rooms 228 and 230 from 11:30 to 1:30 today and everyone is invited.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I’m very pleased to announce a very, very important day today. One of our own is celebrating a birthday. She is celebrating her 29th birthday. She just walked out of the chamber: Marie-France Lalonde.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I just want to welcome students from Essex District High School, who are visiting us here at Queen’s Park today. Welcome.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for doing my work for me, but we’re all encouraged to attend Peterborough Day in rooms 228 and 230.

I do have some people to introduce. We have Stuart Harrison, who is the general manager of the Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce; member of the board Jim Hill; and my executive assistant from Peterborough, Matt Stoeckle.

A very important person I want to introduce today—some of you remember that my son, Braden, was a page here back in 2011. Braden Leal is with us today.

Hon. Mitzi Hunter: Today I have a very special guest to introduce to the House: James Roberts. He was born in Manchester in 1930. He lived near the dockyard that was bombed out in the 1940 Blitz. He served in the British Armed Forces in the Suez Canal zone with a clean record. In 1957, he came to Canada from the UK with \$50. He became a master electrician. He had three children, all university graduates. He lives in the riding of Scarborough–Guildwood. Tomorrow, May 12, will be his 92nd birthday. So I’d like everyone to please welcome James Roberts to Queen’s Park.

I would also like to welcome guests who are with him: Fred Calvert, Joe Fashion and Arthur Ewing of Ace’s Place.

I want to thank them all for coming today.

Also in the east gallery are my two interns: Jordan Chevalier and Farnaz Yaqubian.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I’m looking for my friend Steve McMullen from Unifor, who is here. I want to welcome him to Queen’s Park, wherever he is.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROBATION AND PAROLE SERVICES

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Community Safety. Global National’s Carolyn Jarvis revealed a shocking number last night: 4,513. That is how many outstanding warrants there are in Ontario for probation violations—shocking. How many of these 4,513 are sexual predators, pedophiles or violent criminals?

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: I thank the member for his question.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to Ontarians that our government takes the safety of our communities very seriously. In partnership with our police services and our justice partners, we’ve made Ontario one of the safest jurisdictions in North America. For 11 straight years, Ontario has had the lowest crime rate of any province or territory in Canada. Also, it’s one of the safest metropolitan areas, according to the census.

We’re building on this success through our Strategy for a Safer Ontario and our plan to make our commun-

ities even safer. The strategy is the biggest transformation in 25 years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the minister: When asked that question yesterday, the minister said she had to look into it further and had this to say: “To know that number, what it means, who are those individuals?” We’re all still waiting for an answer.

Who are these individuals? Are they pedophiles? Are they sexual predators? Are they violent criminals? What offenders are walking our streets unsupervised, with outstanding warrants for their arrest?

This is a specific question; hopefully, the minister can answer this. These 4,513 individuals: Are they pedophiles? Are they sexual predators? Are they violent criminals?

This Global exposé is shocking, and we expect the government to take it seriously.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, as a government, we take this very seriously. I have to say, we’ve hired more parole and probation officers in the last few years to rehabilitate and reintegrate our high-risk offenders.

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Cases per officer have also decreased by 26% as a result, and many of our probation and parole officers have received specialized training on high-risk cases, such as domestic violence and sex offenders.

Mr. Speaker, the opposite party has no plan. They can say whatever they want—their rhetoric about fear and bringing that fear to Ontarians. As a member of the Harper government, the Leader of the Opposition fear-mongered Canadians and increased, actually, our prison population, this mostly due to a massive surge in indigenous and racialized inmates in our prisons.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the minister: Rather than attacking the opposition—this is a Global National exposé—a shocking response: 4,513 probation violations, criminals out on our streets.

There is a team of provincial and municipal police officers who hunt down criminals who have broken federal parole. The Repeat Offenders Parole Enforcement Squad, otherwise known as ROPE, continuously investigates and tries to find criminals in breach of federal parole, but there is no team looking for those breaching provincial probation.

My question is pretty simple. As the Global National exposé showed, if we’re looking for those who breach federal parole, why are we not doing that provincially?

I’m struggling to get an answer here, Mr. Speaker, and rather than a partisan spin line, I would like the minister to actually tell us what we’re going to do to keep our streets safe.

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, let’s look at the Leader of the Opposition’s record. In his time as a Harper Conservative, he actually supported measures of—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Do your job.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, come to order.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying before I was interrupted, he was part of a government that actually cut Canada’s correctional services’ budget by 10%, an equivalent of \$295 million, and introduced ridiculous—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If it continues, those banging their desks will be warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: He also introduced ridiculous changes to mandatory minimums, and even supported the ending of an award-winning program called the Life Line program, which provided support for those serving life sentences and reintegrated those released on parole.

The Leader of the Opposition and his party have the big talk, but they have a record that shows definitely otherwise.

I am very proud to be part of a government that believes in rehabilitation and reintegration while maintaining community safety.

Interjections.

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

PROBATION AND PAROLE SERVICES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety. Through you, Mr. Speaker, should sexual predators and violent criminals be allowed to self-report while on probation? Yes or no?

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Again, Mr. Speaker—and I’m going to take this note, because there’s some great work happening in our community—our parole and probation officers are doing their job. Yes, always, more can be done, and we are working with them. But I am so happy—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: So you don’t know.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin–Caledon, come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: We have made this jurisdiction the safest community in Canada, and we should be very proud of this, based on our actions of working with our justice partners, our community leaders and our police forces. This is why we are working through our Strategy for a Safer Ontario and our correctional reform.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the minister: This is very troubling. We have a minister saying that everything is fine, that everything is safe, and yet we have 4,513—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Education, come to order. And the Minister of Children and Youth Services, I'd like to remind you that if you'd like to challenge the Chair, please feel free.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Warnings from this morning count.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the member from Renfrew can stop, too.

I remind the Minister of Children and Youth Services that he has been warned this morning, and it carries through today.

Please finish your question.

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question to the minister was on self-reporting, allowing violent offenders, sexual predators, to self-report. I did not get an answer to a very clear question, yes or no, on whether the minister feels that that is appropriate, so I'll rephrase it.

Mr. Speaker, should sexual predators and violent criminals on probation receive home visits? The probation officers want to have home visits. They want to do their job, but we have a minister who seems to have a policy that, when it comes to sexual predators, if you get them to pinky-swear to check up on themselves—we want home visits. We want to make sure we actually monitor violent criminals in our communities.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: I think Ontarians in each of our communities—as we showed, we have safe communities. I'm looking forward to seeing how the member will vote on our budget, because as I go through my lines, my budget is actually, within community safety, increasing. So I look forward to his ability to say anything about our increase in our budget to actually support and give tools to our parole and probation officers.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin-Caledon: second time.

You have a wrap-up sentence.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Again, I look forward to him actually voting against our wonderful budget, where we are increasing capacity.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the minister: I can't get an answer on this joke of a policy that self-reporting for sexual predators is okay, so I'm going to try a different angle. Yesterday, the Attorney General called this crisis "manufactured." Was the story of Kyle McLauchlan luring a child on the Internet manufactured? Are the 4,513 outstanding warrants manufactured? Are the violent criminals and sexual predators manufactured?

I didn't make up those stories, and facts matter, so my question to the minister is this, very clearly: Does the minister share the opinions of the Attorney General that

this crisis is manufactured, or is this government finally going to take the situation seriously?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Again, I'm actually not surprised, but a bit disappointed, that a Leader of the Opposition who actually made a decision to cut services—I want to talk about this, because this is so important for me, about his record.

When you think about "no plan to keep our community safe," he actually supported a funding cut for the 18 Circles of Support and Accountability programs designed to prevent the most dangerous high-risk sex offenders from repeating their crimes. He also supported, as I said earlier, the ending of an award-winning Life Line program which provided support for those serving life sentences and reintegrated those released on parole. I'm sorry; this party has no plan.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Acting Premier. Ontario families, businesses and municipalities are struggling under the weight of soaring hydro bills. Those bills have gone up 300% since the Conservatives first started to privatize the hydro system, continued under Liberal rule—in fact, a 50% increase since this Premier came to power alone.

We've told Ontarians' stories in this House for almost two years now. We've told this Premier of the families who have to choose between buying food and keeping the heat on in winter, who have to make the heart-breaking decision not to contribute to their children's education funds, instead paying their hydro bills.

1050

The Premier's response this week was to move ahead with the disastrous sell-off of a majority stake in Hydro One, a move that will guarantee that these families will continue to see their hydro bills rise. Does the Premier not listen to these stories or care about the people who are struggling to get by?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm pleased to rise to talk about the 17% reduction that families, small businesses and farms have received so far, thanks to this government's fair hydro plan. On top of that, 800,000 families across the province who live in rural or remote parts of our province will see between a 40% and 50% reduction. On top of that, many of those families are Hydro One customers.

When we're talking about the broadening of ownership of Hydro One, yes, Mr. Speaker, our final tranche was done this week. With that sale, we made \$2.8 billion that we can invest in things like the GTHA GO regional express rail. I know that's obviously something that the opposition party doesn't support. What about the \$5.3 billion in the Eglinton Crosstown or the \$1 billion in Ottawa? That's all great news for this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Acting Premier: We've told the Premier about businesses eager to expand and create more jobs, if only they could get some relief on their hydro bills. No response for four years under her watch.

We've told her about municipalities across Ontario, which are worried about having to close valued community centres and arenas because they can't afford to keep the lights on. No response.

The people of Ontario have said loud and clear, "Stop the wrong-headed sell-off of Hydro One," which the Premier knows will only cause more chaos and damage to our already fragile hydro system. No response.

Why?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: If we go back just even a few years, we can start talking about how this government pulled costs out of the system: \$3.5 billion in the re-negotiation of the Samsung agreement, saving ratepayers money. We cancelled the LRP II project, saving ratepayers money.

We can go back further and further, Mr. Speaker, to talk about ways that this government continued to find ways to save ratepayers money on their electricity bills. But the one thing that we had to do was rebuild the system. The system was a mess, and it was left a mess by those two governments when they were in power.

We stepped in in 2003 and had to rebuild the system, at a cost of \$50 billion. When we rebuilt that system, we made it clean and reliable and we no longer use coal in our electricity grid, something that is seen as a leadership role around the world.

Interjection.

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

Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Acting Premier: The Premier ignores the 80% of Ontarians opposed to the sell-off of Hydro One. She looks away when she hears about the real and devastating impact that her mismanagement of the hydro system has had on families, businesses and local governments. She doesn't have a credible plan to fix any of the mess that she and her government have helped create—maybe bury it in a mound of buried money; that seems to be what they're thinking about.

Without a mandate and just a year shy of being booted out of office, she has decided to complete the sell-off of a majority share of one of the most profitable public utilities in this province. Does the Premier listen to anyone but Bay Street bankers, high-powered investors and an energy minister who just doesn't seem to understand this file?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Once again, I'm very pleased to stand and talk about the significant reductions that families are already receiving: the 17% reduction that they are receiving today.

When talking about not understanding the file, Mr. Speaker, outside experts and observers agree that the

NDP's pamphlet on what they would do with energy won't even help Ontarians. Thomas Walkom from the Toronto Star called their proposal "thin gruel" and said that it consisted of "wishful thinking" and puts off "tough decisions."

This government is making tough decisions to make sure that we're bringing lasting relief right now for families, small businesses and farms. So we take no lessons from a party that has no plan, that has no idea, and won't do anything to help people now.

We are acting. We are bringing forward legislation that is bringing forward a 25% reduction. That is something we should be proud of, Mr. Speaker.

PHARMACARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question is for the Acting Premier. This week, New Democrats received a letter from Sarah. Sarah lives in Norwich, which is just outside of Woodstock. She works at Tim Hortons, trying to put herself through school. She wants to become a social worker.

Sarah has a chronic eye disease that causes blurred vision, dark floating spots and progressive vision loss. Sarah is 27 years old.

Can the Acting Premier explain why she thinks Sarah should have to pay for the expensive medication for her eyes out of pocket?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will ask the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to respond to the supplementary.

Sarah is a perfect example of why the changes we have made to OSAP are going to transform her life. Working at Tim Hortons, I'm assuming she's making under \$50,000 a year—I expect significantly below that. Not only will she have free tuition, she will also have money in the form of non-repayable grants that will allow her to cover some of her living expenses. If Sarah happens to have a child, the news is even better for her.

Sarah is exactly the kind of person we had in mind when we took away the restrictions on OSAP that related to age. OSAP is now available to all students if they qualify financially, regardless of their age.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Sarah doesn't want to get pregnant; she wants help to pay for her medication. She told us, "No person with any severe health problem should be forced to choose between paying bills and paying for much-needed medications."

The NDP's universal pharmacare program would help Sarah and the thousands of other Ontarians who have to make that heartbreaking decision each and every month. Why is the Premier ignoring the best advice, refusing to bring in universal pharmacare and refusing to help people like Sarah?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It gives me great pride to be able to stand up and talk about our pharmacare program,

which is a great leap forward to what I think we all agree ultimately should be universal pharmacare for all Ontarians and for all Canadians; and not somewhere in the future—perhaps in 2020, as with the third party’s proposal—but actually on January 1 of next year, four million children and youth will have access to 4,400 drugs absolutely free, no annual deductible, no copay.

We continue to hear from Ontarians just how important this program is and that there are many, many families and individuals who are celebrating the fact that in many cases, expenses that can run into the thousands of dollars for them will now be covered under this plan starting on January 1 of next year.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Health care is based on universal access. Our health care system is built on the principle that nobody is turned away. Sarah shouldn’t have to worry about school, about working, about trying to pay for her medication because she is 27 years old rather than 24.

Ontarians want a fair system. They want their government to implement a fair system. Why won’t the Premier bring in universal pharmacare that leaves no one behind?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I think the third party needs to describe their own proposal more accurately. It’s not universal; the proposal is for 125 drugs. Our commitment is for 4,275 drugs more than their program—the entire formulary. They propose to income-test access to their program as well. It’s not universal when it’s income-tested.

To give you an example, Durhane Wong-Rieger, who is the CEO of the Canadian Organization for Rare Disorders, has this to say: “We believe Ontario’s child and youth OHIP+” pharmacare program “is a bold move and a really big deal for Ontario families, coming at a time when other drug plans, including the private plans, seem to be abandoning those who are most vulnerable and in need. The Canadian Organization for Rare Disorders is committed to working with the Ontario government and calls on other provinces to follow suit.”

That’s just one of literally dozens of examples of organizations and individuals who support our commitment.

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ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Minister of Energy. Yesterday, I received an order paper response from the minister, but it really wasn’t much of a response. He said he couldn’t answer my question and that I should submit a freedom-of-information request.

What I wanted was documents and correspondence from January and February from the ministry, IESO and OPG that used words like “fees,” “commissions,” “broker,” “lender” and “refinancing.”

The minister knows that this House is going to have to vote on legislation that he brings forward. Why is he

trying to get members to pay for information that they should have before they vote on legislation?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Of course, I always like to stand and address the questions that are brought forward by the opposition.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Stand in the way of a freedom-of-information request is what you want to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, second time. Oh, yes. I’ve got a checklist.

Carry on.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Of course, the Ontario fair hydro plan and the relief that is coming is an important issue. Where we stand in this House on this topic is very well known.

But what’s the position of the official opposition when it comes to their plan, Mr. Speaker? It makes you wonder. It’s been almost 70 days now since the Leader of the Opposition stood and said that they have a plan forthcoming. It went from a three-point plan to a five-point plan to a zero-point plan.

I know that part of the role of the opposition should be putting forward a credible alternative. Mr. Speaker, we’re still waiting for anything credible coming from that party.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: If the minister would like us to do his job for him, we would gladly do it, but our job is to scrutinize the plan that they are putting forward.

The people of Ontario deserve to know if the government’s hydro plan involves millions or billions paid out in fees to brokers or bankers. It may as well be brought to you by Goldman Sachs at this point. The people of Ontario deserve to know because, by the government’s own admission, those fees will be recoverable on their hydro rates.

Will the minister turn over exactly the documents I asked for in my order paper question or will this be yet another Liberal scheme done in the backrooms by a Liberal minister who has got his hand in the pocket of ratepayers?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the last minute, the member did make some statements that I am not happy with, and I would hope that he would never try to do that again.

Minister.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I think it’s important that I do remind the critic from the opposition party that as the critic for the energy file, he did attend a technical briefing where officials gave him all the details of our plan. We’re more than happy to share more information with him. I know we offered an additional technical briefing.

I do agree, Mr. Speaker, that it is the role of the official opposition to make sure that they question what the government is doing. I understand that role. And you know what? It also takes courage to bring forward a plan, to talk about what they would do differently. Who thinks that? Let me read a quote: “The challenge for anyone who aspires to be Premier—any party that aspires to serve in government—is to say what we would do.” Do

you know who said that, Mr. Speaker? The leader of the official opposition. It's just too bad, when it comes to energy or Ontario, they have no plan at all.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Acting Premier. Prior to the 2014 election, the Premier told Torontonians that the relief line subway was one of her top transit priorities. But since the election, she has refused to commit to funding the construction of the relief line. The mayor of Toronto and the TTC say that the relief line must be built before the Yonge line extension or else there will be transit chaos, but the Premier seems to be more interested in saving Liberal seats north of Toronto than funding a subway project that transit experts say must come first.

Why is the Premier once again putting her own political interests ahead of what's best for Toronto transit riders?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member from Parkdale for her question this morning. That member and every member in the chamber will know that we are the provincial government that is investing more in public transit, in the city of Toronto and in communities in every corner of Ontario than any other government in history. Speaker, our investments in transit in Toronto are, in fact, unprecedented.

Interestingly, just a couple of days ago at the city of Toronto, there was a staff report that came out that said, among other things, that over the next up to two years, the city of Toronto staff will continue to refine and provide the public with a finalized budget for some of the projects that the member opposite is talking about, like the relief line. We look forward to seeing that information flow out of the city of Toronto, and I've said repeatedly, the conversation will continue with Toronto.

But in the meantime, we are the only level of government that has provided \$150 million in planning money to help advance the relief line, and \$55 million for Yonge North, Speaker. At the same time, we're investing literally billions in Toronto and in the 99 communities across Ontario that have transit systems that deserve our support.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Back again to the Acting Premier: What Toronto wants is pretty clear on this file, Mr. Speaker. They have declared the relief line to be the top transit priority—nothing new in that. Prior to the 2014 election, the Premier said the relief line was her transit priority too. But so far, the Premier has committed exactly zero dollars to the construction of the relief line.

It's impossible for the city of Toronto to plan the construction of major infrastructure projects when it doesn't know if the provincial government will be a funding partner. So I'm asking again, and it's clear: Will the Premier commit today to funding the relief line, or will she keep letting down Toronto transit riders?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I do appreciate the passion that members on all sides of this House bring to the transit discussion and the transit debate. I sincerely hope that Andrea Horwath—sorry, the leader of Ontario's NDP, the third party, and members of her caucus are not suggesting that it would be prudent for any level of government to confirm a contribution to a project for which there is not yet a confirmed budget. That doesn't make a lot of sense to me.

In the meantime, I will say again that we are the only level of government that has provided \$150 million to prepare or to help advance the planning to make sure that the relief line is shovel-ready.

Speaker, one of the other problems that I have with the line of questioning coming from that member and from that party is that they seem to suggest that we should favour one community over all of the others. That's not how this side of the House views transit in the GTHA. We know gridlock is not a uniquely Toronto problem or a 905 problem. It doesn't respect municipal boundaries. We need to keep investing in Toronto and in every other community that needs our support, and do so in the way that makes the most sense. That's what we have done. It's what we are doing and will continue to do.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, we all know how committed our government is to helping our kids become lifelong learners. This is a commitment as an educator that I made many years ago. Earlier this year, you announced increased funding for education to \$23.8 billion, an increase of \$849 million from last year. I'm also pleased to hear that 71% of elementary students are achieving our high provincial standards in literacy and numeracy, that Ontario's grade 8 students are ranked the second highest in science and math in the country, and that Ontario students do outperform nearly every OECD country.

Speaker, I also know that the minister made a very special announcement earlier this week regarding graduation rates across the province. Can the minister please tell us about this announcement?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member from Barrie for her question and for her relentless focus on education.

Mr. Speaker, our government's 2017 balanced budget includes an additional investment of \$6.4 billion over three years in Ontario's education system. This reflects our commitment to help learners reach their full potential by supporting them from full-day kindergarten to post-secondary education and beyond.

Ontario's unprecedented investments in education have pushed the high school graduation rate to a historic new high. On Monday, I was joined by members of my Minister's Student Advisory Council to announce that in 2016 the five-year graduation rate of our high school students reached a new high of 86.5%. That's an increase of more than 18% since 2004, when it was just 68%. This

is about the hard work of students, teachers and their parents.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'm extremely pleased to hear this fantastic news. This is an excellent example of how committed we are to ensuring that our youngest learners become successful. Since 2004, about 217,500 more students have graduated than would have if the graduation rate had remained at the 2004 level. That's a population the size of the cities of Kingston and Thunder Bay combined that now have high school diplomas.

Despite this great news, we know there is still more work that can be done. This includes additional funding for a number of programs our government introduced through the Student Success Strategy that are credited with helping to sharply boost the graduation rate since 2004.

Minister, please explain how these programs have helped our students achieve better results and, in turn, increased the rate of graduation.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: We want all of our students to succeed. There are a number of students in the gallery today. We have a number of innovative programs that were introduced as part of our Student Success Strategy, and they have helped the graduation rate. These are programs like Specialist High Skills Majors, dual credits, our expanded co-op education, and our Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program so that they can one day maybe become electricians like our friend Jim Roberts here. Instead of using a one-size-fits-all approach, students can customize their high school experience to match their strengths, their interests and their career goals, creating more engaging learning environments and better preparing them to pursue future opportunities.

As mentioned by the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development yesterday, the new Career Kick-Start Strategy is helping students to gain even more experience from this \$190-million investment.

OPIOID ABUSE

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Acting Premier.

I'm joined here today by Sean O'Leary, executive director of We the Parents, an organization dedicated to parents of youth who are struggling with opioid addiction. Sean and his 17-year-old daughter, Paige, have courageously shared her struggle with addiction to counterfeit Percocets laced with fentanyl. I've raised the issue many times, including requesting the Minister of Health to visit Ottawa, where the opioid crisis is claiming the lives of children as young as 14.

Can the Acting Premier commit today to provide funding to deal with the opioid crisis in Ottawa?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. First of all, I want to acknowledge Sean O'Leary, who is in the

audience with us. I'm not sure if you are here with your daughter, Paige, or not but—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Yes, he is.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to both of you for being here today.

I want to applaud his advocacy and that of Paige, who is an incredibly courageous young woman, with a courageous father as well. They have advocated, as the member opposite has indicated, very strongly about the dangers we're facing in this opioid crisis, dangers that are found throughout this country, but are, as Sean and Paige can so eloquently speak to, particularly prominent in Ottawa and in the Ottawa region.

I know that they have advanced some very important activities and suggestions—activities and suggestions that we're looking at very closely.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Minister. I appreciate that acknowledgement of Mr. O'Leary and his daughter, Paige.

According to Ottawa Public Health, they "have not received any additional information as to when, how or to whom funds will be allocated or whether there will be any conditions or expected deliverables associated with this new funding source" to deal with the opioid crisis. Although there has been a verbal agreement from the Premier that these funds would flow, according to public health in Ottawa, they haven't yet.

I'm just wondering if the minister could assure Mr. O'Leary, We the Parents and Ottawa Public Health that funding to fight this crisis will indeed flow and that the answers as to when, to whom and how the resources will be allocated will be shared expeditiously.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I acknowledge the advocacy of the member opposite. I should also reference the strong advocacy and involvement of the Liberal MPPs in Ottawa as well, who have met with many individuals who either have a concern or have a responsibility to deal with this crisis.

We announced \$140 million in mental health supports. There are additional funds in the budget that we are now debating that will go specifically to opioid treatment, so I look forward to the member opposite supporting the budget and supporting those initiatives. We also invested, just last year, \$1.5 million in Ottawa in the Dave Smith Youth Treatment Centre, which will provide a 30-bed youth treatment centre for individuals who are faced with addictions to opioids and other narcotics.

There are 80 pharmacies in Ottawa that are providing naloxone free of charge, which is a lifesaver. We have a very comprehensive plan that was announced last fall that we're now in the process of implementing.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Acting Premier. Sadly, polling tells us that 90% of Canadians have lost hope. They no longer believe that their children will do better than they did. When the federal Liberal

finance minister tells workers across this country to get used to precarious employment, who can blame them?

That's why DeJanai Love is left with the work she's in. She works at GoodLife Fitness and cannot afford to take a sick day when she has a concussion from a work injury. Worse, she and her GoodLife colleagues have spent months fighting for a first contract.

Hard-working Ontarians, like DeJanai, expected improvements to labour standards in the budget last week, but, sadly, there was nothing.

Liberals have had over 14 years to improve working conditions. How much longer do workers across the province have to wait to see improvements to working conditions from the Liberal government?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: The short answer would be: not very long. We've put, I think, the right effort into this, and I hope all members of the House support the work we've done with the Changing Workplaces Review.

We know that since these two acts, the Employment Standards Act and the Labour Relations Act, were last looked at in 1995 and 2000, the world of work has changed under our feet. The world of work that young people, as you describe, are going into is quite different from the world of work I went into and many of the people in this House who are of my vintage.

The concerns you're talking about will be clearly addressed by the advisers, such things as scheduling, hours of work, sick time, emergency leave and domestic violence. These are all issues that have seized the attention of the advisers. I'm looking forward to bringing in a very comprehensive report on this issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: New Democrats value consultation, but the public has already made it clear what they want. We know what their concerns are; we've known for years. The final recommendations are in.

It's unacceptable that three million workers in Ontario have to worry about losing pay if they need to take a day off because they're sick. We believe in the minimum wage. As New Democrats, we believe in protecting workers' right to join a union and get a first contract. We believe in the same pay for the same work, and we believe in access to sick days for workers.

The Changing Workplaces Review is in; the minister has it. And so we ask again: When is the minister planning to release the final report so that hard-working Ontarians can see some change?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for the question again. The work is done. The consultations have taken place. Organized labour, the chamber of commerce, the business community and poverty advocates have been consulted. People who have been asking and advocating for changes to these pieces of legislation have had their say to some very learned individuals who have put together a very comprehensive report. We've taken the right amount of time, I think, to make sure that

when we bring this package forward, it's going to address the needs of all working Canadians while keeping Ontario's economy competitive.

What I don't agree with is, the NDP has called this process a waste of time. It's anything but a waste of time. It's work that needed to be done properly, that needed to be done right, and the results, I think, are going to support everybody who works hard in this province.

INDIGENOUS ARTS AND CULTURE

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is to the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. Our government is committed to reconciliation with indigenous people through closing gaps, supporting indigenous cultures and reconciling relationships. Mr. Speaker, as you know so well, the residential school system was established and mandated to wipe out indigenous cultures, and indigenous art has stood as a testament to the resilience of indigenous communities in the face of cultural genocide. The significant influence of indigenous arts and culture on Canadian society too often goes unmentioned and unappreciated.

My father, Mr. Justice Potts, as he toured Ontario and the Northwest Territories, often returned home with glorious pieces of indigenous art, and we, as a family, were exposed to this unique cultural form early on.

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I'd like to ask if the minister could elaborate and provide examples of how indigenous art and culture and their increasing significance in Canadian culture are being recognized.

Hon. David Zimmer: I'd like to reference the contribution of indigenous music culture. This past weekend, I attended the Hot Docs festival on Sunday evening for a viewing of a film entitled *Rumble: The Indians Who Rocked the World*. It won two major prizes. It won the \$50,000 prize for the audience's choice of the best documentary. Then it also won the festival's award as the best documentary.

What *Rumble* highlights is the underappreciated and often unknown contributions that indigenous musicians made to rhythm and blues, rock 'n' roll and heavy metal music. It was a splendid documentary and it showed indigenous musicians working with these world superstars in rhythm and blues and rock 'n' roll, and the tremendous contributions they've made to that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I look forward to seeing this documentary, *Rumble*. I want to thank the minister for the great work that he is doing, and his leadership in helping heal cultural wounds in our society.

The work that our government is doing in supporting and investing in indigenous art and culture is so important. It is in complete accord with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations to emphasize the significance of indigenous arts and culture in Canadian heritage.

I know that this is also a very important matter for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, and that her ministry is very involved in supporting indigenous arts and culture and providing those supports so that those works of art can be seen by all Ontarians and Canadians.

Will the minister also elaborate on how our government helps support and promote indigenous arts and culture, particularly when it comes to youth, in our society?

Hon. David Zimmer: Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I'd like to thank the member for Beaches–East York for his advocacy and his question. It's a timely question indeed, as the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation has pointed out, not only in this important year of our 150th anniversary, but also in light of the Hot Docs festival, which is another program that my ministry and our government are delighted to support.

We are supporting, as the member pointed out, two important cultural camps as part of our journey of reconciliation with indigenous peoples: one in Fort Albany First Nation, and the other in Pikangikum. They include activities that are cultural in nature but are sport too, because we know the healing power of sport. Of course, it's also giving them an opportunity to try out for the North American Indigenous Games, which are going to be held this summer in Ontario for the first time ever, supported by our government.

Across the board, Speaker, we're absolutely thrilled and delighted. Our support for indigenous arts and culture is long-standing, and we look forward to continuing to maintain that robust support.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Despite the royal assent of Bill 9, the End Age Discrimination Against Stroke Recovery Patients Act, in December 2016, this Liberal government continues to discriminate against post-stroke recovery patients between the ages of 20 and 64.

Jim McEwen is one of those patients, and he's here this morning in your gallery. Because Jim is not 65 yet, he's unable to access post-stroke recovery services that he needs and deserves.

That is why I introduced Bill 9, which provided access to post-stroke rehabilitation services regardless of age. But this Liberal government continues to deny Jim and thousands of others like him the post-stroke recovery services they need.

When will this government stop the discrimination of post-stroke recovery patients 20 to 64 years of age?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I want to commend the member opposite for the initiative that he took last year, the private member's bill, that we supported. I think it unanimously was supported in this Legislature, but it certainly passed with the involvement of and co-operation of my ministry—the End Age Discrimination Against Stroke Recovery Patients Act.

Mr. Speaker, we are in the process of implementing that act as a government and as a ministry. I'm proud of the investments that we have been making across the board. In fact, there's an important investment in this budget that speaks to acute care for patients with stroke, which is a game-changer, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: They can't wait.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I hope the member opposite who is heckling me right now will support this, because it's critically important to stroke care.

But we continue to—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All right. The member from Dufferin–Caledon is warned.

Finish.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The funding in the budget and the efforts that we're making in providing publicly funded physiotherapy to stroke patients where their clinician believes that it is relevant and advantageous to their therapy—we continue to fund that in hospitals, in hospital outpatient clinics, in home care, in long-term-care homes and in community physio clinics across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Back to the Minister of Health: Once again, the intent of Bill 9 has always been to provide post-stroke recovery services to patients, regardless of age. Will this minister agree this morning—yes or no—to end age discrimination in post-stroke recovery services for those 20 to 64 years of age?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I want to acknowledge Jim in the gallery, as well, who has taken his valuable time to come and join us here in the Legislature for this question.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what the member opposite's difficulty is, because by working together—the ministry, myself, his office and him directly—we have actually refined and passed unanimously his private member's bill, the End Age Discrimination Against Stroke Recovery Patients Act, 2016.

We are in the process—as we are legally bound to be, as a government, in legislation that was passed here—of implementing that act that he authored. And, as I mentioned, we are continuing to invest significant millions of dollars in funding specific to the aspect of physio, which is relevant, important and impactful for many post-stroke patients.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Acting Premier. Steven is a Hamiltonian who was waiting for a liver transplant. On his way to an appointment at St. Joe's to remove fluid from his abdomen, Steven fell in the parking lot, cutting his chin and losing consciousness.

Inside the hospital, Steven waited to be seen. In fact, he waited for eight and a half hours. Finally, late that night, he was sent home, still bloody, still disoriented and still with fluid in his abdomen.

Steven's heartbreaking story shows exactly what is happening to patients in dangerously overcrowded hospitals across Ontario due to years of Liberal cuts and layoffs. Why doesn't the Premier see the damage that she has done to patient care?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I obviously can't speak to the particulars of this individual, but despite what the member opposite says, we have among the shortest, if not the shortest, wait times in our emergency rooms in the entire country. There is third-party independent evidence, and reports that have been issued over the past several years, including from the Fraser Institute, including from the Canadian Institute for Health Information, that demonstrate that despite an increasing population and increasing volumes to our ERs, the wait times have continued to go down.

In fact, 85% of ER patients are getting treatment within the target if they are a complex patient, and 89% within the four-hour target for minor patients. Wait times have actually gone down by almost 30% in the last several years, despite the fact that ER volumes have gone up by 40%, and ER wait times for the most sick have gone down by 15%.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: I don't know if the minister heard me, Speaker, but eight and a half hours is not within the target time—and still to be sent home.

Steven's wife, Debbie, drove him to the hospital. Debbie has mobility problems and uses a wheelchair. While in the hospital, Debbie had to help Steven to get to the toilet. Then, on her own, she had to clean him up and get him back into his bed. When they left the hospital, Debbie had to get Steven out of the car all alone. Remember, Speaker, this woman is someone who needs to be in a wheelchair herself. Debbie and Steven deserve so much better.

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But once again, the Premier's hospital funding in this year's budget falls more than \$300 million short of what is needed. When will the Premier admit that she is failing Steven, Debbie and patients all across Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I have to disagree with the member opposite, and I hope that she supports this budget, because it has an infusion of more than \$500 million this year, a 3.1% increase to the operating budgets of our hospitals. It has over \$1 billion specifically dedicated to reducing wait times throughout the hospital system. It has specific elements that add additional hours for MRIs, 2,800 more hip and knee replacements and 2,100 more cataract surgeries.

In fact, we're investing—when you look at last year's budget and the increases that were built in in this year's—more than \$11 billion over the next three years in the health care system, in the health budget.

So I would hope, given the concerns that she has expressed, she'll support us and support us strongly.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question is for the Minister of Research, Innovation and Science. Over the past few years, Ontario has become a leading destination for companies interested in opening research and development branches. Ontario has one of the highest-educated workforces in the world, a low tax rate and red tape burden reduction. These commerce-friendly policies make doing business in Ontario profitable, stable and enticing for private entities looking to expand into new markets.

A particularly exciting area is Ontario's massively expanding tech sector, an industry that is expanding at an exponential rate in my riding of Kingston and the Islands, a city where history and innovation thrive.

One great example of an innovation incubator is the Breakout Project, which started yesterday at Fort Henry in Kingston and the Islands and is sponsored by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Mr. Speaker, could the Minister of Research, Innovation and Science please tell the members of this House about tech companies investing in Ontario?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I would like to thank the member from Kingston and the Islands. She has been a great advocate for research and innovation, particularly in her area.

Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely correct. Companies from all over the globe recognize Ontario for its reputation as a business-friendly ecosystem. Just a couple of days ago, Uber, a popular ride-sharing company that has deep interests in artificial intelligence, announced it would be starting a partnership with our Vector Institute for Artificial Intelligence as a platinum investor. This marks the first occasion that Uber has ever invested outside of the United States in research and development.

The R&D office at the Vector Institute will be led by University of Toronto professor Raquel Urtasun. It's a move that speaks volumes to our capacity for talent retention.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue building our innovation economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you to the Minister of Research, Innovation and Science for his answer. I am delighted to hear this fantastic news. I can't think of a better testament to Ontario's capacity for leadership in this sector.

Creating new jobs isn't a simple matter of reducing red tape and supporting existing sectors; it's a matter of training a highly skilled workforce, assisting entrepreneurs in commercializing their ideas and attracting businesses that are looking to expand into new tech economies. We need to be leaders and visionaries in the innovation field to increase our capacity, and we are doing that.

Can the minister elaborate a bit more on the types of companies that are established in Ontario and are contributing to Ontario's economy?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again, I want to thank the member from Kingston and the Islands for her question. I would be delighted to speak a little more about international investments in Ontario innovation.

Last year, Versant Ventures and Bayer AG partnered to invest in BlueRock Therapeutics, which is a stem cell research company based in the discovery centre at MaRS. Their investment, which was a total of \$225 million, was the second-largest series A financing for a medical science company.

In January of this year, Highland Therapeutics was able to secure \$200 million in financing from Morgan Stanley and Co.

Mr. Speaker, this is just the beginning. More and more tech and medicine firms are looking to invest in our province of Ontario's innovation and research.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Has cabinet ever been briefed or received a document detailing the expected cost of hydro through the year 2024? Yes or no?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased to talk about our fair hydro plan, because as we talk about the fair hydro plan, we are talking about how we are moving forward in refinancing, like remortgaging our home, a portion of the global adjustment. With that, we have said that this will take up to 20 years longer, and we've always acknowledged that this will cost us a little bit more.

In terms of what we want to do, Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that the folks and the families right across the province who are investing in our energy system will see that and utilize that system for the duration of its lasting life. In terms of what we're doing, we're making sure that we're lowering rates for families, farms and small businesses right across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the minister: That didn't answer the question. So let me ask you this: What is the expected cost of hydro in 2024?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I don't have a crystal ball. I'm sure maybe he does. Maybe he can look in it and see their plan. Maybe they can find what they would do in terms of—what they would do to lower rates now, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're warned.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, no. It's just a reminder; that's all. In case you were thinking about it.

Carry on.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I know their policy is going to come up in the magic weekend in November, but on this side, we're worrying about families now. We're worrying about small businesses now. That's why we're bringing forward Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan, which on average will reduce rates by 25%.

But right now, rates are lower by 17%. That is something that families, small businesses and farms right across this province are applauding.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Acting Premier. As you are aware, a recent announcement from Woodbine Racetrack on their new stable policies will stop any horse stabled at Woodbine from racing at another track more than once a year. Alongside 40 new turf race dates, Woodbine is going to offer \$5,000 claimers and \$6,200 conditioned claimers on the main track. Quite frankly, this policy is completely self-serving and will have serious negative impacts on the Fort Erie Race Track.

The Fort Erie community has serious concerns about the negative effect this will have on their beloved track, putting 1,000 jobs in jeopardy. I have spoken to the mayor. The Ontario Racing Commission and the Ontario government should immediately stop Woodbine in its tracks and ensure horse owners have the ability to stable their horses wherever they want, as long as they want and whenever they want. Fort Erie expects nothing else.

I ask the Premier again, will you please step in, address this important issue and stop the unfair attack on the livelihood of—

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

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I really want to thank the member from Niagara Falls. He was very courteous about a week ago. He provided me the information, the background about Fort Erie and its relationship with Woodbine, the two thoroughbred tracks in the province of Ontario.

Fort Erie Race Track of course hosts the second leg of Canada's Triple Crown, the Prince of Wales Stakes, that will be held there in and around July 25.

I indicated to the member that we're taking a look at this right now. I certainly committed to him, just earlier this morning, that I would be back to him in a timely way.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound on a point of order.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to welcome Rebecca and Wesley Hergert from the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, who have joined us at Queen's Park this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs on a point of order.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I just noticed that my good friend the warden of Peterborough county, Joe Taylor, is in the east members' gallery. We welcome Warden Taylor here to Queen's Park today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome all of our guests.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on government notice of motion number 10 relating to allocation of time on Bill 127, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes.

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

The division bells rang from 1140 to 1145.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On May 10, 2017, Mr. Naqvi moved government notice of motion number 10 relating to allocation of time on Bill 127. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

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

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael	Scott, Laurie
Bailey, Robert	Hatfield, Percy	Smith, Todd
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jones, Sylvia	Tabuns, Peter
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Taylor, Monique
Coe, Lorne	Mantha, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
DiNovo, Cheri	Martow, Gila	Vanthof, John
Forster, Cindy	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
French, Jennifer K.	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Gates, Wayne	Natyshak, Taras	Yakabuski, John
Gélinas, France	Oosterhoff, Sam	Yurek, Jeff
Gretzky, Lisa	Pettapiece, Randy	
Hardeman, Ernie	Sattler, Peggy	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 49; the nays are 34.

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

Motion agreed to.

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

The House recessed from 1148 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: It's my privilege to welcome from Multan, Pakistan, some folks who are here for a family wedding, which I also attended, in Etobicoke: Munawar Javed, Ramesha Javed, Dr. Qaiser Javed and Nuzhat Qaiser, ably accompanied by Mazhar Shafiq of the government of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. I'm glad you're with us.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FOUR COUNTIES HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Monte McNaughton: On June 9 and 10, Four Counties hospital in my hometown of Newbury will celebrate its 50th anniversary.

Four Counties hospital was a dream of my grandfather and a community of supporters, and stands at the intersection of the counties of Middlesex, Lambton, Kent and Elgin, serving a catchment area of 23,000 residents. Crucially, the hospital is the closest emergency health care facility to Highway 401 in the long stretch between London and Chatham.

Four Counties Health Services offers extensive outpatient care, 24-hour access to a physician for emergencies, minor surgical services and a number of continuing care beds. Additionally, Four Counties has an active and successful adult daycare centre, and the facility supports numerous community programs, such as Meals on Wheels and VON's palliative care volunteer program.

In 1967, Four Counties was started through the efforts of my grandfather, among others. With Newbury at the centre of an extensive farming tract in an area that boasted several local industries, Jack McNaughton, reeve of Newbury, and his council recognized the need to have a local hospital. Their efforts were strongly supported by Matthew Dymond, Minister of Health under the Honourable John Robarts. Four Counties Health Services is now a part of the Middlesex Hospital Alliance and continues to play a vital role in our community.

The anniversary celebration itself will include hospital tours, a time capsule ceremony, first responder demonstrations, a staff and volunteer reunion, a vintage car show and a children's fun fair. A good time will be had by all.

CLUB RICHELIEU WELLAND

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's a pleasure to rise today to congratulate the Club Richelieu in my Welland riding on celebrating their 60th anniversary this year.

The Club Richelieu provides invaluable space and programming for our francophone community. They also help raise money—upwards of \$40,000 annually—for local groups, including the long-term-care facility Foyer Richelieu, while helping to preserve the francophone culture.

On February 7, 1957, a group of 40 people came together to respond to the fast-growing francophone population in Welland. They reached out to friends, family and community, outlined goals, and before you knew it, the Club Richelieu was born. Armand Gervais and Lionel Beauparlant are the only two surviving members today.

Their very first contribution was \$1,000 to the Welland hospital. While it may not mean much now, at the time it was a significant amount of money.

The club is now among the largest Club Richelieu chapters in the world, and I'm so proud to support the work that they do each and every day. To Armand, Mike Seguin, Lionel and many other members and their partners behind the scenes who have contributed to the success, congratulations on 60 years. Félicitations.

NIAGARA COLLEGE

Mr. James J. Bradley: On Saturday, May 6, along with over 300 community leaders, educators and well-wishers, I had the privilege of attending the 50th anniversary gala of Niagara College of Applied Arts and Technology at the beautiful Niagara-on-the-Lake campus.

Over the past half-century, Niagara College has had a profound positive impact on the Niagara region, and indeed our province and country. The college's highly qualified and dedicated faculty has been an excellent resource for our entire community, and in particular those who have attended the college as a student.

Industry, business and labour have all appreciated the outstanding co-operation that has been forthcoming from the college as it prepares its students for the workplace. Both those who are entering post-secondary education for the first time and those taking advantage of meeting additional educational requirements and obtaining training for a new vocation have benefited from these experiences at this renowned educational institution. Student satisfaction surveys and the success of its students in securing employment positions are evidence of the significant role that Niagara College has played in the lives of its students, both while they are attending Niagara and in their lives after college.

Under the dynamic leadership of Dr. Dan Patterson, Niagara College continues to lead the way in so many areas of post-secondary education. For this, all of us in Niagara are deeply grateful.

BLUE UMBRELLA PROGRAM

Mr. Lorne Coe: I rise to recognize the work of the Blue Umbrella Program in Whitby, created by the Alzheimer Society of Durham Region in partnership with the town of Whitby community development fund.

Speaker, there are approximately 10,000 people living with dementia in Durham region. The Blue Umbrella Program aims to provide local businesses and organizations in the region with education about dementia and strategies to provide good customer service to people

living with dementia. Once all employees are trained and the business is certified, they can wear blue umbrella pins and have window decals, and a resident with dementia will be aware that there is help there for them.

Learning how to interact with residents who may have forms of dementia is very important, and the Alzheimer Society of Durham Region, with the assistance of the town of Whitby, is assisting with that process. It's my pleasure to highlight the Blue Umbrella Program launched by the Alzheimer Society of Durham Region and to encourage all businesses and organizations to reach out to better the lives of those living in Durham region with dementia, who otherwise would not have this level of help to support them and their families.

PARAMEDICS COMPETITION

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Let me tell you about Ontario's world champion team of paramedics. They are from Windsor and Essex county. Last year they travelled to the Czech Republic. It was their first international competition. The Rallye Revjiz brings together paramedic teams from 30 countries. They take part in a 24-hour competition that starts at 6 in the morning. For 24 straight hours, the teams are thrown into a dozen life-and-death situations. They are judged on how well they assess their circumstances, come up with a rescue plan and provide the medical treatment.

It's a gruelling competition. Team Ontario came away with the gold medal last year, and they'll soon be on the way to defend their championship. The competition will run between the 25th and the 28th of May. Once again, the team captain is Chris Kirwan from my riding of Windsor-Tecumseh. He's joined by Lance Huver from last year's team and by two newcomers, Shawn May and Mike Filiault. They're members of CUPE, the Canadian Union of Public Employees. The other Canadian team is from British Columbia, and they finished second last year.

Speaker, I don't know about you, but for me, having the top two teams from Canada says a lot about the quality of our paramedic training here in Canada. It also says a great deal about Ontario's professional paramedics.

You can follow their trip on Facebook and Twitter, at EMS Team Ontario, or on their website at—all one word—emsteamontario.com.

Guys, have a great trip and, if you can, bring home the gold.

VOLUNTEER AWARDS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Last weekend, I had the privilege of attending two volunteer service award ceremonies that recognized the hard work and commitment of dedicated volunteers in my community.

At events in Cobourg and in Belleville, I was thrilled to be able to personally thank each one of the recognized

individuals and bring greetings from the Minister of Citizenship and the Premier of Ontario. I was so pleased to be able to honour over 170 volunteers for their service contributions to Northumberland–Quinte West’s communities in various organizations. From the Bewdley Legion to the Roseneath Agricultural Society to the Girl Guides of Belleville, and from the Highland Shores Children’s Aid Society to Community Care Trent Hills, over 2,775 years of service have been invested by these selfless individuals to make their communities better places to live. I was moved by the many stories through the evening of the appreciation and happiness their actions brought to the organizations they serve.

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I was reminded of a quote by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: “Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve.... You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love.”

Again, I want to take the opportunity to thank all the volunteers. As I often say, what would our communities be without volunteers?

DOROTHY JANE NEEDLES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: This weekend, a Dufferin county treasure, Dorothy Jane Needles, passed away after a life well lived.

Dorothy Jane, or DJ, lived her life with a passion for music, the arts, her family and her community. At the age of five, she had already written her first play and was an assistant director for her mother, who ran the Toronto Children’s Players. At the age of 16, DJ had received her teacher’s certificate and was teaching at the Crescent Preparatory School for Boys. She married William—Bill—Needles in 1946, and a few years later began hosting Kindergarten of the Air on CBC Radio. By the mid-1950s, DJ and Bill had purchased their farm in Mono.

In the 1970s, while working for the Etobicoke Board of Education, the Needles family moved to Rosemont and lived in the Penny Farthing Antique shop, and founded another Rosemont landmark, the Globe Restaurant. DJ worked as a dispatcher for the Rosemont Volunteer Fire Department and continued to give back to her community as a church organist, as a volunteer at the Dufferin County Museum, giving music lessons and running a cultural program out of the Orange Hall. She even nurtured a heritage garden at the Mono municipal offices.

In 2009, she was awarded the Lieutenant Governor’s Ontario Heritage Award for commitment to her community.

The Needles passed on their passion for the arts and public service to her son Dan Needles, a celebrated author and playwright, and her daughter Laura Ryan, the current mayor of Mono and previous warden of Dufferin.

While we mourn her passing, Dorothy Jane Needles’s enormous contribution to Dufferin is a legacy that will continue to enrich our community for years to come.

NURSING WEEK

Mr. Granville Anderson: I am pleased to rise in the Legislature to recognize that May 8 to 14 is Nursing Week in Ontario. This is an opportunity to congratulate and thank the dedicated nurses and nurse practitioners in my riding of Durham as well as in our whole province, who continue to provide quality care for their patients, families and friends.

Nurses work tirelessly to make our lives healthier and happier. They play a vital role in the delivery of high-quality health care in Ontario. As the father of a nurse, I know first-hand the hard work, long hours, love and compassion required to do their job, and I sincerely thank them for their efforts.

I would like to encourage my colleagues to participate in the Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario’s 17th annual Take Your MPP To Work event. This event provides a unique opportunity for MPPs to go to work with a registered nurse to see the skills and expertise required to provide quality health care to Ontarians.

Tomorrow, I will be visiting Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences in Whitby. I am looking forward to meeting with registered nurses, nurse practitioners and students within the Durham region to engage in meaningful discussions.

Thank you once again to all the nurses in Ontario for all that you do.

ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: I’m pleased to rise today, as the first MPP of Korean heritage in Ontario, to speak about Asian Heritage Month. Asian Heritage Month, in May of each year, is a time to reflect on the many achievements and contributions of Asians in Ontario, who have helped to shape the great province that we are today.

One of the key strands in the fabric of Ontario’s multi-cultural mosaic is, of course, the many Asian communities. Their dynamism, work ethic, entrepreneurship and beautiful culture help make up part of Ontario’s beautiful cultural mosaic. Today, we see Asian Ontarians are very active in their communities and are successful in various fields.

As an MPP of Asian origin, I’m especially proud of the integral role that Asian Ontarians have played in enriching our province economically, culturally and socially. I invite all Ontarians to learn more about the important roles played by Ontarians of Asian heritage, and to take part in the many events taking place this month.

Mr. Speaker, I hope all members will join me in celebrating Asian Heritage Month, honouring our Asian communities.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FAIR HYDRO ACT, 2017
LOI DE 2017 POUR DES FRAIS
D'ÉLECTRICITÉ ÉQUITABLES

Mr. Thibeault moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 132, An Act to enact the Ontario Fair Hydro Plan Act, 2017 and to make amendments to the Electricity Act, 1998 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 132, Loi édictant la Loi de 2017 sur le Plan ontarien pour des frais d'électricité équitables et modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité et la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: If passed, the Fair Hydro Act would build on the previously announced initiatives to deliver broad-based relief and lead to electricity bills that are 25% lower, on average, for residential consumers starting in the summer of 2017.

This legislation also includes initiatives to reduce costs for up to half a million small businesses, farms and manufacturers, Mr. Speaker.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

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

“Whereas seniors and families deserve long-term-care beds that provide high-quality care in their community;

“Whereas, according to the Ontario Long Term Care Association 2016 report, 97% of residents need help with daily activities such as getting out of bed, eating or toileting;

“Whereas there are currently 26,500 people on the wait list for long-term care, and that number is expected to double in the next six years;

“Whereas long-term-care homes require stable and predictable funding each year to help pay for the rising cost of operations, provide quality care and invest in more beds;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to move quickly to pass Bill 110, the Long-Term Care Homes Amendment Act, 2017, and ensure that funding for food and utilities reflect changes in the cost of living.”

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

CHILD CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to thank all the people who signed the petition, including Donna Campbell from Garson in my riding. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition here which is of tremendous interest to the people of Ontario, specifically today, given the legislation that was just introduced by the Minister of Energy.

“Support the Ontario Fair Hydro Plan.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

“Whereas the Ontario fair hydro plan would reduce hydro bills for residential consumers, small businesses and farms by an average of 25% as part of a significant

system restructuring, with increases held to the rate of inflation for the next four years;

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

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

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

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

I certainly agree with this petition, Speaker, and I leave it with the page.

LUNG HEALTH

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

“As the bill had already been debated at committee in the bill’s original form, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, to expedite through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 71 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

I support this petition, Madam Speaker, affix my signature to it and give it to page Rada.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I’d like to thank Madame Jeannine Beaudry from Val Therese, in my riding, for sending this petition. It reads as follows:

“Fair Treatment of the Frail Elderly Seeking Long-Term-Care Placement.

“Whereas frail elderly patients needing long-term-care placement in homes within the North East Local Health Integration Network ... have been pressured to move out of the hospital to await placement, or stay and pay hospital rates of approximately \$1,000 per day; and

“Whereas frail elderly patients needing long-term-care placement in Sudbury and Sault Ste. Marie have been pressured to move to homes not of their choosing, or to ‘interim’ beds in facilities that don’t meet legislated standards for permanent long-term-care homes; and

“Whereas the practice of making patients remain in ‘interim’ beds is contrary to Ministry of Health ... policy which identifies ‘interim’ beds as intended to ‘ensure a continuous flow-through so that interim beds are constantly freed up for new applicants from hospitals’;

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“—Ensure health system officials are using ‘interim’ beds as ‘flow-through,’ in accordance with fairness and as outlined in MOHLTC policy;

“—Ensure patients aren’t pressured with hospital rates and fulfill promises made to hundreds of nursing home residents who agreed to move temporarily with the promise that they would be relocated as soon as a bed in a home of their choosing became available.”

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

GRANDVIEW CHILDREN’S CENTRE

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I’m very proud to affix my signature and give it to page Kaitlin.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Cindy Forster: The petition I have is “Nurses Know—Petition for Better Care.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

“Whereas procedures are being off-loaded into private clinics not subject to hospital legislation; and

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

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

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

“Implement a moratorium on RN cuts;

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

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

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

I support this petition, sign it and will send it with page Gracin.

WATER FLUORIDATION

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

“Update Ontario Fluoridation Legislation.

“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.”

I agree with this petition. I’ll affix my name and send to the table with page Kenna.

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HYDRO RATES

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition. I add my signature to it and give to page Jeremi.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to present a petition entitled "Widen Highway 3 Now.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Highway 3 from Windsor to Leamington has long been identified as dangerous and unable to meet growing traffic volumes; and

"Whereas the widening of this highway passed its environmental assessment in 2006; and

"Whereas the portion of this project from Windsor to west of the town of Essex has been completed, but the remainder of the project remains stalled; and

"Whereas there has been a recent announcement of plans to rebuild the roadway, culverts, lighting and signals along the portion of Highway 3 that has not yet been widened;

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

"To revisit plans to rebuild Highway 3 from Essex to Leamington and direct those funds to the timely completion of the already approved widening of this important roadway in Essex county."

I support the petition and will send to the Clerk's table with page Noah.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over the northeast, and I'd like to thank Michelle Ellery from Hanmer in my riding.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Orders of the day.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

HOUSING POLICY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government should appoint a panel to consider and report on its recommendations with respect to housing affordability and supply in Ontario; and

That in their deliberations that panel should consider methods to increase supply, reduce red tape on housing, address affordability for first-time homebuyers and stabilize the real estate market in both the short and long term, and any other issues the panel deems necessary; and

That the government shall appoint the panel within 30 days; and

That the panel be required to report within three months and that the minister shall table the report with the House within 15 days of receiving it; and

The panel shall include representatives from:

- Association of Municipalities of Ontario;
- Building Industry and Land Development Association;
- city of Toronto;
- Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada;
- Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario;
- Mortgage Professionals Canada;
- Ontario Building Officials Association;
- Ontario Home Builders' Association;
- Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association;
- Ontario Professional Planners Institute;
- Ontario Real Estate Association;
- Association of Ontario Land Economists;
- Environmental Defence;
- a homeowners' association;
- an organization whose members are young potential homebuyers; and
- any other experts that the minister shall deem necessary.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Hardeman has moved private member's notice of motion number 52. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to bring forward this motion calling on the government to create a housing affordability panel.

Today, Ontario is facing a housing crisis. Toronto's 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 on 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 one unit a day because they can't afford to maintain them to a livable standard. Vacancies in Toronto, Peterborough and Guelph are all around 1%, which is basically no vacancy at all.

We've been hearing from people across the GTA, especially young people, that they are starting to believe they will never have the opportunity of owning a home.

I want to recognize that the government has announced some proposals, but the reality is that nothing has changed. We're still seeing lineups at the sales offices as people fight for the right to buy a new home or a condo. We're still seeing bidding wars for houses and apartments.

Last month, housing prices in Toronto increased another \$44,495, to \$943,947. The average detached home in Toronto last month was over \$1.5 million. Last month, Peterborough, Cambridge, Pickering and other municipalities all saw prices continue to increase. Clearly, the problem has not been solved.

We need to develop a real solution to stabilize the housing market. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. said, "Toronto and Hamilton continue to face price acceleration, over-evaluation and overheating. Price growth has intensified and demand is outpacing supply in the rental, resale and new home markets."

But it isn't just in the GTA. We've seen a rapid price increase in Peterborough, Guelph and Chatham-Kent. Young people are seeing the dream of home ownership slipping further and further away. We need to do more to address this housing crisis. We need to develop a plan in consultation with the experts to stabilize the real estate market. We need to address our shortage of supply.

Solving the housing affordability problem is complex, and it will not happen with the solution created behind closed doors at Queen's Park. This panel must include the people who plan houses, the people who build them and the people who live in them.

We need the people who are on the front lines, who have experience planning communities, and the people who know how to build houses and where the roadblocks are.

We need the people who are providing housing for our most vulnerable, and the people who are focused on smart growth to protect our environment; the people who finance homes, and the people who ensure that they are built properly.

We need both the homeowner, who is worried about protecting equity for their retirement, and the young person who wants a home, to begin a new family.

In early April, myself and our leader met with Juan Rojas, who had been trying to buy a new home for his growing family. He and his family have a three-year-old daughter and are expecting another child. At that point, they had put in offers on up to 10 homes, and every time they were outbid. They raised their offers to match the

price that homes were selling for last week, but prices were increasing so fast that they couldn't keep up. They were frustrated and discouraged.

That day, the leader and I wrote a letter to Minister Sousa outlining five actions that we wanted to see the government take to address housing affordability. Establishing this panel was one of those points. We were hopeful that they would do so, but so far, they have only announced their intention to meet with the industry once a quarter. That's just not enough. We need a panel with broad membership, clear goals and a tight timeline.

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Having these industry experts come together means that we will have real solutions that will work on the ground, and having a diverse group will avoid unintended consequences. Bringing the groups together is more effective than individual meetings because the groups share information and work together to find solutions that work for everyone. It's easy for everyone to simply point to someone else as being the problem, but when they are part of the same working group there is an opportunity to examine the delays from both sides and look at what both sides can do to make the process work better.

The panel will work together to come up with real solutions for red tape, increasing supply and stabilizing the real estate market. It will be delivering its report when the government is about ready to hold the second meeting from the group that they were going to meet with from their proposal.

We have offered, over and over, to work with the government to address this issue. We have been raising alarm bells on housing affordability for years. In fact, over the last three years, I have raised affordable housing and housing affordability in this Legislature 140 times. But we need to ensure that the action we take is right and that it is not making the problem worse.

Many experts have raised concerns in the last few weeks that the government's recent announcement will result in vastly reduced supply and make the problem worse in the long run. The truth is that despite the announcement, not a single piece of red tape has been cut. There have been no changes that impact the process of buying a house, and there have been no changes to encourage supply. We need to ensure that we involve the experts who understand the complexities of the housing market and the unintended consequences that government policies can have.

Just this week, a panel at the Land and Development Conference raised concerns that the government's housing plan will not accomplish its goals. As Daniel Winberg of the Rockport Group said, "I'm hoping this plan will have some refinement and that the government will meet with industry leaders."

This morning, I was pleased to host a round table at Queen's Park to start the discussion. I want to thank all the participants who made the time to come to the meeting: BILD, Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario, Mortgage Profes-

sionals Canada, Ontario Home Builders' Association, Toronto board of trade, Ontario Real Estate Association, Environmental Defence, and the Association of Ontario Land Economists. It was a great discussion, and it's clear that there is value in bringing these groups together. When I asked people what the biggest challenge is for housing affordability, they all said "supply." Several people mentioned that we need to work to ensure that there is also more choice and more diversity of homes. We also heard that there's a lack of understanding of basic economics. When there is a shortage of supply, the price goes up. To stop the price from going up, we need to increase supply. They also talked about how complicated our planning and approvals process is and that other jurisdictions have more efficient systems.

They began the discussion on how to increase supply with ideas on how to eliminate barriers to construction, innovative zoning, ways to get land serviced, and how the provincial government could lead by example. Everyone in that room agreed that there are ways we can make this system work better. There were already some disagreements—but this is the value of having everyone involved in the discussion: so they can work through the disagreements to come up with solutions that work for everyone to address the housing crisis.

The constructive discussion this morning is evidence of the good work that this panel could accomplish. Already, we could see the value of having a discussion with all these groups in the same room.

There has been wide support for developing a panel or task force to create a coordinated real plan, to deal with Ontario's housing crisis.

In a recent speech, Dave McKay, the CEO of Royal Bank of Canada, called for a multi-faceted solution which addresses supply constraints and speculative forces. He also said, "If it's not done in a coordinated fashion, we could do real damage."

During our recent committee hearings, Joe Vaccaro from the Ontario Home Builders' Association said, "That brings me to our last but perhaps most important recommendation for the standing committee to consider. In an environment of rapidly increasing housing prices, challenges in delivering housing supply, increasing development charges and other fees and the ever-changing planning approvals framework, I think it is time that the government take a complete view of the entire housing system and strike a panel to look carefully at the housing supply challenges and how they contribute to housing price—and I mean all contributing factors."

The Ontario Real Estate Association "recommends that the government of Ontario strike an affordable home ownership task force to study housing affordability and supply. The task force should work quickly to bring forward recommendations to the minister ... on how Ontario can increase housing supply."

Even the former Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing said recently in committee, "We did have long discussions about a housing panel and some of the people who may be on it. I'm a big supporter of that. I think it's

the way to go." In fact, this morning I had a call from the Ontario Association of Architects, which has asked to be part of the panel if it is supported today and moved forward.

One of the concerns that was raised at the round table this morning was that we still don't have accurate data on the housing industry. At the announcement, the Minister of Finance said that foreign homebuyers are 8% of the market. The next day, he said that it was only 5%. Now the Toronto Real Estate Board says that it's less than 1%.

We believe that the only way for housing policies to be successful is to ensure that they are based on evidence and knowledge. Clearly, the government doesn't have that knowledge, but the people on the panel do. They are offering their expertise to help solve this crisis. The government simply has to say yes.

Most of us grew up with the dream of owning our own home. Our children and our grandchildren have that same dream, but for them, that may be all it is. Young people who are trying to save for a house are seeing prices increase faster than they can save. We have about 100,000 new people moving into the GTA every year, and we only build homes for a fraction of them. That means that unless we take real action to address supply, the housing shortage will get worse and worse.

That's why the leader and I included this housing affordability panel in our asks of the finance minister in early April. That's why I'm asking all members to support this motion so that, by the end of the summer, we will have an expert report that gives us real, implementable solutions to stabilize the real estate market and once again make home ownership an achievable dream for all the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's always an honour to stand here in Ontario's provincial Parliament on behalf of the good people in Windsor–Tecumseh. Today, we are discussing the merits of a bill brought to us by my good friend from Oxford, Mr. Hardeman. He is a former mayor and a former warden, and he served a couple of times in a Conservative cabinet. In other words, this isn't his first rodeo; he has been around the block a couple of times. Sometimes we'd do well to listen to his advice, and this is one of those times.

What the member is proposing is one way of approaching the crisis we have in affordable housing in Ontario. We hope we can all agree that there is a lot to be done on the housing file. Like myself, Mr. Hardeman is a party critic for municipal affairs and housing. We agree—the two of us—that the government could be doing more to try to get a handle on this file.

The Liberals, as you know, Speaker, have been in power the past 14 years. During that time, they've had 12 Ministers of Housing. Before that, the Conservatives were there for eight years, and they had six ministers—in total, 18 ministers in 22 years. The member from Oxford served as an associate minister in that portfolio with responsibility for rural affairs, so maybe that makes 19 ministers in 22 years.

That, to me, says that housing has not been a priority for Ontario's political leaders for a very long time. So now what can we do about that? Well, the member from Oxford has an idea. He suggests we appoint a housing affordability panel. He is calling for this panel to be made up of experts from across the housing sector. Their goal would be to develop real solutions to the housing affordability challenge. They'd look at ways of reducing red tape, of increasing the housing supply and of stabilizing the real estate market in both the short and long term, and they'd find ways to make it more affordable for first-time homebuyers to find a suitable place to live.

Mr. Hardeman believes there will be a spot on that panel for planners and builders, as well as tenants and homeowners. There is quite a list of potential panel members, as we've heard. AMO would be there, of course, and the city of Toronto. There would be a spot for co-op housing people, and that's a good thing, because Mr. Hardeman and myself are both co-chairs on a co-operative caucus here at Queen's Park, along with Ms. Lalonde from Ottawa-Orléans. Planners, realtors, environmentalists, developers: It's a lengthy list. And in case anybody has been forgotten, the bill says he'd accept any other experts that the ministry shall deem necessary.

1350

This wouldn't be a job you'd take on if you didn't want to work. The bill calls on the panel to be appointed within 30 days and to report back to the minister within three months. Then he would have 15 days to report his findings to this House. It's a pretty ambitious agenda, but then again, it would have to be if we are to get serious about looking at options and alternatives in solving the crisis in affordable housing in this province.

I've been told that the Liberal government held a series of consultations with housing stakeholders before introducing Bill 124 and before announcing they would be making other changes, such as imposing penalty taxes on those who live elsewhere but buy properties as portfolio investments in Ontario.

I don't believe there is one magic solution to the housing file. There are loopholes that can be plugged, regulations that can be updated and incentives that could be offered by governments at all levels. If ever there was a time for the stakeholders to come together, this is it. There can't be winners and losers. We can't scapegoat one partner. We must be fair to all.

As we have seen so far while we listen to delegations at the Standing Committee on General Government over Bill 124, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, previous consultations didn't work out so well. Many of the stakeholders have told us that they were expecting more or different solutions. Some of them have bluntly told us how disappointed they are with what was delivered as opposed to what they thought was promised. I wasn't there for those consultations so I don't know if anything was actually promised, but certainly we've been told the perception was left that their issues would be

addressed in the bill, and they have not been. So there is work to be done.

When I look at the list of associations that could be on this panel, I'd suggest we also invite a representative from Habitat for Humanity. That organization has been filling a need in many of our communities. I'd also suggest we have someone on there representing the many homeless shelters we have that operate around the province. Shelters provide a temporary fix as opposed to a more permanent solution, but they know the stories and they have the history of how easy it is to fall into homelessness. They must be part of this conversation as well. I'd also suggest we have a First Nations representative for discussions on how we can improve living conditions in their communities.

We can't limit our solutions to conditions in the big and mid-size cities. Small towns and rural communities must be represented.

We should have academics on there as well, one or two of them who know the history of Ontario's housing issues and know what has worked elsewhere and what may not have worked well in other places.

This is a huge endeavour. It's a major problem. It has been ignored for far too long. You can't point fingers; we're all part of the blame.

CMHC should be there—they're the housing experts—and maybe FCM.

Ottawa has to step up to the plate. We need a national housing strategy.

I commend the member from Oxford for bringing this home. We have to send a message, a strong one, that we aren't content to sit back and allow the market to correct itself. It just isn't going to happen. The issue needs study. It needs it now. Let's do it. Let's do it today. Thank you to the member from Oxford for bringing this forward.

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

Hon. Chris Ballard: First, I'd like to thank the member for Oxford, my critic when it comes to housing, for introducing the motion.

As the member knows, our government has already introduced the Fair Housing Plan. It includes 16 points that, frankly, will make buying or renting a home more affordable, including the formation of a housing advisory group. The advisory group will provide ongoing advice to the government—and I emphasize "ongoing"—on the housing market. The group will be made up of a very diverse range of experts, including economists, academics, developers, community members and the real estate sector. We're looking at a strong cross-section of all of those who are touched by housing.

But our plan will go further and do more than what my critic has put on the table. I can give you the first example: Our government recognizes that maintaining a healthy supply is important to make buying or renting a house more affordable and fair. That's why we're creating a new housing supply team that will work with developers and municipalities to identify opportunities for bringing housing supply to market.

I think we've referenced these before. The housing supply team is sort of our housing SWAT team that will be able to move in quickly, and have members who are senior enough in government that they can quickly deal with issues on the municipal side, the developer side or on the provincial side.

So we really have two teams: a higher-level advisory team comprised of a wide range of experts in the market, and then our on-the-ground housing supply team that will be looking at real issues that developers and municipalities face as they try and get new projects to market.

I can say that as I crossed Ontario talking to organizations and groups about housing in their communities, municipalities would sometimes express frustration with developers. Developers would sometimes express frustration with municipalities. Both would often express frustration about the province. This housing supply team is going to look at some of those and identify not only what we can do on an individual project, but identify some of the more systemic on-the-ground issues, the irritants that developers, municipalities and the province face on getting projects to market.

We're told in a study that there are about 70,000 shovel-ready approved housing units ready to go right now in the GTA, and about 118,000 more shovel-ready approved housing units ready to go in Toronto. The question is: Why aren't they moving ahead? What's holding that back?

I believe the housing supply team and our advisory team will give us some insights into why that's happening and what we can do to increase supply through making it easier for those units to be built and get to market.

With all due respect, I think what the member opposite is introducing is something that's a bit of an incomplete plan and just really doesn't go far enough. If I wanted to be critical of my critic's position, I would say that the first meeting of the PC's proposed panel is not scheduled for over a year after our government began to address the issue.

In the past year alone, and certainly since I became Minister of Housing, we've worked very hard alongside the government of British Columbia, as well as the cities of Toronto and Vancouver, in a federal working group on the housing market, trying to understand what the issues are at a national level, sharing data between Toronto, Vancouver, Canada and Ontario.

We've met with people on every side of this issue, as I mentioned earlier: developers, planners, financial institutions, economists, federal and municipal partners, and realtors. Perhaps most importantly, though, we've listened to all of the people who are looking for a place to live or are struggling to pay for the place that they're living in now. I can tell you, Speaker, that as I went across this country, there were heartbreaking stories of people who faced economic eviction, who faced eviction through the "own use" clause of the current legislation—things that we're proposing to fix in our proposed legislation.

Together with my friend Minister Mauro, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, we've put together a dedicated housing affordability team, made up of senior ministry staff. I can say that one of the disappointing things that I saw happen was last fall, when the Progressive Conservatives voted against doubling the land transfer tax rebate for first-time homebuyers. They voted against that relief for future homebuyers, and it is, shall I say, unfortunate. It's money that anyone who is scrambling to buy a house, or to outfit the house, could certainly have used. I have heard from people who are very appreciative.

1400

The MPP for Oxford suggests that his suggested panel would take three months, and suggests legislation sometime in the future after those three months. Speaker, people need relief from increasing rent and housing prices now. They need it today. Three months is too long, and then we'd need to pass meaningful legislation after that. People need that relief now, not down the road.

This panel, or the suggested panel—another reason I'm critical of it—although I will say I do get the spirit in which this is being put forward. I don't think there is a member in here who isn't somehow affected by the housing issues that we face, whether it be rapidly increasing housing prices or rental issues. Everyone is here because we really are concerned and we really do have the best interests of our constituents at heart.

I will say that the suggested panel—a problem I have is that it would be a one-off. It won't be revisiting the issue three months after its first report. It really doesn't afford us the opportunity to assess how our legislation is working.

That's what we have in mind with our panel, Speaker. The academics, the businesspeople, the users, the renters, the homeowners: Those are the people we want to work with on an ongoing basis, to give us the feedback about how things are working in the field, so that we are better informed.

I just want to take the few minutes I have left to talk about the bill that is now in committee, our fair housing bill.

It goes without saying that housing is essential for families across Ontario, yet too many people are being affected by the growing pressures of trying to buy a home or afford their rent. I have said many times that when I'm walking down my street and going to pick my mail up from the local mailbox, not a day goes by where I don't bump into a neighbour, and the talk, the discussion, always pivots to the price of real estate.

First, everyone is amazed at how much their house is suddenly worth. But then we also recognize that this imparts a real hardship on younger people who are looking to get a good start in the housing market. Although we might be benefiting because we were fortunate enough to buy a house at a time when they were less expensive compared to the amount of money we were making, that's not the same today. I hear that; I understand that. This government hears it, and it understands it.

The flip side to that—and this is something that I learned as a municipal councillor in the greater Golden Horseshoe, in the GTA—is that the rising prices also really reflect the economic strength of our region, and they have benefited current homeowners.

Speaker, we have over 100,000 people moving to this area of Canada each and every year. Within the GTHA, the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, we have to build a city the size of Kingston each and every year—all of the housing, all of the public facilities, the roads, the sewers, the water, the electricity. Each and every year, we have to build a city the size of Kingston somehow. We have to fit that number of people into the GTHA, and it is a challenge. But those people are coming here from across Canada, from around the world, because Ontario is a success.

At the same time, though, we need to stabilize the housing market and make buying or renting a home fairer and more affordable.

A number of things we have done have been introduced in the budget—for example, the non-resident speculator tax of 15% in the greater Golden Horseshoe. Ontario, as I said, remains a welcoming place, with many new immigrants choosing Ontario as a place to come and put down roots and be wonderfully productive members of this great province. Our tax targets only those looking for a quick profit or a safe place to park their money, not those looking for a new home in which to put down roots and raise their family.

One of the key parts of the legislation we introduced is around expanding rent control to all private rental units, including those built after 1991, strengthening protections for tenants against sudden and dramatic rent increases. In my last few minutes, I'll focus there.

Travelling around Ontario, certainly travelling throughout the GTHA, we continually heard from tenants as they faced a really uncertain future about where they were going to be able to buy a house and how they were going to be able to afford their rental units. I can tell you that this is no way to build a strong and stable province, when there is that anxiety with people who don't know if they'll ever be able to own or rent.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to rise to speak in support of the member for Oxford's motion on the appointment of a panel to consider and report on recommendations concerning housing affordability and supply in Ontario.

Stakeholders within my riding continue to tell me that their concerns are completely absent from Bill 124, and that's despite receiving assurances and feedback from ministers and staff at particular meetings that they were being listened to carefully.

We're becoming increasingly concerned, Speaker, that a decision has been adopted by this Liberal government to limit input from private and public sector experts, many of whom are listed in the motion before us today. Here once again, what appears to be happening is that

consultations are merely window-dressing to ram through a politically expedient agenda. If there ever was an issue that required extensive debate, in-depth consideration and a consultation process inclusive of public and private sector representation, it's the housing crisis facing Ontario today.

This housing crisis in Toronto and the greater Toronto area is one of the most complex problems confronting government. It involves homeowners, renters, rental property owners, home and condo construction businesses, and multiple levels of government. An extensive consultation process is absolutely required in order to inform the development of measures to mitigate and address this housing crisis.

What's clear is that this motion introduced by the member from Oxford would result in the creation of a truly sector-representative panel tasked with the consideration of methods to increase housing supply, reduce red tape on housing, address affordability for first-time homebuyers, and stabilize the real estate market in both the short, mid- and longer term. It's particularly crucial that housing supply and red-tape-reduction approaches are discussed by this proposed panel.

The measures included in this Liberal government's recent announcement, in my estimation, simply don't go far enough to reduce the amount of red tape that prevents or delays the construction of new homes, condos and rental properties.

The Fraser Institute, a well-regarded institute, as you know, measured the regulatory barriers that the housing construction industry faces, including how long it takes to obtain a building permit, how much it costs, and the opposition that home builders face, particularly from local councils and community groups. Particularly important is that their research found that long and uncertain approval processes can severely restrict the supply of new homes.

In conjunction, the government's measures to specifically address the supply of housing are insufficient. While the government has clearly acknowledged the importance of supply in the housing equation, if they are serious about housing affordability, their proposed plan should go much further.

By addressing the fundamental imbalance between the demand and supply for housing, a long-term solution can be found that is to the benefit of homeowners, renters, landlords and home builders. That's why the proposed panel in my colleague's motion is so crucial, because the Liberal government's plan does not include measures to affect some of the underpinning issues in the housing crisis. The proposed panel would include representatives from no less than 15 major stakeholder organizations and associations, and encompass groups that plan housing, build housing and live in housing.

1410

We know, and there are many members in this Legislature who have served with distinction on municipal councils—this is not anecdotal. The proposed panel reflects that. This panel would be focused on creating

good policy, based on expert knowledge that will actually stabilize the real estate market; in contrast to the Liberal government's plan, which was created behind closed doors, with very little empirical evidence and very little consultation with stakeholders.

Effective consultation benefits decision-makers and providers too, as stakeholders become better informed and better motivated to get involved and support ideas if they have some influence over the agenda. Better-informed stakeholders are also likely to lead a drive for better quality engagement, which will in turn support efforts to improve policy directions.

It's much better to get people involved in difficult decisions, including the impact of changes to programs and services that they use. Focusing on a broad base of diverse stakeholders—private and public—ensures, I'm sure you would agree, greater public value in a time of constrained resources.

Speaker, there is a substantial amount of evidence in support of public engagement on housing affordability and supply, as well as case studies showing that broad multi-sector engagement results in better outcomes, in particular, policy and program development. Over recent years, the public engagement model recommended by the member from Oxford has become well established as a best practice in supporting the development of public policies.

I'm confident, Speaker, that the recommended approach from the member from Oxford will ensure that private and public sector representatives' concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed, and that feedback will be provided on how stakeholder input was factored in the decision-making, ultimately ensuring that their particular directions and longer-term directions are reflected in the ultimate program design.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to thank the member from Oxford for bringing forward this motion. Whether it's high rental costs in major cities and in rural and northern areas; or housing prices that are so unaffordable that the average worker, or a young couple trying to start out, can't get in; or the increasing retirement home rates that are already too high—many seniors living on the guaranteed income supplement can't even get into a retirement home, or if the rates aren't increasing on paper, they're actually increasing the food services or the health care services to hide the fact that there's a rate increase.

Whether it's the wait-lists for affordable housing broaching somewhere around—depending on the numbers—175,000 to 186,000 and growing; or the wait-lists for long-term-care beds across this province; the use of transitional long-term-care beds in our hospitals and in our retirement homes; the lack of group homes for people living with autism or developmental delays; or the growing loss of a ready stock of affordable homes in Toronto because they're in a state of disrepair—with no money to actually fix them.

All of these sectors, although some of them don't fall under the housing portfolio, are impacted, because there are people in regular rental housing that should really be in other places where they're actually getting supportive services, but there is no room for them.

The ever-growing private, second-stage lodge, or secondary lodge, or for-profit supportive living that is growing in our communities—19 of them are in the Niagara region.

Housing is at a crisis today, and it has been for a number of years. The lack of supply, or the price, also affects health care costs, policing costs and corrections costs, because when people don't have a safe home to live in, and they have mental health issues or they have other disabilities, they often find themselves camping out with the police or camping out in our correctional facilities, or being readmitted time and time again to our hospitals.

The idea of a panel is good. The Liberals aren't the only party that has good ideas.

These problems have continued to grow for 14 years, under a Liberal government. Not one of these areas has actually gotten any better.

I was the housing critic back in 2007, when I was elected. The Premier of today was the housing minister. In those days, I asked her to put a trial in place, a pilot, which would have seen three or four ministries that I have spoken about here today work together to see whether some of the money from those ministries could be funnelled elsewhere if people were housed properly and had the ability to get into safe housing.

If the bill was passed—there's quite a growing list there, and people have kind of added to that, but I think that we would need to add people like the Community Livings, our community legal clinics, and the landlord and tenant advisory people. Those are all people who deal with the most vulnerable in our communities, who have lots of insight into the problem side of those constituents that they represent for us. Every day, they're dealing with those people.

I'm going to be introducing a bill that hopefully will augment some of the work that the member from Oxford is trying to achieve here, that would actually put regulation and licensing around supportive-living secondary lodges, because today they are unregulated, and many of those places need to have some regulation.

The non-profit ones generally are operating well, and people are being looked after in a very respectful way. But for many of the for-profits, there are huge problems that, certainly, I've been dealing with in the Niagara region. I know there have been problems up in St. Thomas and in London. I'm sure that every member in this House has a for-profit lodging that could be problematic for their constituents.

The Liberal housing minister said that they have the best interests of the residents at heart. If that's the case, I would ask why their current 16-point legislation plan isn't addressing all of the issues that were raised by the members from Oxford and—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Windsor–Tecumseh.

Ms. Cindy Forster: —Windsor–Tecumseh, and from the Niagara area, because all of these issues are important. I don't think that you can just pick and choose the ones that you want to address. We need to look at all sectors of housing.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Speaker. It's a pleasure to see you in the chair.

I'm obviously going to support this resolution. I was, frankly, very pleased to hear the NDP members from Windsor–Tecumseh and Welland offering some suggestions on how to expand the panel. I think that the suggestion of Habitat for Humanity and our Community Living organizations makes a lot of sense.

On the flip side, I was as concerned and disappointed that the minister played this game of, "My panel is better than your panel." To suggest that three months is a long time in the life of a government and in the life of housing unaffordability in Ontario is ridiculous. We have had house unaffordability and housing shortages in Ontario for many, many years—I would suggest, oh, maybe since 2003, since the Liberals came into power. The question becomes, if this was such a critically important issue, and three months is far too long, in the words of the Minister of Housing, what have you been doing?

1420

Half of my riding of Dufferin–Caledon is in the GTA and half of it is outside the GTA. I can tell you that Dufferin–Caledon has a housing problem. We do not have the amount of housing stock and supply that people are looking for. I'll quote from my colleague from Oxford: "Home ownership is a dream that is getting further and further out of reach for many young people. This panel will put forward real solutions to address that affordability."

I had the pleasure of listening in on the panel that the member from Oxford participated in, hosted, organized this morning. It was an hour and a half. It had many of the representations listed in his resolution. At the end of an hour-and-a-half discussion around the table—which was excellent, by the way—they said that these kinds of inclusive, participatory panels bring us closer together, not further apart. We're not playing this game where one industry or one organization or aspect of the housing supply and affordability issue is given more credibility and more weight than others. By putting everyone in the room together, by having discussions about where the barriers are, where the challenges are, we can move forward together. We can have industry and we can have social agencies and municipalities and lending organizations all coming together and offering suggestions that will actually see an improvement.

It's very quick, the turnaround that is being suggested. The panel must be appointed within 30 days. The report must happen within three months. After that, within 15 days it has to come back to the chamber. So to suggest that this is a delaying tactic, to suggest that this is kicking

the can down the road, is, frankly, laughable. We are offering a suggestion. The member for Oxford, if he is known for anything, is known for his pragmatic view of how to solve issues. This is not a partisan resolution. This is a resolution that is trying to proactively, frankly, offer the government a gift, and I would suggest to you that you look across the floor and say, "Thank you for the gift. We would welcome to receive it." It speaks to how he can bring people together and how, in bringing people together, solutions are found.

Is there an opportunity for expanding who participates? Absolutely; no question. If there are organizations and individuals out there who have things to share, I think it is incumbent on us and the minister to hear those views. Some of them may be opposing views, but isn't that ultimately what we are supposed to be about?

We want to bring forward some suggestions that will actually make your life easier and ensure that the young people who are looking at the news articles, reading the stories and saying, "There is never going to be a time in my life in Ontario where I can afford a home"—sadly, that is the kind of thing I'm hearing now, and it must end.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank all the people who responded to my original presentation, but I want to spend just the two minutes that I have to speak to the minister about it.

Obviously, he must have been busy speaking to his colleagues when I made the presentation, because he seems to think that somehow this motion is trying to replace the advisory people in his ministry that he's going to get together to try and make the system, going forward, work better. This panel is totally opposite. This panel is being set up to quickly get it all together.

He also spoke of two years of consultation that developed a 16-point plan. I want to tell you, the people we talked to this morning, all the professionals in the industry, said your plan isn't going to work. So I'm just suggesting that this panel would look at what needs to be done across the housing sector, and they will deliver that to the minister. The minister can see what he wants to implement from that. Then he can use all his panels that he has put in place—which has the advisory people from his ministry who already exist there. I thought they were advising him all this time; that's what they were getting paid for. But if that's what he wants to do, then, fine; he can keep them in place. This has nothing to do with going forward; this is to provide some advice to the minister so that we can solve some of these problems, because it isn't getting any better. Fourteen years, and look at the mess we're in.

Unless we change the direction and start doing things differently, we're not going to be able to solve this problem. Home ownership for so many people—so many young people—in our province will be gone because the minister refused to listen to an idea from across the aisle because if it's not his, it must not be any good.

He spoke of committee hearings. I sit at the committee. These same ministers were responsible for the bill

there: 50-some amendments. You can't tell me that in those 50 amendments that we, shall we say, slaved over for a few days—they didn't give us much time—that there wasn't one that merited supporting because they came from the wrong side. And that's what we're seeing here again today.

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

LAWREN HARRIS DAY ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LE JOUR DE LAWREN HARRIS

Mr. Bradley moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 128, An Act to proclaim Lawren Harris Day /
Projet de loi 128, Loi proclamant le Jour de Lawren
Harris.

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

Mr. James J. Bradley: I am doing this on behalf of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, David Levac, the member for Brant, who does not have the right, as Speaker, to present a private member's bill. This has been a pet project of his for a period of time. I want to thank his office for providing the information, along with Joe Salter of my office for preparing information for me for this particular bill.

It's my honour to present this bill about the talented individual born in the fine riding of Brant. Lawren Harris was a founding member of the Group of Seven, who are known for their scenic depictions of Canada's landscapes. The seven consisted of Franklin Carmichael, A.Y. Jackson, Franz Johnston, Arthur Lismer, F.H. Varley, J.E.H. MacDonald and Lawren Harris.

Harris was regarded as the driving force behind the group's movement, encouraging discussion and lending his artistic vision to fellow colleagues. His works have sold for millions at auctions in recent years and can be found on display in major Canadian art galleries such as the Art Gallery of Ontario, the McMichael Canadian Art Collection and the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa. In honour of his contributions to Canadian culture, Bill 82 is an act to proclaim October 23 Lawren Harris Day.

Lawren Harris was born on October 23, 1885, in Brantford, Ontario. His father was Thomas Morgan Harris, the secretary of Massey-Harris Co. Ltd., a major manufacturer of agricultural equipment. During his comfortable upbringing, Harris had plenty of opportunity to explore his creative side and occupy himself with drawings and paintings, creating Christmas cards for family and friends.

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After attending St. Andrew's College and Central Technical School in Toronto, Harris studied for a brief period at the University of Toronto. His mathematics

professor caught sight of Harris's sketchbook and suggested to his mother that he go away and study in Europe. Before long, he went to Berlin to pursue his passion.

He spent three years travelling around Europe, from 1904 to 1907, studying European art and immersing himself in modern artistic movements, including symbolism, expressionism and Fauvism. He was deeply moved when he stumbled upon a religious philosophy called theosophy, which encouraged one to reflect on the mysteries of life and nature and its underlying principles. This newfound spirituality would inform many of his later works.

Upon returning to Canada, Harris painted rural landscapes and urban scenes, often venturing into the Ward, an impoverished neighbourhood for immigrants in Toronto, to capture a day in the life. These paintings capture important scenes in Toronto's history.

In the 1910s, that particular period of time, he used to hang out at the Arts and Letters Club in St. George's Hall. There he met fellow artist J.E.H. MacDonald. He introduced Harris to the other soon-to-be members of the Group of Seven, alongside Tom Thomson and Emily Carr.

In the years before the war, they met regularly to share their opinions on modern art and the direction in which they wanted to take it. In 1913, Harris financed a studio, for himself and his colleagues, called the Studio Building for Canadian Art, located in the Rosedale ravine. Tom Thomson opted to work and live in a small construction shack out back.

The avid outdoorsman Tom Thomson led Harris and company on excursions that took them well north of Toronto, into Algonquin and Algoma, where some of the most renowned paintings would be envisioned. Lawren Harris would spend much time on the banks of Lake Superior. Arthur Lismer and Tom Thomson would spend time adventuring in Algonquin Park. Franz Johnston went into the Canadian Shield to capture the northern lights.

After World War I ended, the artists could reconvene in relative peace, and the Group of Seven was officially founded in 1920. Distinguished artists in their own right, the seven further developed their ideas through discussion and broke away from the European traditions that pervaded early Canadian art.

Tom Thomson certainly would have been an eighth member, except he mysteriously drowned in 1917 in Canoe Lake in Algonquin Park. Some believe he was caught in a bad storm. Others believe he committed suicide. Some think Thomson was murdered. To this day, it is a tale told around campfires that frightens children as well as grown adults.

Although not a member of the Group of Seven, Emily Carr, another exceptional Canadian artist, was closely associated with them. Harris's work greatly inspired her and encouraged her to pursue art when she had stopped painting in the late 1920s. Fortunately, she continued, for it was in the following decade that she produced many of her finest works.

As with all great artists, Harris's style changed dramatically over the course of his career. His artwork progressed from capturing a nationalistic view of a Canada still rooted in its colonial heritage, to capturing a more profound, universal aspect of nature that manages to combine its awe and its mysticism. While many of the other members of the Group of Seven were fascinated with varying seasons and lighting, Harris focused on exposing nature in its truest essence. The others soon incorporated his techniques and vision into their own work.

The effect of his European training is evident in his early works: detailed urban scenes, with loose strokes of rich, earthy tones, reminiscent of post-Impressionist art. But over time, he developed his own unique style. His brush strokes became smoother, his colour palette more refined, and he started reducing the environment into geometrical shapes, culminating in classic works such as *Mount Lefroy*, *Afternoon Sun*, *Lake Superior* and *North Shore, Lake Superior*.

In the mid-1930s until his death on January 29, 1970, Harris spent his days in Santa Fe and Vancouver with his second wife, Bess Housser, creating increasingly abstract works.

Harris had three children with his first wife, Beatrice Phillips.

From the shores of Lake Superior to the Rocky Mountains and up into the Arctic fringes, Lawren Harris managed to record the ultimate Canadian experience with his simplistic, abstract interpretation of Canadian landscapes. Nowadays, his paintings are in high demand. In 2015, *Mountain and Glacier* sold for \$4.6 million, followed by *Mountain Forms*, which sold for \$11.2 million in 2016, setting a record for the most expensive Canadian painting ever sold at auction.

As you may know, Madam Speaker, last year Harris's work was on display at an exhibition held at the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. The exhibition was co-curated by the comedian Steve Martin. If you can get Steve Martin to promote your work, you're probably doing all right. Martin stumbled upon Harris at a private auction and initially thought he had discovered a hidden gem, until Harris's painting sold for over \$2 million. The Harris exhibitions were a huge success, drawing tens of thousands of placid visitors to see his work.

His work crops up all over the place. In 1972, his painting *Mount Thule*, *Bylot Island* was featured on a stamp, and school art classes across Canada regularly study and recreate his artwork—talk about the importance of teaching students about iconic Canadians.

Lawren Harris's contributions to art and artists alike have had a lasting impact and helped to forge a unique artistic identity for Canada—talk about the importance of our geography. The formation of the Group of Seven resulted in the creation of numerous art collectives, such as the Canadian Group of Painters and the Eastern Group of Painters, which have helped Canadian artists to connect, share ideas and innovate.

Harris's openness and adventurous spirit also serve as a prime example for many aspiring artists. On one hand

he was solitary and independent, while on the other he appreciated the value of collaboration and advocated for greater interconnectivity within the arts community.

To this day, Madam Speaker, his newfound global acclaim is helping to put Canadian art on the map and introducing the world to Canada's vastitude.

I'm pleased to have the privilege, on behalf of Speaker David Levac, MPP for Brantford, to present this particular bill to the Legislature. Initially, when it was presented before, by Han Dong, a Toronto member, it was co-sponsored by Bill Walker—I'm using the names; I'm not supposed to right now—the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who was kind enough at that time to co-sponsor the bill and who I see across the floor is prepared to offer his comments on it.

We're all proud of the Group of Seven. We're proud of our artists. It is something that we as Canadians, being part of a country that's rather younger—though it's 150 years this year. We have taken some time to perhaps recognize those who have made a contribution over the years.

It's appropriate that this assembly deals with this particular bill today. It was initiated—I give full credit to Speaker David Levac and not to myself. I thought, as a gesture of kindness, I suppose, to our Speaker, who announced that he will not be seeking re-election to the Legislative Assembly—we thank him for his fine service to the people of Brant and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. This gesture on my part is something I can say is the least I can do.

I should also say that David Levac, before he became Speaker, was kind enough to come down to St. Catharines on many occasions for special occasions, which he's precluded from doing now that he is the Speaker of the assembly.

With that, I'll sit down. I think I have two minutes at the end to wrap up. I look forward to that opportunity.

1440

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to stand today and speak about Bill 128, An Act to proclaim Lawren Harris Day. I'm honoured to rise in support of Bill 128, which would designate October 23 in each year as Lawren Harris Day in Ontario.

Lawren Harris is one of Canada's most significant artists. Over almost a century, he produced an incredible lifetime of work. From his time as a member of the Group of Seven until his death in 1970, he created some of the images that we consider most iconically Canadian, whether they be the forests of Algonquin Park, the majestic Rocky Mountains or the sublime and mysterious northern vistas.

Harris was also a huge supporter and advocate for other artists and for their continued recognition. Whether it was supporting emerging artists in studio classes or being one of the prime drivers for the creation of the Tom Thomson Art Gallery in Owen Sound, in the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, in honour of maverick

artist Tom Thomson, Harris's influence and legacy continues to inspire and affect Canadian culture in profound ways. In this way, having a day established to honour one of Canada's most important artists is a wonderful way to celebrate.

Of course, I'd be remiss if I didn't talk about why we can take pride in the Group of Seven—it's that we live in a country and province that is truly the world's prettiest playground. It is our vast, wild and rugged landscapes that gave Lawren Harris and the Group of Seven a medium to call their own. They knew how to enjoy the beauty of our massive, untamed outdoors, and then to embed it in their art, which is what made them world famous.

This is why I have always been the strongest supporter of the efforts of our outdoor education program, a kind of made-in-Ontario education medium which brings learning to life and connects students to the built and natural world around them. I'm proud to say, Madam Speaker, that I served at our outdoor education centre. It truly does connect our youth with the outdoors. It gives many children, not only in our own backyard, who live in rural Ontario, but many who come from the city what might be their first, hopefully, of a lifetime of love of our outdoors, the environment, nature and all that we have to offer. It even serves as a training ground for a new generation of Canadian naturalists and painters.

Robert Bateman is one such example. Bateman, as the members will know, is another renowned artist and naturalist, and a staunch supporter of Ontario's outdoor education program. He sees how the outdoor program is helping build a new generation of naturalists and even artists.

Of course, I would be remiss if I didn't talk about Mr. Bateman's deep disappointment over the ongoing loss of the outdoor education centres, which is the result of mass school closures across Ontario. One of the 300 they're shuttering, sadly, is Robert Bateman High School, which includes the closure of the outdoor ed program and the beloved art room. I wonder if members gave much thought to this: that their government is actually shuttering Robert Bateman High School in Burlington. How ironic it is that we stand here lauding the greatest painters of our wild outdoors, while this government allows their very training grounds and a school named after our own Robert Bateman to be wiped out.

Mr. Bateman said in response to that school closure, "When you cut down a tree, it's very hard to get it to grow again." He also said, ominously, "It's the end of a very beautiful era." It is my hope that someone can still go to the education minister and talk to her and the Premier and remind them that the era does not have to end like this.

We can go on celebrating Lawren Harris and the Group of Seven, and other great outdoor painters like Tom Thomson, who is renowned and revered, certainly in my backyard. But from across the world, people come to the gallery in Owen Sound to admire him—I mean, very much a mystique. He died in Algonquin Park on a

canoeing trip, so that mystique draws. His art, if you've ever had the opportunity—I don't know where the member Laura Albanese is from; I can't remember her riding. Maybe you could help me, Madam Speaker?

Interjections: York South–Weston.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you. Her husband does a lot of work, and I've certainly seen her at the art gallery on a very large number of occasions.

I encourage everyone in the Legislature, watching at home and across the province to tour and come and see the Tom Thomson Art Gallery in Owen Sound. Certainly, there are some Lawren Harris paintings there, as well as others from the Group of Seven. But even there, there are pieces of art that, because of the size limitations—they're actually going on a fairly large project to try to expand the Tom Thomson. I applaud Virginia Eichhorn and the board of directors, who are actually in the process now to become their own foundation, their own charitable arm outside of the city—that's somewhat restricted in their ability to attract grants. Some fairly large donors are willing to come on board and help to do that, so that they can actually put more artwork out. Much of it, sadly, is in storage as opposed to being on the walls for people to admire. That just allows other paintings, like Lawren Harris's, and donations to be received so that art is always on display. There's nothing sadder, in my mind, when I go there and there's actually more in the back rooms. It still has to be contained there. They have to have all of the environmental aspects, to keep it heated and cooled properly. So you're spending all of that money, and it's a shame that it's in a back room and not on a wall for all of the public to be able to admire. So it's my hope that we can do that.

I'd like to commend—I'm going to get all the right names of this one—the member from St. Catharines, the government whip and, I would suggest, the dean of our Legislature, Mr. Bradley, for acknowledging and doing what he's doing. I did have the pleasure of originally co-signing this with Han Dong. And I certainly congratulate Dave Levac, the member from Brantford, who wrote this bill, but in his role as Speaker could not actually present it.

We could go on, but what I really want to say is that we can ensure our vast rural and northern landscapes stay alive by keeping our schools and educational opportunities there open, and truly, always, be proponents of the art, the culture, and all that that adds to our great province.

We're very fortunate in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound to have artisans of all walks who actually bring beauty to life. We all have different tastes, different palettes, but at the end of the day, they are huge economic contributors. But mostly, it's our cultural vibrancy and that mosaic that makes us truly Canadian.

I'm pleased to support this, and I thank the members for all that they've done to bring it to the House.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's not easy speaking to this bill after we've heard the other parties tell us most of the

information we were thinking about saying about Lawren Harris.

For me, this bill is long overdue. I, like many of us, knew of Lawren Harris, of course, but until I started reading more of his background in preparation for today's debate, I never really knew just what a fascinating person he was. As we've heard, he was born and spent his early years in Brantford, where they are looking forward to this bill passing into law. I'll get back to that at the end of my discussion.

I will borrow extensively from previously published articles about Harris. I begin with excerpts from a Jason McBride story in *Toronto Life* last June: "Lawren Harris, the Group of Seven's flamboyant front man ... could have been a Photoplay cover boy—squint and you might see Charlie Chaplin, squint tighter and maybe Clark Gable. His buddies were bank presidents, doctors and industrialists, and he built elegant, expensive houses for his family. Still, he always felt more at home in the deep bush."

Lawren is not a common name. You see, his mother wanted to call him Lawrence, his father thought Lorne was a good name, and they settled on Lawren.

His father was rich from a farm machinery business he merged with his competitors, the Masseys, and they grew the Massey-Harris Co. into the largest agricultural firm in the British Empire.

The Harris family was very religious. Morning and evening prayer was mandatory, as was going to church three times every Sunday. Young Lawren had a rebellious streak, though. When he was seven, he donned one of his father's suits, dressed his younger brother in his mother's dress and fur stole, and then they showed up at the church parading down the aisle.

He was given his first watercolour set as a toddler, and he promptly ate the coloured cubes as if they were candy.

One of his childhood buddies was Vincent Massey, who would later become our first native-born Governor General.

He was not a healthy child, so when he was home ill, he sketched, he coloured, he painted, and his appreciation for the arts flourished.

Speaker, in the old days, there was a neighbourhood called the Ward, and we're practically in it right here. It was bordered by College, Queen, Yonge and University. The Ward was home to waves of newcomers: Jewish, Italian, Irish and Chinese. They crowded into rundown rooming houses and sweatshops. Obviously, that industrial, rundown area of Toronto is no more. As he grew older, Lawren Harris found poetry in the Ward's poverty. He not only sketched and painted there, but he wrote his one book of free verse about the Ward as well.

Here's a small taste of those gloomy images from *A Note of Colour*: "In a part of the city that is ever shrouded in sooty smoke ... hides a gloomy house of / broken grey rough-cast, like a sickly sin in a callow soul." Wow.

Let me borrow now from an article written last July for the *Toronto Star* by Murray Whyte. It was written to promote the Lawrence Harris exhibit that comedian Steve

Martin put together at the Art Gallery of Ontario. This Murray Whyte article is poetry in itself. Listen to this: "It starts with Harris's earliest pictures of Toronto, a teeming brew of industry and people that coalesce in its gritty, hardscrabble streets. The Eaton's manufacturing plant looms above the Ward, a tight warren of immigrant worker's cottages where Nathan Phillips Square now sits, cloaked in a smoky shroud. A gas plant belches steam over the dun-grey snow of the city's filthy core. A weathered two-storey shack perches on a desolate street, its plaster hide crumbling into the muck below, the sky the colour of ash."

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Wow. Speaker, how can anyone not visualize that scene from Murray Whyte? He just painted for us in describing the Lawren Harris exhibit of his early works at the AGO.

He calls him a "hearty nationalistic flag-waver," saying he "falls away, replaced with a sensitive soul likely more true to his actual character. Partly out of social conscience, and likely partly out of guilt—the scion of a wealthy industrialist family, he was the beneficiary of the city's rough transition into polluted, sometimes violent squalor—Harris painted the city, and the Ward specifically, with a devoted pathos."

Murray Whyte takes us into the next room at the AGO, a world away, to his idolized mountains and shorelines. He writes:

"Out of the darkness of a roiling city lurching into the modern age, we arrive in the jarringly cleansing light. And suddenly, the paintings look nothing like the idealized patriotic chestnuts of a true north strong and free we've been so heavily conditioned to see.

"Harris's works here—unpeopled, imagined, spiritualized landscapes he'd rarely seen—slip the yoke of nationalist iconography. Instead, they become the isolating escapism of a sensitive soul bent on crafting his own world once the tumult of the real one became too much to bear.

"This is no excuse, and there can be none, for the artist's own erasures here—notably, of the First Nations peoples he encountered on his northern sojourns—but there is, at last, some clarifying explanation. Harris abandoned the complexity he could no longer bear for a purity of his own creation."

Speaker, the Group of Seven is considered Canada's greatest art collective. With Lawren Harris in the lead, they changed the art world forever for Canada. My legislative assistant, Angie Dawson, discovered an article written by Heather Bot. She's a staff writer with *Algoma Country*. She writes, "This group rode the rails into the deep recesses of the Algoma wilderness to escape not just the hustle and bustle of Toronto, but to immerse themselves into our landscapes that brought them peace and a sense of tranquility. With the death of their friend Tom Thomson and the horrors of World War I, our healing landscapes brought them here again and again."

Speaker, Ms. Bot also gives us 10 interesting facts about the members of the Group of Seven that might surprise you:

“(1) The first trips to Algoma were in May and September of 1918, when members of the group painted along the rail line.

“(2) Members of the group used handcarts to travel up and down the rail line to access painting sites.

“(3) A.Y. Jackson returned to Michipicoten Bay and area often between 1955 and 1961, where he shared ownership of a cottage. The cottage still stands today in Wawa, although located on private property.

“(4) A.Y. Jackson painted a headstone in the Garden River Cemetery and no one knows why. It's a mystery!

“(5) Not all members of the group painted in Algoma; Frederick Varley never painted here, but his grandson travels here every summer to hike in Lake Superior Provincial Park!

“(6) Lawren Harris wrote poetry during the years he was in Algoma.

“(7) Dr. Frederick Banting, who discovered insulin, was a member of Toronto's Arts and Letters Club, where he befriended ... A.Y. Jackson and Lawren Harris.

“(8) There are over 400 discovered sites painted by the Group of Seven in Algoma....

“(9) In 1995, Canada Post issued 10 stamps, each based on a painting by each member of the group; three of those stamps were paintings from Algoma,” including Lawren Harris's North of Lake Superior.

“(10) In 2009, an oil sketch by Harris titled The Old Stump, Lake Superior sold for \$3.5 million, the second highest price ever paid for a painting in Canada at the time.”

Of course, Speaker, as we know, last year Harris's Mountain Forms painting sold at auction for \$9.5 million, the most expensive artwork ever sold at a Canadian auction, and when you factor in the 18% buyer's premium, which comes out of winning bidder's pocket and goes to the auction house, the total price was \$11.21 million. Winter Landscape sold at auction for \$3,658,000, and his Mountain and Glacier also sold in 2015. It sold for \$4,602,000.

There's a wonderful documentary called *Where The Universe Sings: The Spiritual Journey of Lawren Harris*. The great Canadian actor Colm Feore stars in that movie. Just so you know, Speaker, his mother, Sally Feore, worked for 24 years as an administrator with the Windsor Symphony Orchestra. There's always a Windsor connection.

It's a wonderful bill, and we should all be proud to help proclaim Lawren Harris Day in Ontario. He was one of our best landscape artists, imbuing his paintings with a spiritual dimension. In 1926, he wrote: “We are on the fringe of the great north and its living whiteness, its loneliness and replenishment, its resignations and release, its call and answer, its cleansing rhythms. It seems that the top of the continent is a source of spiritual flow that will ever shed clarity into the growing race of America.”

His most famous works were done in Toronto, then in Algoma region, the North Shore of Lake Superior, and the Rocky Mountains. He settled down in Vancouver, where he died.

Brantford hasn't forgotten Lawren Harris. The good people there in Speaker Dave Levac's riding are looking favourably on the outcome of this bill. They want to turn this into a launching pad for a walk of fame. They want to turn Lawren Harris Day into the spark that ignites a fall festival of the arts.

Just so you know, Speaker, Speaker Levac is also a bit of an artist himself. He was accepted in the Ontario College of Art at the same time he got into teachers' college. He chose education over art at that time, but now that he's retiring, he's got a hobby already built into his plans. Let's help him with that. Let's pass this bill. Let's give Brantford a reason to celebrate. Let's honour one of the greatest Canadian painters of all time. Let's declare October 23 Lawren Harris Day in Ontario.

I thank you for your time this afternoon.

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

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'm so pleased to rise and speak on Bill 128, an act to proclaim October 23 in each year as Lawren Harris Day.

Speaker, here's an interesting back story that I think underscores why it is so important that we have a day recognizing this great Canadian. When my father visited Canada for the first time, almost two decades ago, one of the places on his to-see list was Brantford, Ontario. He was an engineer with a real passion for engineering, and he absolutely wanted to visit the city where the telephone was invented. So I have this wonderful memory of going to Brantford to see the homestead of Alexander Graham Bell.

What neither my father—who can be excused, because he was a tourist—nor me as a Canadian were aware of was the fact that Brantford was also home to one of Canada's most famous artists, part of the G7, Lawren Harris. A story like mine underscores why it is so important to set aside a day to celebrate this great man.

I'm going to quote from the same article in *Toronto Life* that the member from Windsor—Tecumseh did, when I say that here is one depiction of Lawren Harris: “Lawren Harris, the Group of Seven's flamboyant frontman, was dashing, oracular, ambitious and enigmatic.”

One of the interesting things about Lawren Harris is that we often think of artists as starving artists, but Lawren actually came from a very wealthy family, one of the wealthiest families in Canada at the time, and used that wealth to promote not only his art but Canadian art. I think that is what we're celebrating as well today, the idea: What is Canada?

One of the things that I am struck by often in this Legislature is that when members from the north, in particular, talk about northern Ontario, there's a particular sense of pride, that, “We are just a little bit special because we are from the true north.” I think that sense of Canada being the north is such an essential part of Canadian identity. I see that pride even here in our Legislature. Certainly Lawren Harris was among those trying to get a handle on a still-young country, still a colonial country, as Canada tried to carve out its own niche, its

own identity, its own sense of self. The Far North was a big part of that imagination.

1500

I'm going to quote from Lawren Harris's own words, to try and capture what he was trying to capture of Canada through his paintings: "Dr. MacCallum and I took a train to the Soo and, the next morning, went up the Algoma Central Railroad and discovered a paradise for Canadian painters—wild, rugged, tumultuous country.... After that, each October for four years, in a railroad box-car, with a handcar and a canoe, MacDonald, Jackson, Lismer and I explored and painted Algoma."

He goes on to say, "Our aim is to paint the Canadian scene in its own terms. This land is different in its air, moods and spirit from Europe and the old country. It invokes a response which throws aside all preconceived ideas and rule-of-thumb reactions."

He goes on further, to say at one point, "It has to be seen, lived with and painted with complete devotion to its own life and spirit before it yields its secrets," when he spoke of the north.

What's really interesting, as we celebrate Lawren Harris here today, is that for a while, because of his personal life, he actually had to go into exile. He left Ontario, left Canada and went to the United States. When he did come back, he lived in Vancouver, and his visits to Toronto were very brief. But I think some of us might be interested to know that for a while, he lived in a huge mansion at 63 Queen's Park Crescent, not very far from where we are. That house is no longer in existence. It has been torn down, and it's part of the University of Toronto buildings. But somewhere here, very close to the Legislature, I know that Lawren Harris spent some time painting.

To me, it's such a great pleasure and an honour, particularly as we've spoken about our Speaker and his particular interest in getting this bill enacted, so I certainly hope I see the support in this Legislature. We know that the Speaker has announced formally that he is not going to be running again. I can't think of a better tribute and a better gift, if I may use the word, to our Speaker than to ensure that this legislation is supported by all of us and that, indeed, we do get October 23 as Lawren Harris Day, to celebrate what it means to be somebody who tried so hard and is such an integral part of defining what Canada is.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the member for Niagara West–Glanbrook.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very pleased to stand today and speak to the piece of legislation that the member from St. Catharines introduced but which has its origins in the seat that you are currently occupying, that of the member for Brantford, the current Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, who has contributed greatly to our assembly here in Ontario and has also made great contributions to his home community.

I'm pleased to be able to stand and render him homage by speaking to the legislation that would enact October 23 as Lawren Harris Day.

The member from Brantford, who has brought this piece of legislation forward, knows that Lawren Harris was born in Brantford and that Lawren Harris grew up in Brantford in a wealthy family—a very conservative family, I might note. Yet Lawren went on to not only transcend his own hometown, but benefited the appreciation of art, the growth and understanding of Canadian natural beauty, the importance of recognizing the true gift that Ontario is to Canada when it comes to natural beauty, but, really, the gift that Canada is, as a whole, to the world.

I believe the member beside me, the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, spoke about how northern Ontario is the playground of Canada. I would argue that perhaps we could extend that and say that Canada is God's playground, because we have an absolutely incredible profusion of colours and diversities within our natural landscape, that Lawren Harris and the Group of Seven recognized, that they helped to encapsulate, and that they went on not only to pictograph but to inspire future generations to come up with a greater appreciation for: Canadian landscape and Canadian art as well.

As a young person, I think it's especially pertinent that I speak to this, because unfortunately, although I think there is an appreciation of art, there's also a lessening understanding of finite art. What I mean by that—perhaps it's a strange term to use—is that we live in an age where you can flip on your phone and access high-quality photos of art from across the world. You can access images of art from many different cultures, from many different places across our country, across our continent and across the world. Sometimes we can lose appreciation of that very rich beauty that an original piece of artwork contains.

Lawren Harris once said, though, "The power of beauty at work in man, as the artist has always known, is severe and exacting, and once invoked, will never leave him alone, until he brings his work and life into some semblance of harmony with its spirit." I think we can all agree that when one sees an original piece of art done by the Group of Seven or by Lawren Harris, there's a sharp, emotive quality to that art that is uniquely powerful when it's seen first-hand.

I do want to take the opportunity to say on the record that I think we do need to be encouraging more young people to get involved in the arts. We need to be making sure that they get involved in the very real, very tangible original artwork that Lawren Harris helped create.

Really, Lawren was one who loved art for art's sake. He didn't love art for the sake of wealth. He didn't love art for the sake of any sense of greatness in himself. In fact, he often didn't date his art, and he often didn't even sign his art, because he wanted that art to be appreciated for its innate value, not because of who had created it or when it was made, but really to be appreciated as that pictograph of the reality that he saw.

Harris had an enormous amount of impact on the Group of Seven, as the only independently wealthy member of the Group of Seven, in fact. The rest, including Franklin Carmichael, A.Y. Jackson, Franz Johnston,

Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald and F.H. Varley, made their living as commercial artists, and at one time several of them even worked together in the same shop. But Harris financed those famous boxcar trips for the artists to attend to the Algoma region, and he really made the work of the Group of Seven possible in many ways. He helped inspire them as they contemplated their interpretations of the Canadian landscape in such a way.

They believed very distinctly in a Canadian perspective to art. They had the belief that Canada itself must inspire distinctly Canadian art. I think that when we look at the work of the Group of Seven, but especially the work of Lawren Harris, who is arguably the greatest painter who Canada has ever produced, we do see that unique beauty that is specific to Canada. I think we should embrace that as an assembly and as a province, and I'm excited to support this motion that the honourable member for Brantford has brought forward. I look forward to hearing the rest of the remarks this afternoon.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Just briefly, I want to thank all the members who have joined in the debate, and thank the Speaker, Mr. Levac, for his initiative on this. It's just a wonderful opportunity to learn more about our creative culture, the arts and an iconic member of the Group of Seven, and to learn about the wonderful aspects of our natural landscape, which has inspired so many artists across this country, and how emblematic that is to our culture and to our identity.

Thanks for the opportunity for me to learn a little bit more. Although I doubt I will ever have the opportunity to purchase even a print of any one of the Group of Seven, I'm going to try to find at least a poster and put them up. They are beautiful, and we are certainly enriched by those works of art.

1510

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

Mr. Han Dong: I want to say to the member from Essex, I'll get you a print and make sure you get a chance to appreciate the beauty of the artwork by Lawren Harris.

I think it's a very good bill. Mr. Harris is indeed an icon in Canadian history. It's very fitting, with the fact that we are celebrating Ontario's 150th and also Canada's 150th anniversary this year, to proclaim October 23 as Lawren Harris Day.

I have to share with the members of this House that last year when the Speaker, the member from Brant, approached me and asked if I would introduce the bill that shares the same title, co-sponsored by my good friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, I was honoured. I was truly honoured to be asked by the Speaker, a very well-respected member of this House.

It also gave me an opportunity to do some research and learn more about this iconic Canadian. I found out later that Steve Martin was going to have an event in my riding of Trinity-Spadina, at the Art Gallery of Ontario. I attended that event. It was at that event that I saw so many people coming in, truly fans of his work. Steve

spoke frankly, straight from his heart, of his admiration for Mr. Lawren Harris.

Just last weekend, I had a friend visiting my family from the States. I took her to the AGO. We were supposed to be there to see the Georgia O'Keeffe exhibit, but I found myself wandering the hall looking at Lawren Harris's work. It's truly amazing.

For a lot of us, we first heard of the Group of Seven when we were in school. As we grow older and get more mature and have a bigger perspective on life, a different perspective on life, we—at least for me, I've learned to appreciate the work done by the Group of Seven even more. The use of colour, the large pieces to express shade and this expression of the size, the massiveness of our Canadian landscape are truly amazing.

Lawren Harris was a Canadian painter, as mentioned by many members in this House this afternoon, born in Brantford. I also want to remind the members that Brantford is home to some of Canada's greatest talents, including Alexander Graham Bell, Dr. James Hillier and, of course, the Great One, Wayne Gretzky.

It can be argued that Lawren Harris started the Group of Seven. In fact, he was credited with being the driving force behind their formation. Whether he was with the group or on his own, he definitely pioneered a distinctly Canadian painting style that now is envied and studied around the world. His work is an integral part of Canadian art and its history and is recognized throughout the world. He painted many Ontario landscapes during his professional career.

Back in November 2005, in Toronto, a Lawren Harris painting, once locked away in the dark of a hospital broom closet, came back into the light of public admiration, selling at a packed downtown auction house for \$1.38 million. Decades earlier, before it was sold, that very painting was donated to Toronto Western Hospital in my riding. It was donated by Toronto financier Edward Rogers Wood and his wife, Agnes. The painting was called Algoma Hill. It is a landscape from the area north of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.

For some years, the painting had hung on the hospital wall but at some point it was put into storage for safe-keeping and then, I'm sure, people might have forgotten about it. The place was described as a broom closet. Then they found it and it was later auctioned.

The painting sold in 2005 for \$1.38 million, but that wasn't the most expensive auctioned painting by Lawren Harris. Recently—I think it was last year—his work named Mountain Forms was auctioned off for \$11.2 million in Toronto, and that was a record for the most expensive work done by a Canadian artist auctioned around the world. So there's no question that Lawren Harris's work has a large following, a big fan base, and it's iconic to our Canadian history.

We have so many tourists coming to Toronto, coming to Ontario, coming to Canada every year, and the AGO is a place they visit. They get a chance to learn about Canadian art. I think the contribution by Lawren Harris is massive, not just in the art world but in the history of our great country and its diversity.

I urge all members to support this bill and proclaim October 23 as Lawren Harris Day.

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

Mr. James J. Bradley: First of all, I want to thank each of the members who brought a different perspective.

The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound talking about the gallery in Owen Sound and how important it is to have the capacity to show that work—he’s quite right in that regard.

The member for Windsor–Tecumseh started out by saying that everything had been said. Well, after you listened to his speech, you understood that not everything had been said, and again, a great perspective of the individual himself and his profound effect on art in Canada.

The member for Mississauga East–Cooksville talked about the true north. The Group of Seven did capture the true north, which is something of which we’re justifiably proud in Ontario.

The Niagara West–Glanbrook MPP, new to the House, brought, I think, a different perspective which was important, and that is, on a day when we are obsessed with electronic equipment and ways of communicating and we can look at pictures, if you will, at art electronically, he emphasized the importance—and he was quite right in this—of being able to see the original in an art gallery or in some other venue. I think that was exceedingly important.

The member for Essex only had a few minutes, but he certainly did indicate just how valuable these pieces of art are and how none of us in this House that I can think of can probably afford to purchase the originals, at the very least.

To the member for Trinity–Spadina, I want to thank him very much for allowing me to take on this particular responsibility. He agreed to it, along with Bill Walker, some time ago.

The people of Brantford can be justifiably proud of Lawren Harris. I believe there are some in the gallery here today and there are many, many watching at home. I’ll be delighted, and I’m reasonably confident, that we will probably get unanimous consent to at least pass this bill at second reading.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will vote on this item after private members’ public business.

Before I go on to the next item, I want to remind members that you are to address each other by riding. We heard throughout the day people addressing each other by first name or surname, but you know the rules.

REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL
PLANNERS ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR
LES URBANISTES CERTIFIÉS

Mr. Milczyn moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act respecting the regulation of Registered Professional Planners / Projet de loi 122, Loi concernant la réglementation des urbanistes certifiés.

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

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It’s a pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon to speak to my private member’s bill, Bill 122, the Registered Professional Planners Act.

I want to note that in our gallery today, we have a number of registered professional planners and representatives of the organization.

Madam Speaker, this bill seeks to repeal the dated Ontario Professional Planners Institute Act, 1994, and, if passed, will enact an updated and modernized piece of legislation that will govern urban, rural and regional planners across Ontario.

1520

The new act continues the Ontario Professional Planners Institute, the professional organization that is the voice of the planning profession in Ontario. The OPPI is composed of nearly 4,500 skilled professionals who work in government, private practice, universities and not-for-profit agencies, in the fields of urban and rural development, urban design, environmental planning, transportation, health, social services, housing, and economic development.

If passed, this act will safeguard the public interest by further strengthening the profession’s strict practice requirements and further improving accountability of the institute and its members.

The bill proposes to add additional definitions and title protection for professional planners. It creates prohibitions and offences respecting the use of specified designations and initials by unauthorized individuals. Further, it provides a framework for membership and sets out procedures for dealing with matters such as: complaints against current and former registered professional planners, procedures for determining whether a member of the institute is incapacitated, and powers to appoint an investigator to examine professional misconduct.

Madam Speaker, this act is significant to the Legislature and the province because it proposes legislation that governs an institute and its professional members who are integral to so much of the work that’s done both in this Legislature and in municipalities across the province. Professional planners are the highly skilled and accredited professionals who help create, advise and help implement public policy and investments in all of our municipalities and regions. As many of you know, especially those members who served on municipal council, planners continuously identify community needs and develop short- and long-term plans to create, grow or revitalize a community or area. Regardless of whether you represent an urban or rural area or a small municipality, we all have planners, and they help to shape the policy that makes our communities great places to live, work and play.

In my 17 years on municipal council, my now nearly three years as an MPP and my previous life in professional practice, I learned the intrinsic ability of planners to work collaboratively with other professionals in a

range of disciplines, such as engineers, architects, environmental professionals and, dare I say it, even politicians. That's the biggest benefit that they have, I suppose. As elected officials, we rely on planners to provide us with professional opinions on key policy matters.

One thing can't be emphasized enough: Professional planners play a crucial role in ensuring that Ontario and its various municipalities evolve in a way that protects our economic well-being, vital resources and healthy lifestyles.

The timing of this bill is very important because of a number of key changes that have been enacted to planning in Ontario. Our government initiated a number of reforms to planning in 2015—Bill 73, the Smart Growth for Our Communities Act, and also changes to the Development Charges Act and the Planning Act. They resulted in improvements that gave municipalities more ability to fund growth, to have a greater say in how their communities grow, to make the development charges system more predictable, and to make planning and appeals more predictable. All of that depends on the advice of our professional planners.

Of course, the historic investments our government is making in infrastructure also require professional planners to give advice on how to implement these decisions and also on how to help communities change their zoning and update their zoning bylaws to get the benefit from these infrastructure investments.

Of course, the other key area that our government has undertaken a review of is our growth plans and our greenbelt. That relies, again, on the good advice of our professional planners and will rely on them going forward over the years to help implement these plans.

So whatever one's views are on these policies, we can all agree that without professional planners we cannot move forward on any of them.

What this private member's bill will do is help modernize this act. At one point, Ontario was the first jurisdiction in the country to have an act governing professional planners. We were leading the way in registering the professional planners' designation and designating how the profession should be governed. But after close to 25 years, many other jurisdictions across the country have enacted more modern legislation and have leapfrogged us. That's why it's important in Ontario for us to update this legislation.

This legislation will provide expanded title rights to planners so that the title Registered Professional Planner, or RPP, will remain protected and reserved for use by practising full members of the OPPI. The title of "professional planner" will be protected in other contexts.

It's also important to note that employers will continue to be able to choose whether they want to hire somebody with this designation or not.

There will also be a holding-out provision that's very important for public protection—so that a person does not represent themselves as a professional planner when they're not registered as a member of the OPPI. This means that a person who reasonably thinks they're hiring

somebody to provide them planning advice will have a greater certainty of the credentials and accreditation of the person they're hiring.

Madam Speaker, after very lengthy discussions with the OPPI, we've come up with a clause that guarantees what that accreditation level will be and will protect the public at large. It will also give the OPPI the ability to level fines if, after a proper hearing, it's determined that somebody has held themselves out to be a professional planner when in fact they're not. We found a level of fine that's comparable to other professions: a fine of \$15,000, which will act as an effective deterrent.

This bill will also provide new investigation powers to the OPPI so that they'll have the ability to require an individual to provide documentation and evidence of what their credentials are, and also, in extreme circumstances, the ability to get a search warrant if it's required.

This bill does not create a regulated profession, as some other professions are, but it does give very important title protection to the profession of planners in this province. It provides the ability to ensure enforcement around the holdout provisions if a person provides services in the province of Ontario in the area of professional planning.

Over the course of a year and a half, I've had the great privilege and honour of working with the women and men of the OPPI. Many of them I knew from my previous experience, but certainly working with them on the focus of what it means to have a well-regulated profession opened up my eyes even further to the great benefits that they provide to our communities, and to the provincial government as well, through the way that they offer their services, offer their advice and offer us an ability to look past the immediate and long into the future.

When we discuss this act I would hope that all members of this House think keenly about how they might rely on a professional planner in their community; how their municipality might need the advice of a professional planner; how an individual wishing to make an investment in their community—to build a new structure, to develop a new parcel of land, to create a new subdivision, to create more housing and more affordable housing—how all of those individuals rely on the sound advice of a professional planner; and how important it is that, in an era where there are so many consultants, so many professionals out there, we all have a common language and a common understanding to understand who truly is accredited, has the experience, has the credentials and also has the accountability so that, when they offer advice, we know the true value and quality of that advice.

1530

I was very keenly aware also, in the drafting of this legislation, that there might be many smaller municipalities that don't have the benefit of large planning staffs and what the impact might be. I did specifically ask the OPPI, as part of the consultation, to talk to AMO, to talk to some of those smaller municipalities, to get their input into this bill and also to provide reassurance that people

who work as planners in those municipalities but who might not currently have this designation could continue to work for that municipality.

We're not creating a new regulatory regime that creates new costs or new barriers for small municipalities to employ people to provide them with the advice and the transactional abilities to process development applications. It was very important that we do that: to ensure that every municipality in this province can continue to govern itself and manage its resources as need be. Those who choose to use registered professional planners will be able to; those who choose not to will not be required to.

But for rest of us, Madam Speaker, going forward, we'll be able to have great confidence that when we speak to somebody with the designation of Registered Professional Planner we'll be able to rely on their advice—to know that they will give us the best advice to help build our province up.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: I rise today to speak to Bill 122. Not unlike the sponsor of the bill from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, I also served as a municipal councillor, for 13 years, with the town of Whitby. For that period, I was the chair of the planning and development committee. During that period, I came to appreciate that planners are skilled professionals who work to improve the quality and livability of Ontario communities—healthy and sustainable communities, Speaker.

What's clear in that process: As shifting policy objectives and competing interests in communities continue to evolve with social and technological changes, planners, in my belief, have a significant role in terms of encouraging Ontario residents to think about the public realm first and the role it can play in effectively developing healthy and sustainable communities.

Planners do this by balancing the interests of communities and individuals—and what a balance it is—that I saw day in and day out by the commissioner of planning in the town of Whitby and, similarly, the commissioner of planning at the region of Durham, in effecting development of the eight communities that form the region of Durham, to ensure a short-, mid- and long-term objective of affordable, compact, diverse and livable communities.

Professional planners, as my colleague from Etobicoke–Lakeshore pointed out, are represented by the Ontario Professional Planners Institute, and they represent over 4,000 professional planners in Ontario, many of whom were working at the town of Whitby, in the region of Durham. They have a wide suite of responsibilities, such as establishing the professional code of practice of its members, which is an important process in itself. Equally important, they also have a mandatory program of continuous professional learning as a requirement of membership, to ensure that members are current with modern practices—and ever more important when you have changes related to the provincial policy statement,

the growth plan and other planning pieces as we go forward.

More recently, the institute has been pursuing legislative changes to enable regulation of the planning profession, and that in itself is the catalyst for Bill 122. The bill proposes to repeal the Ontario Professional Planners Institute Act, 1994, and would enact what we're debating today, the Registered Professional Planners Act, in its place. The bill would establish the powers and responsibilities of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute and its role as the representative organization of professional planners.

While the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus will be supporting this bill during second reading, we're somewhat concerned about the timing of the bill. As you know, Speaker, Bill 68, the Modernizing Ontario's Municipal Legislation Act, 2017, is also before the Legislature. When you step back and you look at that volume of legislative direction, it's an omnibus bill which seeks to change over a dozen other laws in Ontario. While supportive of some aspects of Bill 68—there has been a broad discussion of that in this Legislature—which respond to requests from municipalities, such as definitions of meetings, expanding prudent investor rules and moving the start date for newly elected councils, we question why the government and the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore didn't roll the proposed measures within Bill 122 into Bill 68.

At the end of the day, we have a bill before us today that takes into account what I've certainly been hearing in my municipality through fairly regular interactions with some of the regional councillors in the region of Durham and the town of Whitby. It certainly reflects the direction that they would like to see, and certainly as a caucus we're supportive of that direction.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always a privilege to rise on the part of the people of Parkdale–High Park and Ontario.

I just want to acknowledge, on behalf of our member from Essex, that Essex high school was here and Walkerville Collegiate was here. So welcome.

But to get back to the member's bill, from my colleague from Etobicoke–Lakeshore: Absolutely, we in the New Democratic Party support this. It's been almost 25 years since this act was updated, and certainly the time is now. It's due.

In terms of the bill itself, it's pretty pro forma. It changes some of the credentialing, some of the accreditation, some of the fines etc. Again, all of this is for the Ontario Professional Planners Institute, and that's fine. We're good with that.

It does give me an opportunity to talk about some of the initiatives that we've undertaken here around planning, because I speak, of course, as a downtown Torontonian, and my goodness, the city has exploded in the decades that I have lived here. Certainly the rate of development and the kind of development is a concern

for everybody, I think, in downtown Toronto. We're building a city the size of Kingston in the downtown core almost every year, just in terms of density. This is a phenomenal achievement, but it's also a phenomenal challenge, and planners are absolutely at the core of that. Even in my riding, where condo development has picked up apace, it's hard to keep up with the new developments, with the community meetings.

Years ago, I introduced a bill to reform the Ontario Municipal Board, supported by the city of Toronto, to get the OMB out of the planning of the city of Toronto. It's an unelected board; we don't think it's particularly responsive sometimes to the needs of constituents. We've had assurance from the government that reforming the OMB is also on their agenda, so I guess what I'm pleading for with the parliamentary assistant over there, the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore, is that we get that reform of the OMB soon, because we've been fighting for it on this side of the aisle in the New Democratic Party for years. I think I've tabled that bill four or five times at this point. Whether it goes as far as we're asking or does something, certainly something is needed.

It's interesting; in my riding, there are two very different communities represented. We have some of the wealthiest people in Toronto who live in my riding, and we have some of the poorest and most marginalized people in Toronto living in my riding. I won't say where I was, but at one meeting in one part of the riding, I talked about OMB reform to huge cheers. Rental reform? Silence. In the other part of my riding, I talked about rental reform to huge cheers. The OMB? Silence. You can guess.

But that's the other bill that, of course, we've been fighting for. My colleague the member from Toronto–Danforth was really seminal on this, in bringing forward reforms to our rental processes here. Certainly, in the NDP, we're on record going back a long time for more rent control because we're losing that wonderful mix in our city, where people of all income levels can live. It's becoming a city for wealthy people only. We have to fight back against that. That's planning too.

1540

At any rate, the other issue, of course, for which I've been fighting for years and introducing bills multiple times, is inclusionary zoning. Again, we are one of the few cities of our size that doesn't have some form of inclusionary zoning. The government has acquiesced. The government has brought something in on that. We're a little concerned about some of the aspects of that bill, I have to say. We certainly think that our councillors and our planners have some flexibility where that's concerned—with section 37 dollars, for example. It shouldn't be an either/or situation. They should be able to have the flexibility of both when they're looking at bringing more affordable housing into the mix.

But again, that's a response to having enclaves of the wealthy, enclaves of the not so wealthy and enclaves of the marginalized. We really need to be a city where those folk live together. That's part of the diversity and richness of our community.

I want to leave some time for my colleague from Toronto–Danforth.

A pet beef is the historical legacies of our city. I'm going to Europe. I'm lucky; I'm going to Europe this summer. Of course, in Europe, when you think of the great cities of Europe, you think of cities that really value their historical legacy, their architecture. Yet here, often that's left up to small groups of volunteers who have time on their hands to fight for a building or to fight for something. That is not the way it should be. We need more architecture and less archi-torture, if I can use that term, in our city. Again, planners are part of that process too.

I know, as a United Church minister, we're losing about a church a week across the country. Now, imagine losing a church a week in Europe. Again, not all churches are significant architecturally, but some are. This cannot be purely left up to dollars and cents, to the market. It can't be left up to the market. It has to be planned. It has to have some input. There's no single body here at fault for that. Certainly, we are all responsible for that, but again, planners are in the midst of that.

I'm going to leave time, as I said, for the member from Toronto–Danforth, but I'll just say that absolutely at no time in our history has planning been more important than right now. I'm happy to do anything to facilitate that process with professional planners. Updating this legislation that governs them is absolutely apropos, and of course we will support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Han Dong: I'm very pleased to speak to this bill, titled the Registered Professional Planners Act, 2017, introduced by my good friend the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

I think it's a very good bill, and I'll be supporting this. My colleague from Parkdale–High Park spoke very well about the challenges that we are facing in the downtown core. I happen to represent a riding that is, I'll say, half or at least half of downtown Toronto. We've seen unprecedented growth in the last 15 years. In Trinity–Spadina, if you go anywhere south of College now, you'll see cranes and construction sites, condominiums, and commercial buildings are popping up as well.

Professional planners play a key role in the devolve-ment—or gentrification, in many cases, in my riding—of our community. Every time I go to a meeting where the developer will consult with the community, I always want to wait and listen to the advice and insightful knowledge provided by the planner because the stuff that they look at, the stuff that they have to think about goes beyond what most of the people in the room would initially react to.

I think this is a very good bill. I'll take this opportunity to talk about some of the challenges that I've been hearing in my riding. Thinking back, three years ago when I was knocking on doors, people kept telling me that a lot of planning was not done respecting the process, respecting the thoughts and suggestions from the residents in the community.

I think it's so important that, in that process, whether it's one condo or whether it's a whole strip of redevelopment, we must listen to our constituents. We must listen to people who live in those communities and respect their views.

I know the government has done quite a bit of work on that through the modernization of the Planning Act; as well, we are in the process of reforming the OMB, making sure that local voices are heard at those levels. As well, I spoke to the inclusionary zoning bill, brought in by the government last year. I know it's in the works, and I hope to see it in its official form adopted by the city of Toronto, because it's going to add a lot more affordable units and bring players—stakeholders like co-ops—officially into the planning and into that search for a solution for more affordable housing around Toronto.

One more thing that I must add is that we also, in the planning of our city and its redevelopment, must look at heritage buildings. We have so many heritage buildings in the downtown Toronto core—downtown Toronto, I speak to—and we're not doing a good job of protecting them. We're not providing an incentive for these heritage building owners to do what they need to do to keep these properties.

In the States, people are proud to have a heritage building, but here they feel that they're a burden when it comes to upkeep, retrofitting and maintaining these buildings. They feel they're left out. There is less support, they feel, coming from all three levels of government. So I think we've got to do a better job in supporting those heritage building owners.

I'll leave some time to my good colleagues to speak to this bill as well.

I urge all members of this House to support this very timely, very needed bill.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm pleased to rise and speak today to Bill 122.

In 1994, Ontario pioneered the first private legislation in the country to protect the title of Registered Professional Planner. Professional planners are people who are ultimately tasked with determining our communities' state of health and well-being by being responsible for analyzing and implementing decisions on how our physical space is developed and revitalized.

It's 2017, and so we are 20 years behind on this legislation. At the same time, we're on the cusp of a significant shift in our province's population growth and development to match that transformation. Clearly, it's time for an update, and this legislation is an important step in laying the foundation for that coming transformation.

I will be supporting this bill because it's time to bring it up to date, but also because I support the accountability piece, and that is protecting the Ontario consumer by making the planning profession accountable to the people through various changes; namely, ensuring consumers are receiving evidence and advice from accredited professionals.

The proposed act would continue to protect the title of Registered Professional Planner, or RPP, and reserve its use for practising full members of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute, OPPI, which is 4,500 members strong today. The title of "professional planner" would also be protected, except when used in a different context, such as a financial professional planner in a bank.

At the same time, the bill would prevent people from identifying themselves as a professional planner, and thereby prohibit just anyone from providing a professional opinion on planning matters, which is key in ensuring the consumer is protected. The proposal is also to penalize anyone who is not a member of the institute but uses its preferred acronyms or designations—to be held liable and face a \$15,000 fine. Furthermore, the act would also specify more precisely the duties of the regulator, which is the institute, OPPI. The act would also make it a mandatory requirement to have public members serve on council.

Altogether, these changes, I believe, will do both: provide better title protection of professional planners and increase accountability to the people of Ontario.

I would now like to give a local perspective on this bill, and share some of the feedback that I received from my constituents.

Randy Scherzer, who is Grey county's director of planning, supports this legislation, which, he adds, is already in place in other jurisdictions. He believes this change will bring stronger accountability to those who are tasked with the decision to grow and develop our communities.

1550

Liz Buckton, who works as a senior planner with the municipality of Meaford and is a member of OPPI, believes Bill 122 will strengthen accountability and the ability of communities to make better planning decisions in the public interest. She says, "I strongly agree with OPPI's president, who has stated emphatically that 'great plans need great planners.'"

Meaford's planning department was recently faced with critical decisions involving the possible NEC expansion that proposed to take in thousands of acres of land in the local area under the planning control of the Niagara Escarpment Commission. The question that local planners had to take into account was: How did this proposal affect local planning regulations, local landowners and future growth?

In the end, the decision was that the proposed expansion not proceed, which pleased my constituents, who had argued all along that the current planning policies, together with conservation authority regulations and policies, already manage growth and protect the natural environment.

Clearly, land use and development decisions are critical. I'm pleased to support an update to the legislation that will help strengthen accountability in the planning professions, with a higher degree of oversight, as well as a commitment to make decisions that reflect the public good.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to rise in support of the bill put forward by the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

I don't think there's any question that in this society it's critical that we have a full supply of, a full complement of, capable planners and that there is proper regulation and proper support for that regulation.

Speaker, you are deeply familiar with my riding. You have a long history with my riding, and I'm pleased that you have that history. As you may well be aware, we are a fairly well-developed neighbourhood already but one going through substantial changes in the decades to come.

As with my colleague at Parkdale-High Park—the role of the Ontario Municipal Board and its function when it comes to supporting or opposing municipal decisions on planning is critical. Planners are crucially necessary to dealing with the intensification of cities so that that intensification can take place in a way that preserves those human values, that allows us to have walkable streets, allows us to go down streets that aren't wind tunnels but really are pleasant, intensified avenues.

I know from talking to my constituents that there have been, over the years, a number of planning issues which for them have been critical. One of the ones that are going on right now is along Broadview Avenue, which runs parallel to the Don Valley north of the Danforth, the section that I'm interested in at this point. The city of Toronto has engaged in a process of planning along there, looking at some intensification, but an intensification that would fit in with the existing fabric of the neighbourhood.

There is huge concern amongst the people who live along Broadview that the plan that has been brought forward by the city and was the subject of an extensive consultation, extensive debate, something that most people can support, and if they can't support it they can live with it—but there are those others who are not interested in the plan as it is written, as it has been proposed, who want to intensify far more than what has been proposed. I think that what has been brought forward by the city is sensible.

The appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board undermines support for intensification when you don't have the buy-in from the community around the area. There's no doubt in my mind that there will be planners who will be brought into this matter to argue. But in many ways, Speaker, and you're well aware of this, often the OMB just ignores what the planners have to say.

I talk to my colleagues who are councillors in the city of Toronto. The member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, I'm sure, has been there. He has been on that council, but he has also talked to people about development proposals that are out of scale, that don't make sense in a particular area. Far too often, sensible planning advice and decisions made by a municipality—and I'll talk about the city of Toronto right now—get ignored at the Ontario

Municipal Board. It's as if planning didn't exist. And if it exists, it is seen as an obstacle to making a big bag of cash from a particular piece of property.

I'll give you another example, a much smaller street in my riding: Albemarle, south of the Danforth. It's a very nice street with two- and three-storey houses on the side of a hill, so it's got a very interesting gradient. On the north side of the street, you have to go up about two storeys to get to the front porch and then go up the front porch to the door. On the south side of the street, everything is at ground level, with the houses, behind the front, dropping down into a ravine.

A recent fight on that street in the last two years was against a proposal to put in a large cube in the midst of houses that really have that traditional Riverdale look—peaked roofs, a porch that's comfortable to sit out on in good weather—introducing an urban house form that reflects nothing of the history and nothing of the architectural detailing that's there. I should just add that although the city of Toronto didn't support it and although the residents opposed it, the OMB overruled everyone and plunked it in the middle of that street, creating this really discordant sense of what that street is and what it should look like in the future.

Having regulated, capable planners whose opinions are weighed by municipal politicians—in large municipalities and small ones—and applying their advice without having the OMB overrule them all the time is going to be critical. So what the member has brought forward is a good bill. It just needs further action: in particular, bringing the OMB to heel; but in the city of Toronto, a big enough jurisdiction—larger than many provinces—letting the city of Toronto make its own planning decisions. It hires professional planners. Let them do their work. Let us respect their work.

Ms. Soo Wong: Further debate?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to stand in support of the bill introduced by the honourable member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, who has a legendary reputation in his community and as a planner. I was pleased to work closely with him when I was Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. He was always able to lend some wise counsel and some great advice.

Planning is a complex process, riddled with many challenges. There are some who have spent some time talking about some of the related, integrated issues. I was pleased, as minister, to be part of an activist, centrist government that looked to introducing a long-term housing plan, reviewing the OMB, embracing inclusive zoning and insisting on a bylaw on granny suites. Recruiting David Crombie was a bit of a godsend, Madam Speaker, to do that coordinated review.

I can speak as a former city councillor and as a former small-town mayor. I know planning is really critical, and the better we are at it, the easier it is to turn our cities into communities and our streets into neighbourhoods. I think that's what professional planners, when all is said and done, when they're doing their job well—and most of them do it very, very well—that's what it's all about.

This bill, very quickly, will strengthen practice requirements, improve accountability, sharpen definitions, build in a complete process, provide for an investigative vehicle for professional misconduct; in short, protect all the very good planners who want to do very good planning from the very few planners who can have a tendency, when they're left to their own devices, to make things difficult. I think the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore would acknowledge that as well. Those are all things that are happening here.

We're always caught, in government, between "You're 20 years too late," but "Why are you rushing things?" I'd rather be part of a government that's doing too much, too fast and have to come back maybe with the wise counsel of people in the government and the members opposite to kind of get things straight.

This is the next step in a process. I suspect, down the road, we may very well end up—I don't know, member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, whether we'll be into a delegated authority kind of regulatory regime or not; that's not for us to decide today. Our job today is to decide to take the next step.

I think this is a very reasonable, responsible and wonderful way to raise public awareness about the importance of planning, to update existing legislation and to affirm, in a very intentional way, our professional planners.

Thank you for being here today.

1600

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm not going to repeat a lot of what everyone has said.

I'm happy to support Bill 122. Frankly, I think, for people who are listening to today's debate, they would be surprised that we don't already have this in place in Ontario.

I would be remiss, if we're going to talk about professional planners, to not talk about R.J. Burnside and Associates. Many of you will recognize the name Burnside and Associates. Bob Burnside was the founder. He will tell you that he is a proud farm boy from Amaranth township in Dufferin county. Now, Burnside and Associates operates in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and South America. They were instrumental in partnering with our indigenous communities across Canada, and you will see Bob's legacy throughout Ontario, and in fact, the world. He has been an incredible mentor and a great source of advice for me over my years serving as the member for Dufferin–Caledon. So I think I should acknowledge Bob's involvement as a planner.

In fact, one of my family members, one of my many brothers, is a planner. I won't promote him because then I might get accused of free advertising.

This is something that most of us assume is already happening. Municipal, federal and provincial governments rely on that skill set to make sure that decisions, as we plan our communities, as we plan our neighbourhoods, as we decide on our infrastructure needs—we

rely on that professionalism and what planners bring to the table in terms of their skill sets.

I smiled when the member from—it's such a long riding: Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale; throw them all in—talked about the speed at which we move here in government. It was actually in 1987 that the four chapters of the Ontario Institute of Planners came together, so here we are going to the next step. Of course, in 1994, we passed the first act, and now we're moving forward with Bill 122.

Congratulations on your work. I know that there was a lot of background, a lot of research and a lot of consultation that came before you tabled this legislation. I'd like to acknowledge and thank you for that. It's an important part of bringing forward the concept and making sure that we get it right. So, congratulations; I'm happy to support it.

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

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It is my pleasure to rise in the House and speak to the fantastic bill put forward by my colleague and friend from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, the Registered Professional Planners Act, 2017.

I want to take a moment to welcome and recognize all of the registered professional planners that we have here today, all members of the OPPI. Thank you very much for joining in on the debate here this afternoon.

As someone who represents a downtown riding and has seen the massive explosion of growth in Davenport over the past number of years, I absolutely know the importance of the work that planners do to make cities and towns across the province more livable. Planners across this province work tirelessly to beautify the places we live, ensure that it is easy for us to get to the places we work, while at the same time making sure that our communities have places to grow for generations.

Madam Speaker, this act is significant to the Legislature and to the province because it governs an institute and its professional members who are integral to the work we do in this House, as well as the work the municipalities do across the the province.

Madam Speaker, I know that city planning is more complicated than SimCity makes it out to be. We need to acknowledge the fact that professional planners are highly skilled and accredited professionals.

In this Legislature, we all know that it is professional planners in our communities who help create, advise and help implement policy and investments in each of our municipalities and regions.

In my own constituency of Davenport, I have had many opportunities to meet with planners who are constantly identifying community needs and developing plans to create, grow or revitalize areas within my community.

I also know that planners don't just do this in Toronto. From Moonbeam and Moosonee, to right outside Steam Whistle Brewing, you have planners.

That is why the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore's bill is so important. This bill provides a much-needed

update to the dated Ontario professional planners act and would enact an updated and modernized piece of legislation that would govern urban, rural and regional planners across Ontario.

We know that there are nearly 4,500 skilled professionals who work in government, private practice, universities and not-for-profit agencies doing all sorts of different work. They're working on rural and urban development, urban design, environmental planning, transportation, health, social services, housing, and economic development.

This act would safeguard the public interest by further strengthening the profession's strict practice requirements and further improving the accountability of the institute and its members.

I know that the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore has been an active champion of this issue for years. I know that he has been a champion of protecting the public interest through his many years on Toronto city council and here in this legislative chamber. This bill is the ultimate expression of that.

This bill ensures that municipalities and the province will be able to rely on the expert opinions presented to them.

This bill improves accountability towards planners across the province and their governing body.

This bill gives the tools that Ontario professional planners need to ensure that the public trust is being upheld, and brings legislation for professional planners into line with other provinces.

Madam Speaker, we all know the importance of this bill. We know that city planning is an art and a science that is practised by professionals.

I'm happy to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I will return to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore to wrap up.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I want to thank all of the members for their thoughtful remarks: the members from Whitby–Oshawa, Parkdale–High Park, Trinity–Spadina, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Toronto–Danforth, Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale, Dufferin–Caledon, and my seatmate from Davenport.

Madam Speaker, as we've heard, great plans need great planners, and great planners need great governance for their profession. This bill seeks to update the governance regime for Ontario's professional planners. It will do it in a measured and thoughtful way. It's being done after very extensive consultation with other related professions that our planners work with, with municipalities and other stakeholders. We sought to get this right. It's a once-in-a-generation opportunity that we're going to have to update this legislation.

Madam Speaker, through you to the members in the public gallery today: You should all hold your heads very high because you heard from member after member of this Legislature in what high regard we hold you and the work that you do for us every single day.

Ontario's professional planners give us good advice every single day, in the smallest hamlet, in the largest

municipality, in private boardrooms—or to members of this government.

Our province has been building up for 150 years—through much of that time, with the great advice of professional planners. With the investments in infrastructure and the evolving society and communities we have, I know the greatest plans are yet to come.

1610

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

HOUSING POLICY

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will deal first with ballot item number 55, standing in the name of Mr. Hardeman.

Mr. Hardeman has moved private member's notice of motion number 52. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

LAWREN HARRIS DAY ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LE JOUR DE LAWREN HARRIS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Bradley has moved second reading of Bill 128, An Act to proclaim Lawren Harris Day. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to turn to the member from St. Catharines to identify the committee.

Mr. James J. Bradley: The Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Agreed? Agreed. Congratulations.

REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL PLANNERS ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LES URBANISTES CERTIFIÉS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Milczyn has moved second reading of Bill 122, An Act respecting the regulation of Registered Professional Planners. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to turn to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore to identify the committee.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I wish to refer the bill to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Agreed? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRONGER, HEALTHIER ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2017

LOI DE 2017 POUR UN ONTARIO PLUS FORT ET EN MEILLEURE SANTÉ (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 8, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 127, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes / Projet de loi 127, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter, à modifier ou à abroger diverses lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 11, 2017, we are now required to put the question.

Ms. Jaczek has moved second reading of Bill 127, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This will be a five-minute bell.

There will be a deferred vote: “Pursuant to standing order 98(h), I request that the vote on second reading of Bill 127 be deferred until Monday, May 15, 2017.”

Second reading vote deferred.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members’ public business, such that Mr. Anderson assumes ballot item number 59 and Ms. Forster assumes ballot item number 60.

SAFER SCHOOL ZONES ACT, 2017

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 10, 2017, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

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

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I believe the member from St. Catharines—no, Niagara Falls—has the floor.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Madam Speaker, I don’t know if that’s a compliment or not, telling me that I look like Mr. Bradley. But it’s all good.

I obviously rose yesterday—

Mr. Steve Clark: You’re going to take over St. Catharines.

Mr. Wayne Gates: What’s that?

Mr. Steve Clark: You’re going to take over St. Catharines.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I actually spoke to this; I started my speech. I think I got almost 10 minutes into it yesterday, so I’ll continue on from that.

Before I move on to discussing some of the presentations that we received, which I felt gave great merit to the piece of legislation, I just wanted to publicly thank everyone again who took the time to come out to the committee and provide their insight and their knowledge on their topic. It was very helpful.

As many of you know, I served on city council before I came here. It was a council that functioned very well and one that I was proud to serve on.

I understand the reasoning behind this move to allow municipalities to make decisions about school safety zones.

When I spoke on this bill previously, I noted how important it would be for us to not only listen to the concerns of city representatives or councillors, but I also noted how creating municipal independence was an important part of this legislation. As a city councillor, it became clear that council was a great resource to use to really understand the issues of a community. Sometimes, like the case here, when you listen to the local concerns of city councillors, you begin to realize that certain communities can be facing significant local issues, like school closures and road safety.

I said before that a one-size solution isn’t always the best approach. When it comes to road safety, there can be a local solution that has positive impacts. In this case, the legislation is allowing them to make those decisions about safety zones and speed limits, and as a former councillor and as a member of this House, I support community safety zones. Local decisions must be listened to.

I’ll talk about Niagara Falls for a minute. I might have got to it yesterday, but I’m not sure. In Niagara Falls, we have an area on Kalar Road. There are four schools within a small area. Three are public; one’s a high school. The council I sat on a couple of years ago—it’s almost four years ago now—decided to have a school safety zone. It was carried unanimously by the local committee and supported by the community, which is also important. We lowered the speed limit and we had a school safety zone. I’m pleased to say that we might have had the odd near-miss, but we haven’t had a serious accident since we did that in that area.

The one thing I want to discuss today, because when I was at committee I listened to the PCs talk about this in some of their motions and amendments—the one thing I thought was important is that they had put forward an amendment to talk about a certain time. What’s important when you do school safety zones is not about whether it’s from 8 o’clock till 4 o’clock; it has got to be all the time. What we tried to do, and we’re trying to do it even more

in the province of Ontario because of the number of schools and the further out the schools are becoming—we want to make sure our kids are safe using those facilities not just during school hours but after.

We have a lot of daycare centres in schools today. We have soccer leagues that use schoolyards at night, whether that's for games or for practices; and baseball diamonds. So to have a school safety zone that is only from 8 in the morning till 4 in the afternoon doesn't really make a lot of sense. Our council of the day decided to have it 24 hours a day. Make sure the residents know that it's a school safety zone, and make sure they know it's 50 kilometres down that way—probably better to go to 40 and then to 30, but that hasn't happened yet. But it's important to know that that council and the community made that decision. That's why it's important in this bill to continue to do that.

Local government is the level of government that is most connected to the residents; it's on the front lines, so to speak. So when they feel that an area in their town or city maybe falls under 50 kilometres, they should be able to dictate that. That part, if I understand it, is proper, and I can certainly get behind it.

Before we discussed this bill at the committee stage, I went forward and spoke with the mayors in our riding about the bill. I wanted to hear first-hand from them what they thought about the legislation.

Speaker, as you are aware, Niagara Falls is a very diverse riding. It has many different and charming communities that make it up. The three main communities are Niagara Falls; Niagara-on-the-Lake, which I know a lot of my fellow MPPs have gone to; and Fort Erie. There are many other small communities that exist within these main towns and cities—those are ones with councils and mayors—like Ridgeway, Crystal Beach, St. Davids, Queenston and Virgil. There are many of those that I just listed.

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With that being said, Niagara has many different opinions and views on how their towns, their cities and their communities should function or be legislated by the province.

Here's the important point: You don't get this a lot, but all three mayors agreed that this was a good piece of public policy. I'm going to repeat that, for those that aren't listening: All three mayors agreed that this was a good piece of public policy—all three of them.

I think that is important to mention because when we were in the clause-by-clause section of committee, and amendments to the bill were presented, we saw something interesting from the PC members. With nearly 300 amendments, they re-used the same amendments over and over again—exact wording, but simply switching out the street names. Many of these happened to be in my riding of Niagara Falls.

Here are the street names that they decided to use in my riding, many of which were listed in the wrong city. In Fort Erie, it was Thompson Road, Stevensville Road—I want to list these, because I think it's import-

ant—Central Avenue, Lyons Creek Road, Netherby Road, Bowen Road and Gilmore Road.

Do you know what's interesting about those roads being named? I went to that mayor, Mr. Wayne Redekop, mayor of Fort Erie, and I asked him, "Knowing this, do you still support the bill? Do you believe that we should have school safety zones? Do you support Bill 65?" Do you know what the mayor said? I'll give you some of his quotes later in my speech, but he said, "Absolutely."

Then I took a look at some of the amendments, some of the motions coming forward, on Niagara-on-the-Lake. They named the streets. This was a piece of paper that had one motion with the name of a street, and then they'd go to the next one. In Niagara-on-the-Lake, it was Four Mile Creek Road, Airport Road, Niagara Townline Road and Niagara Stone Road.

Again, in fairness to the motion, I went and talked to the local mayor. In this case, it's kind of interesting. He's called the Lord Mayor in Niagara-on-the-Lake—I always find that interesting—Mr. Pat Darte. And he said that, absolutely, he supports it.

From there, I took a look at the amendments and the motions put forward, and they listed, on a separate piece of paper, every street for Niagara Falls. In Niagara Falls, it was Kalar Road—the schools that I just mentioned are there, four schools almost right together; Beaverdams Road, where there are a couple of schools up that end; McLeod Road and Highway 20.

I wanted to mention this, because when I saw those amendments, I spoke to the mayors. As I've already mentioned, those mayors all support Bill 65, the Safer School Zones Act. They support the province giving them the ability to make the call when a safety zone is needed.

I even have a quote here from the mayor of Niagara Falls, Mayor Jim Diodati, that I'd like to read out regarding Bill 65. I thought it was pretty good. He took the time out, and he sent it to us. I want to thank the mayor, Jim Diodati, for doing that.

"The safety of our young people is of utmost importance. We are most supportive of the ability to implement security tools in these zones and are grateful for the autonomy being provided to municipalities to be able to make these necessary changes in areas that require special care and attention." I think that's pretty important.

There is a key word in the quote from the Niagara Falls mayor: autonomy. Having been a councillor, I understand that. This isn't being pushed down from the province. They're saying to the municipalities, "You know your communities better. Your elected town councils know your communities better. Your citizens know your communities better." So I think the autonomy part of this bill is so, so important, and one that we should support. That is a really important aspect of what this bill does. It gives municipalities the message that says, "Hey, we trust you. You know where and when there's an issue with road safety in your community."

Mr. Speaker, we must trust municipalities to make that call. We can't make it from here. We know what the PC Party thinks about municipal governments in Ontario.

After spending their time in government downloading service after service onto municipalities, why would they ensure that municipalities have the autonomy to make their own decisions on issues like the one we're debating here today?

With that being said, I'd like to discuss some of the city representatives, or city councillors, who came forward with very compelling and important information when this bill was discussed at committee.

I'd first like to discuss the presentation we received from the Ward 5 traffic safety committee of Newmarket. I found the information that was brought forward very interesting. In 2013, Nancy Fish launched a "slow down" campaign up in Newmarket. This was a response to the increased speeding and dangerous driving they had witnessed on the streets in their community. It was also in response to the tragic death of Georgia Walsh in Leaside in July 2014. I'll be speaking further about that tragic incident later in my remarks.

Both Nancy and Bob Kwapis got together with one of their local construction companies in town and acquired lawn signs. I know the members in this House understand the importance of lawn signs and how effective they can be in conveying a strong message. I can confidently say that I know we've all used them, maybe once or twice—and used them again and again and again.

These lawn signs told people in the area to slow down, and they were effective. The PCs raised this issue about using other avenues. People in the area began to recognize the signs and started to slow down, which was good. They were so successful that some of their lawn signs went missing and ended up in neighbouring communities such as Markham and Sutton. Ultimately, they were very successful in alerting the town to the danger of speeding, and pressed the town to create a traffic mitigation plan for the municipality.

While all of this sounds great, and some in the House might be asking why we don't just legislate "slow down" lawn signs in municipalities, rather than creating school safety zones, here's what happened. It's important to listen to this: People stopped paying attention and went right back to speeding.

I'd like to read a quote from Nancy, who presented at the committee: "All of this sounds wonderful, but the fact is that the signs lost their effectiveness. The town has worked on its traffic mitigation plan, but capital costs for re-engineering roads and/or adding speed bumps have hindered its advancement. People are not slowing down."

"One of the top concerns among the citizenry of Newmarket is speeding, yet many people do not slow down unless it's on their own street. People are so time-deprived—I think we can all relate to that, being MPPs—"that aggressive driving has become the norm. Those speeding are not just young kids; they are dads coming home from work, they're soccer moms, they're people going to appointments—they're 'everyman.'" That was a quote from Nancy from Newmarket.

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"Unfortunately, these drivers do not seem to be aware of the real dangers their speeding poses to pedestrians,

seniors, other vehicles and, most importantly, our children. On my street, which has a 40-kilometre speed limit, drivers are going 20 to 40 kilometres over the limit—20 kilometres over the speed limit is 50% over the speed limit, and 40 kilometres over the speed limit is twice the limit. These are dangerous drivers....

"Some argue that automated speed enforcement systems are not effective, or that they penalize the wrong person. I beg to differ. If I received a speeding ticket in the mail, it would affect my driving. I would be filled with remorse and embarrassment that I had broken the law with my dangerous action. Added to this, I don't have unlimited funds to pay traffic fines."

I wanted to read that quote because I think that's important. This person understands their community, actively works to address the speeding problem in their community and now fully understands what needs to happen to protect our kids and our grandkids.

I'd also like to discuss another presentation from a city councillor during the committee stage of the bill. Councillor Catherine McKenney from the city of Ottawa brought forward a very compelling point when we discussed road safety and having an appropriate level of funding for transit. If this government is serious about road safety, they must step up to the plate and deliver on the necessary funding commitments to transit expansion. She's from Ottawa.

Councillor McKenney noted—listen to this, please; people at home should listen to this—that 148 people died on Ottawa streets between 2010 and 2014; 36 on foot, 12 on motorcycles and 15 on bikes. This is unacceptable and I know this is a big issue in Toronto as well. And for the MPPs who are here from Toronto, they certainly know it all too well.

Another presentation, from Walk Toronto, highlighted some of these problems. I'll be speaking to that later in these discussions.

However, the councillor raised a great point: For a fulsome approach to road safety, we need to invest in quality transit options. I don't think this government has invested in enough high-quality transit options for the province. Again, this is a councillor from Ottawa saying this and that's why I thought it was important.

I know the government has told us that they have to sell off Hydro One to raise money for infrastructure and transit. Quite frankly—I have raised this before—the sell-off of Hydro One is one of the biggest mistakes this government or any government in the province has ever made. I said it this morning twice; I'm saying it this afternoon; I'm going to continue to say it.

I want to take some of my time to talk about the importance of municipal independence and discuss the presentations we had from municipal representatives, but what I really want to speak about is the impact that this has on schools and the feedback we've had from school representatives and parents.

As I mentioned before in this House, my wife was a teacher and a principal. I spoke with her regularly about the issues surrounding schools and she has always

mentioned road safety as a major issue her entire career. Injuries or death have the ability to seriously affect the well-being of an entire school, the whole school community, including our much-valued teachers.

She worked in the school system her whole adult life. My two daughters, whom I'm extremely proud of—I have three, but two of them are in the Catholic school system. I can't imagine how much an injury to one of their students would affect them. It's terrible to even think about it.

Unfortunately, from the presentations we receive from school representatives and parents facing life-threatening road safety issues, it's a reality. It certainly is a reality in Toronto and the GTA.

I know you'll be interested in this, Mr. Speaker, because I think we all should be. I'd like to discuss one of the schools that presented to us during the committee stages. They had their principal and their parent association from Allenby school in Toronto, which is at the corner of St. Clements and Avenue Road. They came to committee and presented the serious challenge they were having with speeding and reckless driving near their school.

The principal, Tracey O'Toole, provided the committee with a really good background on issues affecting this school. I'd like to quote some of her presentation, as hard as it was for her to do it.

"The area serving our school is densely populated, with much vehicular traffic in and around our school zone. Most of this traffic is on Avenue Road"—the MPPs from Toronto would know Avenue Road better than me—"a major thoroughfare in the city of Toronto providing motorists a four-lane north-south artery." It's right beside the school.

It "is marked as a school zone with flashing signs posted alerting motorists to a reduced speed of 40 kilometres"—I talked about Niagara Falls, where ours was 50; they actually had theirs posted to 40, because we all know that the slower you go, the less chance of severe injury and death—"during school times." Listen to this: "These signs have proven ineffective in slowing the speed of traffic on Avenue Road."

The school is dealing with serious, serious road safety problems. This is the principal talking. This is not just a few speeding motorists and an overprotective principal.

Here are some of the details from Lisa Parker, chair of and volunteer with the parent association of the school. "[O]ur school is located in midtown Toronto and is bordered by Avenue Road on the east side of the property. The enrolment boundaries are such that our students are crossing Avenue Road and walking along Avenue Road to get to" and from school every day.

"According to city of Toronto transportation services, Avenue Road is categorized as an arterial road. Its primary function is to deliver traffic to and from the 401 at the highest level of service possible.

"Despite its use as a major artery, the 2.3-kilometre stretch of Avenue Road that exists in our community not only includes our school but also a city park, two nursery

schools, a seniors' residence, a private school and a high school." Think about that. "This stretch of Avenue Road is characterized by sidewalks that are right up against the four-lane roadway. There are at least seven posted speeds."

This number should jump out at all of us—I know my colleague in front of me knows this area well: Over 4,000 students attend schools that are located on that stretch. I know the education minister is listening intently, and I appreciate that. There are 4,000 students in that area.

I know some of the members are familiar with this area just north of us. It's a major hub of the community. It is clear that not only are they dealing with speeding issues, but they also have a large number of students walking the streets.

Unfortunately, Allenby has witnessed the reality of speeding and dangerous driving, including distraction from texting while they're driving. Between April 6 and April 16, emergency services were dispatched three separate times for several car accidents in the area. That's a 10-day period. They've had six accidents in their school zone since August 2016. Let me repeat that: six accidents in their school zone in less than a year.

1640

This school has also witnessed their own teaching staff injured due to being struck by a vehicle three years ago. I know that the education minister will feel for this. Two teachers were struck and severely injured as they walked across Avenue Road. Their injuries were so serious that it resulted in the end of their teaching careers. How sad is that? This needless accident ended the careers of those teachers. Quite frankly, we're just looking out for our kids and our grandkids.

If this isn't evidence enough that we must allow municipalities and schools to make a decision about creating safety zones, I'm not sure what is. Can you imagine how this has impacted the teachers and the staff of this school? And not just the teachers and staff in the school; can you imagine what it did to that teacher's family? Their mom went to school in the morning to teach and came home so injured that she could never work again. You're not just affecting the school area when you have an accident like this; you're affecting the students, who are going to go home and talk to their parents; the other teachers; and then the family of the two who were injured—their kids, their husbands, their partners, their aunts, their uncles. Everybody gets affected by this. I just don't know how anybody can't understand the importance of doing this.

I believe that Principal O'Toole put it quite well: "I keep this in mind each time I run from my office to Avenue Road with news that yet another accident has occurred, hoping that no member of our community has been seriously injured. We have been working tirelessly to create a safer community."

To the credit of the parent association and the principal, they have not remained idle. They showed that by coming to our committee the other day. They participated in a pilot project with the Toronto Police Service, pulling

vehicles over that were going 55 kilometres or more, which is 15 over the speed limit. Listen to this: They pulled over at least 30 vehicles in one hour. One vehicle, they clocked at 75 kilometres. This is 40 kilometres over the speed limit. My math isn't very good; it's actually 35, and I wrote this. But at least I corrected it.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: You're correcting your record.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Education did help me; I was pretty good in math.

In one instance, I was told that a car was going so quickly that when the police officer stepped out onto the road to stop the car, it couldn't even stop. It blew right through the school zone.

I would like to commend the group from Allenby for their addition to the discussion on this bill and for continuing to fight to make sure that their community is a safer place. The presentations not only highlighted the accidents that have happened outside this school but also highlighted that a school area can be a community hub.

Speaking with the representatives from the school, it became quite clear that the schools and the buildings in this area are used all the time, day and night. You can understand that with 4,000 students in that small area, they're going to be at the schools.

This is important for my colleagues the PCs to listen to, because that was one of their motions. This means that more people are travelling either by foot or by car in this area—even more reason to ensure that the area is safe and speed limits are enforced.

I believe this is true for more than just this school. I think a lot of schools in Ontario serve as community hubs. These examples are absolutely tragic. It seems like a miracle that no child has been injured in this particular school zone.

While no child has been injured or killed in this particular school zone, other parts of Toronto were unfortunately not so lucky. Just a couple weeks ago, before they brought their presentation to committee, we learned of the tragic news that a young boy and his mother had been struck by a car in Scarborough after leaving their school. Unfortunately, the boy passed away from his injuries. I cannot even begin to understand how this has impacted his family. The details on this tragic death are still not fully known, but I believe it is important for us to highlight it.

There are real-life consequences to how we drive. In this case, it happened to be this young child's life. He was only six years old. No child should leave their home and never come back from school.

Another terrible tragedy we witnessed in Ontario was the death of a young girl hit by a car in the Leaside area of Toronto. The girl was also six years old. While in this case it was not a school zone, it's another unfortunate example of how unsafe driving or exceeding the speed limit can result in the destruction of families and communities.

Discussing these tragedies leads into another important presentation that we received at committee on this bill. We had a presentation from Maureen Coyle from

Walk Toronto. Walk Toronto is an advocacy group focused on the creation of safe, equitable and accessible use of public space which fosters a walking culture in the city—again, Toronto is what she's talking about. What was really important to highlight from that presentation wasn't directly related to just school zones, but generally about some of the serious issues facing pedestrian injuries in the city of Toronto.

I'd like to actually quote some of Maureen's presentation regarding road safety in Toronto, if I may, Mr. Speaker—Madam Speaker. I see you've changed. Welcome back. An hour is a long time. You go for a break and I don't.

Listen to this: "In 2016, we saw among the highest pedestrian deaths this century in Toronto, with 43 deaths on the road—46 when you include private parking areas like malls, for example, which are not covered under the Highway Traffic Act and which are not kept in police statistics." Remember, this is coming from Maureen. "There were an additional 39 people reported killed—pedestrians, specifically—on OPP-enforced roadways. The data from other municipalities for 2016 are not readily available to the public at this point. However, in the first nine years of this century, Toronto, Mississauga, Hamilton and Ottawa together accounted for almost 500 pedestrian fatalities....

"Lower speeds are proven to reduce fatalities of pedestrians and other ... road users. The survivability of an impact with a vehicle increases with a corresponding ... speed. The Chief Coroner's report notes, 'There is a well-established impact of vehicle speed on death, where ... the fatality risk at 50 km/hr being more than twice as high as the risk at 40 km/hr and more than five times higher than ... at 30 km/hr.'"

That is a lot to unpack, but I think there are two important pieces in that information. One is that the number of pedestrian deaths in 2016, which was noted by Maureen, is the highest this century.

1650

The second important piece of information from this quote is the fact that a reduction in speed has a serious impact on the chance of survival in the case of a collision. A five-times decrease in the risk from 40 to 30—I think that is significant and should be considered when we look at this bill. It's pretty obvious what to take from this. Pedestrians are dying in this province, particularly in Toronto, from collisions with cars, and if those cars aren't speeding, they have a much better chance of survival of an accident. The coroner's report that was referenced here lists the top five reasons of cause of death by accidents, and the number one—anybody know? Speed. It's just another example of why this legislation makes sense and why I've said all along that the NDP and myself would support it.

Another point that was raised by Maureen was the economic costs of those accidents. Here's another quote from her presentation:

"A report from Toronto Public Health in 2012 stated, 'Savings in direct health care costs arising from current

levels of Toronto residents staying active by walking or cycling and averting chronic illnesses are estimated to reduce health care spending of \$110 million to \$160 million.” That’s big money. “‘In terms of indirect costs, if estimates of lost productivity or the economic value of a life are included’ in the cost of chronic illness ‘the total economic benefits of active transportation ... range from \$130 million to \$478 million.’

“On the other hand”—I hate using this word but I will—“a conservative estimate of costs of road fatalities puts the burden on the city of Toronto at \$600 million. The fines generated through electronic enforcement is not a cash grab.” It is not a cash grab. “It is a fraction of the economic costs of pedestrian deaths and serious injury—which, in turn, does nothing to recognize the impact on communities and families when a death or a serious injury results from road violence.”

I think this is an important point to make, one that we definitely forget about. Obviously the lives lost are the most important reason to support the bill, but we can’t forget about the financial impact.

Madam Speaker, when this bill went into committee and after we received all these wonderful presentations, we then experienced something interesting. I think you might call it some political games: playing games with a bill that really is always about protecting our kids and our grandkids.

I’d like to discuss some of the amendments that were put forward. One of the amendments stated that a speed enforcement system would only be used in an area where the rate of motor vehicle accidents is at least 33% higher than the average for that class of roadway over the previous three-year period. Think about that. I had a line there but I’m not going to use it. I thought it was a completely ridiculous motion that added nothing to this bill and only served to disrupt an important debate about improving the safety of our children.

There’s another amendment that I think would classify as political games or using weasel words to skirt about the core of this bill. This amendment asked for the use of photo radar systems. I want you to listen to this, and I want my buddies from the PCs to listen to this, too, because it made no sense to me. I just went wild, by the way.

This amendment asked for the use of photo radar systems in school zones only from September to June, from 30 minutes before the earliest school opening in the school zone and 30 minutes after. Now, think about that. We’re talking about schools as community hubs. We’re talking about soccer teams. We’re talking about baseball teams. We’re talking about daycares. A lot of daycares use schools across the province of Ontario. Not only did this amendment continue to disrupt an important debate on improving the safety of our children and added nothing to the bill, it also completely ignored the fact that many of these schools act as community hubs.

I know in my riding of Niagara Falls many of the schools have constant activities right through the year because they operate as a community hub and offer more

than daily school services. I may repeat a little bit of this, but there are daycare centres, soccer practices, football and, with our changing sports, rugby in a lot of our schools now, especially with the artificial turfs that are out there, and baseball games. Children from the community come and play on the school equipment all the time. As a matter of fact, as a parent, when you’ve got a little one, where do you go? Certainly, in Niagara Falls we’ve got lots of parks. Where do you go? Particularly with families that don’t have the money to go on vacation, they go enjoy their parks. That’s what they do. They stay home—stay-vacations.

I understand that these amendments are in the past and have been voted down by the committee, but I think it’s important to highlight the type of attitude that the PCs have taken with this bill and how they feel about the safety of our kids. I want to be clear, because they’re here. I’m going to say it to their—I don’t climb on anybody’s back. I’m going to say this as clear as I can: I have no idea why they did the amendments that they did. I don’t believe that anybody—and I’m going to be clear on this—I don’t believe that anybody of the 107 MPPs who are elected by the province of Ontario, by the residents, doesn’t care about their kids. I think we all care about our kids. I think we all care about our grandkids. I want to be clear on that.

What I’m talking about is the amendments that were brought forward that I don’t think, probably, should have been brought forward, and certainly some of the ones that I’m discussing today. So I’m not saying anything bad about anybody in this House. I think everybody loves their kids. We want our kids to go to school and come home. But when you put amendments together like this, I think it’s a mistake, when you’re doing a bill on something as serious as this; when we know—we know, and I said it—two 6-year-old children have been killed. They might be here today if this bill was in place then.

I’ve already spoken about the fact that the former leader, now mayor of Toronto, John Tory—and this is important too. I should have said this before I said what I just did. I have already spoken about the fact that the former leader and now mayor of Toronto, John Tory, actually asked for revenue tools for the city of Toronto, so I won’t talk about that again. But he actually asked for the same thing.

However, I think we need to address this claim that these systems are cash cows. I know I’ve heard that word phrase used a lot: cash grab, not “cash cow”—sorry.

I asked many of the passionate presenters at the committee what they thought about this being used as a cash grab. I would like to share some of that with you, some of their responses.

Our presenter from Walk Toronto, Maureen Coyle, had this to say: “I think we have a culture that has been created that allows us to dismiss real-life experience as soon as we drag out the ‘cash grab.’ You know, my mother was a librarian. She used to tell me about people coming in and putting their 15 cents on the table for their overdue book, thinking that was how she made her

living. It may not be that far off, but that cash grab is not how anybody in this room makes their living. Yes? That cash grab, that money collected from those fines, needs to be put back, and very clearly put back, in a transparent way, into the creation of safe infrastructure and safe strategies, and other ways....

“To allow an argument as” basic “as that, especially when compared, as I have suggested, to the overwhelming costs of ignoring this problem; the overwhelming costs to municipalities of having productive members of their communities taken suddenly, through trauma; the knock-on trauma on families in general because of these kinds of incidents; the loss of productivity; the court time; the health care facilities’ time—all of these have a huge impact.”

Here’s another comment from Lisa Parker, head of the Allenby Parents’ Association, on the idea that this is a cash grab: “Automated speed enforcement has been referred to as a cash grab by some. However, in the case of protecting our school zones, we think it would be better referred to as a convenience fee. If a motorist would like the convenience of speeding in our school zones and putting our children’s lives at risk, then they should pay for that convenience. The cost of the convenience should be high enough that motorists think twice about putting our children’s lives at risk.” That came from a parent group where they’ve had all kinds of problems.

1700

The third comment came from Mr. Yu Li, from Friends and Families for Safe Streets: “First, we think that people who endanger other people’s lives and break laws by speeding should pay the price. Second, evidence shows that the public is more amenable to safety cameras if they know that the revenues from speeding fines are earmarked for safety-oriented street redesign projects, such as narrowing lane widths to accommodate bike lanes and transit lanes ... and/or wider sidewalks. We ask that Bill 65 designate revenues for this purpose to ensure public support. Third, the real reason we want safety cameras is not for the revenue but to actually slow down cars.” I’m going to reread that; I like that one. “Third, the real reason we want safety cameras is not for the revenue but to actually slow down cars.”

After these comments from Mr. Li, I asked him about the tragic death of the six-year-old boy in Scarborough, and if he felt this would have saved lives or been a cash grab. This was his response: “I don’t think that’s a cash grab. How much are you willing to pay for this six-year-old’s life? Please ask yourself: How much are you willing to pay for the six-year-old’s life?”

I think this quote really sums up everything nicely for us. This bill is about saving lives and protecting communities, and I support that.

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

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It is a pleasure to rise in this House today to weigh in on the debate this afternoon, the Safer School Zones Act, Bill 65. It’s especially important

to me as the mother of two young children who take a school bus home from school every day.

Madam Speaker, as you know, Ontario’s roads are among the safest in North America, but we know that there is always room for improvement. One of the biggest dangers on our roads here in Ontario is speed—the member from Niagara Falls spoke to that—and especially the speed around schools. I can’t tell you how many times—perhaps not so many now that I sit in this House at this hour—I would pick up my boys after school and would just see the cars flying by the stop signs, right at the time when the school buses are crossing intersections and at the time when families and parents and grandparents are picking up their children.

It is important that we have measures in place and give the municipalities the tools so that they can put the appropriate measures in place, like the ones that we are suggesting with Bill 65, that would monitor and that would take pictures of the cars that are speeding. And I couldn’t agree more with the member from Niagara Falls when he speaks about not just the half-hour before or the half-hour after, but at all times. Our schools are used as community hubs. I have one that is coming to my riding of Davenport. This is extremely important.

I had the opportunity to sit on committee this week when this bill was being debated, and I want to thank the member from Niagara Falls for standing with us here in the government and collaborating to ensure that this bill does pass, and to reiterate the fact that this bill is not a cash grab, as has been referenced by the members from the PC caucus, but it is a bill that is here to protect the children.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: I want to commend the member from Niagara Falls on his remarks. I listened quite carefully to the biggest share of it. I, too, want to see safe school zones. I wouldn’t support some of the allegations that were made here either.

I think that, besides fines, we should seize people’s cars. If they’re going to be speeding through—I saw a video the other day in support of the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex. He had—for want of another word—a blow-by. To catch people who are passing these buses—I couldn’t believe how many people were running by these buses with their safety arms out. I would be all in favour of it being like liquor issues: When people are caught drinking and driving, seize the car for a week. If it’s a young lad driving the car, then his dad and mother are going to have to put up with that.

I think we should crack down immensely. I don’t have a problem with that. I have three kids, and two grandchildren now. I see it in my town. I live in a subdivision there, and it’s like a racetrack. I challenge the people when they’re driving their cars, and my wife says—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I do. I probably shouldn’t do it, but I don’t care. I say, “Look, if you want to keep driving that car, you’d better slow it down or I’ll see you. You’ll

be walking.” They know who I am there, and I do it anyway.

I support safer schools, safer school zones and safer roads. I think this is a good debate. I don't like to have people cast aspersions on some people's comments on it.

Anyway, that's my opinion. I would like to see safer schools, safer zones and safer roads. Like I said, let's crack down on these people who are breaking the rules, and really crack down on them, not just give them a fine: Yank the car.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank our transportation critic, the member from Niagara Falls, Mr. Gates, for a very thorough review of the issues that are on the table here. He's right. He talks about the tragedies that people have had to deal with, the situation that we face in our school zones.

I had an opportunity just this week to talk to a number of grade 5 students in my riding—R.H. McGregor, a great school. Interestingly, in a group of about 30 or 40 kids, three of them got up to talk about safety in their school zones and how a number of them had barely escaped being run down crossing at a crosswalk. So I don't think there's any question. I think the member has nailed it well: There are substantial safety problems with speeding cars, particularly in school zones. Families and children need to have the confidence that everything is being done to ensure the safety of those children when they go to and from school.

I've had the opportunity to go past school zones in a variety of schools in my riding, and there's no getting around it: There is a small percentage of drivers who do not pay attention to what's going on on the street, who don't care that they're going through a school zone and are willing to go at an extraordinary speed. It is a huge risk for kids. It simply is a huge risk. I think that what has been brought forward—and the member has spoken to it very well—takes a reasonable approach to this substantial safety issue.

I used to be a city councillor in Toronto. One of the big issues for every councillor is the speed of cars on streets. The vast majority of drivers are pretty sensible. There is a small percentage that are terrible. Putting in place measures that will ensure that those people are caught and stopped is a good move.

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

Mr. Granville Anderson: It's a pleasure for me to stand here and speak to Bill 65, the Safer School Zones Act. I wish to acknowledge the member from Niagara Falls, the member from Davenport, the member from Sarnia-Lambton and the member from Toronto-Danforth for their comments.

The member from Niagara Falls: I couldn't have articulated it any better than he did today. I like his passion that he puts towards the safety of our kids. That's paramount.

I had a conversation with the mayor of Clarington last week. I said to him, “I've been hearing from the PCs that

this is a cash grab.” He said to me, “How on earth is this a cash grab when, way before this photo radar goes up”—I'm going to call it photo radar, because the third party wanted that in the bill. He said, “It's going to be posted that there are radars in the area. It's going to be posted on the municipality website where those photo radars are located. So how on earth is it a cash grab?” I said, “You're correct.” It's about the safety of our kids.

I was a trustee for 11 years, Madam Speaker, and the most calls I got from parents were about speeders speeding in school zones. As a trustee, I was able to work with the municipality to reduce speeds in areas around schools as much as I could. That alone was not enough. Parents couldn't care less what method is used, as long as the safety of their kids is protected. That's paramount.

1710

This measure is about safety. I am appalled to see that the members of the third party are against safety at school. You tell that to the parent in Scarborough, or the teachers who got hit on Avenue Road.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you very much. I appreciate that. But I am going to respond to the PC talking about the schools and the cameras on the school buses. I supported Bill 94, and I supported it the other day, because I think it's a good idea.

But you also know—and I'm going to read it out. I only have a minute and 45 seconds, so, hopefully, I'll get through it.

This was a question asked to the lawyer at committee: “Sure. I think the requirements in legislation are that the photograph or the video that is produced needs to show that the school bus's lights are flashing and needs to depict the vehicle that is committing the offence clearly in order for a charge to be laid.

“All of that evidentiary information that is required for a charge to be laid and to stick in court would require very clear setting of evidentiary rules, which we would work with the Ministry of the Attorney General to do. In terms of allowing cameras on school buses, they are allowed. The ministry does permit school bus drivers to have these cameras on the bus. As the member indicated, there are a number of pilots under way in Ontario. But for the charges to be able to stick”—and this what people have to understand, and I hope everybody is listening to this, “we need to ensure, working with the Ministry of the Attorney General, that the evidentiary rules around what the camera photograph or video shows needs to be articulated clearly so that those elements that I described are clear for a POA officer or for a judge to determine that the offence was committed accurately.”

According to the experts—not Wayne Gates; the experts—the technology today isn't in place to do both, meaning the arm out and getting the lights at the same time. When we get that technology, Bill 94 should be included in the school safety zones. But let's not use it as an excuse to turn this bill down.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: As always, it's an honour to be able to stand in this House and represent the fine constituents of Niagara West—Glanbrook. This is an issue that I'm very proud to be able to speak to today, and it's an issue that I think is of great importance, for a number of reasons.

In my contributions to debate this afternoon, I do hope to clarify a couple of things. I think there are some misconceptions from the third party and from the government surrounding some of our concerns here within the PC caucus, in the opposition benches. Some of our concerns are regarding this legislation—some of the aspects that are unclear, some of the aspects that the government seems to be playing political games with, in an attempt to perhaps score political points, which is unfortunate.

If you'd sat here over the last hour and heard the comments that were made, you would believe—indeed, there was actually a press release, I believe, that the government party sent out to a wide variety of ridings, essentially saying that the PCs don't like kids being safe. That was the sort of absolutely ridiculous rhetoric I was hearing from the government benches. Now, unfortunately, it appears to have been echoed in the third party. They seem to think that perhaps PCs actually don't care about kids' safety; PCs don't want their kids to be safe when they're going to school. I know that's the farthest thing—

Mr. Wayne Gates: I didn't say that.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I understand that you didn't use those words. I wish to assure the member from Niagara Falls that I'm not saying those were his precise words. But it was the general aura, sitting here, that you could feel almost irrationality behind the rhetoric. I think we have to be careful, when you're looking at what the opposition is bringing to the table, that these concerns don't become blown out of proportion, that they don't become political tactics that the government and perhaps the third party use to distract from what our concerns actually are.

The reality is, I do not have children. I do not have children who attend school, but I hope to in the future, and I know most people here in the Legislature have had the opportunity to have their children attend either a public or other form of education, and in this important aspect, obviously everyone in this House wants to see—I have 17 nephews and nieces, and I want to ensure that they can go to school safely and come back safely. It's absurd to think that I believe, or that anyone in the PC caucus believes, that we shouldn't have safer schools, that we shouldn't have more protection for our children. Any accident that occurs, any sort of harm that happens to any child outside of a school or on his or her way to and from school is absolutely tragic, and I would wish that on absolutely no one. Anything we can do to prevent that is beneficial.

The concern that we have, then, when it comes to Bill 65, the Safer School Zones Act, 2017, is that when you allow—and this is the concern: by addressing the ability of municipalities to set speed limits within their borders

without really meaningful restrictions you have the potential—and I'm not saying it would necessarily happen, but I am saying there is definitely the potential that we see an abuse of this power. There's the potential that we see this position being brought forward in a way that would create not just safer school zones, but in their argument we would see—sorry, my argument, then, and my approach is that we have to ensure we have safer school zones, but we have to be careful that we don't have radars in as many areas where they're simply not needed and where they're unnecessary and where they do lead to increased revenues.

The reason for this is something—honestly, I'm confused when I read some of the prior estimations that have been brought forward in this Legislature by other members who have spoken about this. The reality is that not only on this side of the House but on that side of the House—the current government party, when they were in opposition in the 1990s, when they spoke to legislation that the then government, but currently the third party—when they brought forward legislation that talked about increasing the use of not school safety zones, but talked about using photo radar, many people spoke out against it. In fact, the former finance minister, Greg Sorbara, spoke out against it in 1993; the former Minister of Natural Resources—Gerry Phillips, I believe his name was—spoke out against it in 1993. As recently as 2007, the former Premier, Dalton McGuinty, mentioned that we need to address speeding, obviously, and there's no one in this House that would say that we don't and there's no one who would say that speeding is a good thing, but he said, "Photo radar is not the answer."

My question, then, is, sure, I agree that we need to be do everything we can to ensure safer school zones, but if this is the primary focus, then why did we see in committee a failure to actually take real steps to improve this bill in ways that we would gladly support, and improve this bill with certain amendments that would ensure that there would be common sense restrictions that would close loopholes that would have led to an increased revenue tool? That is not the intention of this legislation, and I would hate if, by default, that is what occurred.

We have to recognize that we have to work together to improve this legislation. To the member for the third party: I appreciate his concerns that he brought forward about perhaps the amendments that were brought forward by my caucus colleagues at the committee stage of the legislation. But I would urge the member from Niagara Falls to consider that the reality is that as opposition and in his role in the third party, our duty here in this place, and especially within committee, is to improve legislation, to work on building that legislation into a better piece of legislation that closes loopholes, that closes these issues. I know that with other pieces of legislation—I think of Bill 89, which is currently going through the Legislature and committee. There have been hundreds of amendments that have been brought forward, even from the government, because they recognize that committee is an important place to improve legislation, to

close loopholes and to make sure that we really do have the best piece.

1720

Unfortunately, the third party didn't seem to recognize that. They didn't bring forward any meaningful amendments to this legislation, and I would say that in a sense they're actually abrogating their duties as a loyal opposition when they fail to recognize the importance of closing loopholes that might be negative, and not improving legislation to the extent that it deserves to be considered.

What we have to ensure is that the Safer School Zones Act is not a misnomer. Maybe it should be named the "giving municipalities a new tax tool act." I'm not saying that that's what it is, but we have to be careful that that's not what it turns out to be. The reality is that we've seen chronic underfunding from this government. We've seen chronic underfunding for municipalities. They've long been seeking mechanisms to provide new revenue due to ongoing government underfunding.

Again, I'm not making this statement, but I am begging the question: Is this government simply using this as a creative justification to do just that, to provide an increased revenue tool, a "giving municipalities a new tax tool act"? Is that what they're thinking behind the scenes? Perhaps that's what they joke about when they're not in this House. But the reality is that that's not what the primary goal should be.

I was very disappointed when I heard that the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex, who brought forward a piece of legislation that everyone in this House, at the time it was voted on, agreed was a good piece of legislation, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act (School Bus Camera Systems)—I know the member spoke about it briefly, but we brought forward the option in committee that they could integrate that into this legislation to ensure that we really did have a focus on making it about safer school zones.

The reality is that speed is an issue. We heard that. The member from Niagara Falls spoke about it at some length. Everyone here would recognize that a huge factor in a wide variety of accidents, including the blow-bys which the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex is seeking to diminish, occur from speed. But there are other realities that impact dangerous driving, whether that's texting and driving, as we've spoken about in this House before when the member from Nipissing brought forward his private member's bill, which would have allowed for the creation of texting zones, or whether it's, again, perhaps intoxication. The reality is that there's a wide variety of issues that impact safe driving that we need to examine and look at reducing.

Again, I'm not saying that this isn't necessarily a good step in the right direction, but we have to look at all these areas. If one of these issues is blow-bys, blowing past school buses, then why are they being so short-sighted in their perspective on school safety? If they only care about kids, perhaps, when they're getting on and off of the bus—what about the importance of these school bus blow-bys, when they're stopping, then? Because numer-

ous school bus drivers are concerned over the number of blow-bys that happen each day in Ontario.

Just as a brief aside: I don't wish to go off topic, Madam Speaker, but I did have the opportunity during my campaign to knock on a lot of doors, as I think I've referenced a couple of times here and there, and I really enjoy interacting with people, especially in many of our communities which are really bustling right now in the Niagara region. People are speaking about moving from Burlington, Mississauga, Oakville and those areas into Niagara—many young families, as well as many retirees—and one of the concerns that did come up at the doors was the question of their children's safety in many regards.

I'm sure many members of this House who were involved in municipal politics know that everyone wants to have a speed bump in front of their home, because they are concerned about cars not slowing down in front of their home, and I must confess that I understand that concern from a parenting perspective—or as an uncle, I should say, I understand that. You obviously want to keep them safe.

I think we have to look at some of the recommendations that are being brought forward in other areas of student safety as well, not just relegated to expanding these zones where we can throw up photo radar and increase revenue for municipalities. Again, Madam Speaker, I'm not making this statement about all municipalities doing this, but if it's not what it's about, if that's not why the government is putting forward this legislation, then why won't they close the loophole? Why won't they make sure that it's being put forward only in school zones, that it's only applying to these areas that are high safety?

It's a shame that the Liberals turn an opportunity to really enhance school safety—they've turned it into more of a political wedge that forces, perhaps, photo radar back on expressways, parkways and highways. I think we have to just be careful and realize the precedent that this is setting, if this bill does pass in the Legislature.

So, community safety zones: Let's talk a little bit about this. What is a community safety zone? It's a vaguely defined zone, and its associated fines can go virtually anywhere or for anyone within a municipality's jurisdiction. According to the Highway Traffic Act, a community safety zone is any zone where "in the council's opinion, public safety is of special concern on that part of the highway."

Councillor Sam Merulla—he's from Hamilton—has read the legislation and understands it. He announced plans to seek community safety zone designation for the Red Hill and the Lincoln Alexander expressways. These are not school zones. These are not places where children are getting on and off buses. These are not places where people are attempting to cross the street, perhaps, or leaving school or coming into school. These are not school zones; these are expressways. Councillor Sam Merulla, if he's trying to push for community safety zones in these areas, that's missing the point of the

legislation. But then, going back to what I'm saying, we have to address how we can close these loopholes.

Having set that out, having laid out the fact that certain members in this House seem to have wanted to put forward this portrayal of the PC caucus as being somehow opposed to child safety, as being opposed to school safety, as if we were wishing that our children, our nephews and nieces and our neighbourhood children were being mown over by the hundreds, as if that's exactly what we want—please note the sarcasm, Madam Speaker. That's absolutely absurd.

I find it quite offensive to hear some of the tone that comes across, especially from the government benches, but also to a certain extent from the third party, because we are very passionate about child safety. I think when you look at our history on that, that's something that we've shown. Like I said, the MPP for Chatham-Kent-Essex made a very, very common-sense amendment to the Highway Traffic Act, that it would amend, with his Highway Traffic Amendment Act (School Bus Camera Systems)—and the Liberals had the opportunity in committee to include it in this legislation and to make a real difference.

There's an article written by Luisa D'Amato in the Waterloo region Record, and she says, "It's a shame to see party politics get in the way of making children safer on school buses." She acknowledges that "far too many drivers illegally overtake school buses when they are stopped," and she says—look, the fact that the Liberals voted against it is disappointing. We need to make sure that this happens as soon as possible, that we have meaningful legislation in place that will deter people from speeding past children while they're attempting simply to go home, after a long day often, or heading to school to learn.

I agree wholeheartedly that no child should have to fear being struck by a speeding driver, by a distracted driver—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: The safety of our children is paramount, and we support real measures to make school zones safer. Any suggestion that we have any other concept is absolutely absurd and offensive.

The laziness of the Liberals in shooting down our common sense amendment, along with a number of other amendments that were practical and some of the amendments that were very deliberative and a really sincere attempt to improve quantities of this bill—I think that we need to recognize that this government has an ideological focus on their legislation. They have an ideological focus that fails to recognize the importance of accepting good ideas from all sides of the aisle. They don't seem to realize that a good idea, if it doesn't originate from them, is still a good idea. The government has this mentality, perhaps, of not wanting to listen to anything that comes either from the PC caucus or from the third party, simply because it doesn't come from their benches. I'm saddened by that.

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I think we need to move beyond the partisanship of this. We need to be focused on improving school zones. We need to be improving school safety and not simply seeing how we can distract people with rhetoric; how we can distract people by making base accusations, by sending out press releases, perhaps, that accuse members who are simply doing their job as the opposition to ensure that there are no loopholes in the legislation; simply doing their job in the committee stage and in this House as well, pointing out aspects of the legislation that may be deemed inadvisable, that may be perceived to have and may in actuality have a negative impact, not necessarily on school safety but on other aspects; who are simply doing their best to ensure that every piece of legislation passed in this House has had fulsome input and the opportunity to be well thought out and, down the road, if this government does in fact pass this legislation, that we don't have a situation in Hamilton or, from my area, the town of Grimsby, the town of Lincoln, where they place photo radar on Fly Road in my riding, where there are no schools along that road, yet let's say they place a school safety zone there and—ding, ding, ding—it turns into a nice chunk of coin at the end of the day. I want to ensure that that is not what happens.

I just want to reiterate, as we approach time, the considerations that have been lobbied even currently, from some of the heckling, as if there's this zero-sum game that if I don't support certain aspects of this bill, therefore I don't support safer school zones; as if, because I simply don't support certain aspects of the ambiguities within this bill, therefore I don't think our kids should be safe.

It sincerely hurts me, and it is offensive to me, that members on the government benches, that members from the third party, perhaps, would think that I don't want to do everything we can to ensure that our students get home from school safe.

Thank you for listening to me, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The first thing I have to say is that the member from Niagara West-Glanbrook is really quite a phenomenon. If folk watching this don't know it already, he's 19 years old. Really, I feel incredibly maternal about Sam, the member from Niagara West-Glanbrook. Although we are miles apart ideologically and theologically, I hold out great hope for him because he's only 19.

Think about it. I use him as an example with my Girls Government group when they are hesitant to get involved politically. I said this is a young man who actually defeated a senior member in the Conservative Party, got enough people out to a nomination meeting to win the nomination. This is to be applauded.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Twice.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Twice, he did that. He shows that you don't have to be a certain age to be in politics; that you don't have to have a number of degrees, a career, before you come here; that you can actually do what he did.

I think we have to recommend him for that and we have to applaud it. Way to go. Way to go, Niagara West–Glanbrook.

On the bill itself, there's no question: The vast majority of this House is in support of this bill. This is about children's safety. That's what it is about.

The member talked about the fact that this might make municipalities some money. I don't see that as a problem, quite frankly. But, okay, if that's a problem from a Conservative standpoint, so be it. But primarily—let's face it—this is about children's safety.

In Toronto, it's a paramount issue. We have fought successfully in one of my wards successfully, and in another not so, to lower the speed limit in residential streets to 30 kilometres an hour. That makes a huge difference. That, and this bill, will constitute child safety.

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

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm glad I get two minutes on this, the Safer School Zones Act to provide municipalities with a number of tools regarding road safety.

What can I say, Speaker? How disappointing it absolutely is to hear from the PCs this afternoon their continued objection to this very critical piece of legislation. The fact is, this party, the PC Party, has continually delayed this bill. In committee, rather than give sound, reasonable amendments—which is what we'd expect in committee—what did they do? They tabled over 300 amendments. Guess what those amendments were mostly about? Most of them were street names. That's what the amendments were about. So give your amendments, sure, but is that constructive? Is that helpful? Is that in the best interest of children's safety? I don't think so.

I have to say something else, Speaker. We recently hosted a post-budget breakfast in Scarborough. The member from Scarborough–Rouge River was there and joined us, which was great—to have him there as part of the Scarborough team, so to speak. But I do want to address, specifically, a request that was made of him at that budget breakfast. It was made by one of the trustees in Toronto, Trustee Parthi. If you remember, he asked you specifically about supporting this bill. He encouraged you, the member from Scarborough–Rouge River, to support this bill. He was speaking from experience. He was speaking in respect of the tragic incidents that happened recently, including the very sad death of that six-year-old child in my riding. Trustee Parthi implored you to support this bill. I hope you're giving it consideration here.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to enter the discussion on this particular bill—a bill that would amend by addressing the ability of municipalities to set speed limits within their borders. Well, that's certainly something that I've heard about fairly regularly, both as a municipal councillor and also, more recently, as an MPP.

But let's be clear about one aspect of this legislation: We've always supported initiatives that help to make—I

know I have—our school zones safer. I always have—a long-standing record. But I also look forward to ensuring that any discussion on legislating photo radar focuses on those zones to ensure the legislation achieves its intended purpose. I think that's a reasonable expectation, isn't it?

The member from Niagara West–Glanbrook rightly cited the experience of a regional councillor in Hamilton. He announced plans to seek community safety zone designation for the Red Hill Creek Expressway and the Lincoln Alexander expressway. In my experience—and I have a brother who lives in Ancaster—there is not one community safety zone there, not one. School buses don't stop there—never have, never will. If you step back and look at the intent and unintended consequences, this is surely one, combined with a lack of a definition, and this has always been a challenge for municipalities, of what exactly is a community safety zone. Nothing evident—

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: As my colleague was praising the young man from Niagara West–Glanbrook, I'm going to tell him straight out: I don't have to take any lessons about my responsibility when I sit on a committee from anybody from the PC Party.

I'm going to tell you about the motions you brought forward. The PC Party brought forward a motion where, at the end of the day, they voted against their own amendment. That's exactly what they did on motion 13. Do you know what I wrote at the top of your motion 13? “Wow.” And that was about only worrying about 30 minutes before the school and 30 minutes after.

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Then I took a look at your next motion. Do you know what I wrote? “Who writes this”—I used an adjective, but I'll say “this stuff.” That's how bad it was. Do you know what that one was about? Only if there's 33% more accidents in a school zone do we want have to tickets. Are you kidding me? Who writes this stuff?

Then I look down here and there's another one here that talked about 33% and voting against your own bill. So you brought motions forward, quite frankly, and amendments that made no sense. Do you know what I wrote on this one? No, I want the member to look at me, because I don't need to be told what my responsibility was on the committee. I took a lot of time. I got 300 amendments and motions at 10 o'clock in the morning, and I read every one of them. I went through every one of them.

The streets that you talked about that—they listed a street, then they listed a street. By the way, I don't know who did it, but they had streets that weren't even in my riding listed. They even had the streets in the wrong locations in the province of Ontario, saying it was in Niagara Falls and it wasn't even in Niagara Falls. So when you tell me that what I'm supposed to do when I sit on a committee is to go through them, I went through every single one of your motions. I supported bill 94—not once, but I supported it twice, because it was the right thing to do.

Don't come to this House and tell me that I let up my responsibility on what my job is on the committee. I took my responsibility extremely seriously, and I absolutely believe in making sure that my kids and my grandkids are taken care of.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I wish to thank all of the members who spoke so eloquently recently: The member from Parkdale—High Park, with her high praise. I look forward to more debates with the member on a wide variety of issues as I have the privilege and honour of being able to stand in this House.

I wish to thank the Minister of Government and Consumer Services for her interesting comments regarding my contribution to the debate.

The member for Whitby—Oshawa talked very eloquently and well, and succinctly laid out some of the concerns that he had from a municipal perspective.

And, of course, I wish to thank the excellent member from Niagara, one of the Niagara cohort, whose passionate defence and plea can only be considered commendable. I do commend him for, really, the amazing work he does do. I've had the opportunity to sit with him on the committee for government agencies, and I must say he does work extremely hard and is extremely passionate about his community and the people he represents.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, and as I'll relay really briefly now, this is about unintended consequences. We want to ensure that this legislation is first and foremost and solely about ensuring that it is protecting our kids, and that it's not about unintended consequences when it comes to revenue tools. I know the member from Parkdale—High Park doesn't mind too much when it comes to increased revenues, but again, that's the NDP for you. We have to make sure that we're getting it right, to avoid this becoming an increased revenue tool, to avoid it becoming simply a cash grab.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you for—for the—blech. I'm going to start over. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Oh, I'm so looking forward to a full 20-minute speech. Apparently I'm already tangled. But I'll untangle myself, and I'm looking forward to bringing voice from my community on Bill 65, the Safer School Zones Act.

I'm pleased to follow my colleague from Niagara Falls, who gave the majority of his lead as our party's transportation critic. While I didn't have the opportunity to sit in committee, I have the opportunity to, of course, connect with my constituents on a regular basis. We're here as the bridges, sometimes, from our communities to this Legislature.

I've had emails and letters. I've had phone calls from some of my constituents, frankly on both sides of this conversation. I'll tell you that some of the concern is based on, "Well, I don't want those Liberals taking more of my money." And you know what? We hear that. We

understand that. We don't want the Liberals taking more of our money, whether it's through our hydro bills or any other way. I think this bill is a different conversation. The fear that the government might take advantage through any given opportunity—that's a totally justifiable fear. Once bitten or twice bitten or a thousand times bitten, then you're shy.

However, this bill, where we're talking about—and it's called lots of different things, there have been a lot of different discussions: the speed cameras or photo radar, and all of these different opportunities to increase safety, but basically to encourage safety in school zones or community safety zones, to get people to slow down. There are different kinds of tools and different technologies, and I've learned a lot about that through this.

I think the majority of the voices from my community have said that we need it to be safer; we want it to be safer; we want to know that our children are safe in and around their school zones or in and around their community safety zones. That's been a good part of this conversation: What on earth could a community safety zone be?

I know and I'm sure that many people in—well, most of us in this room know that our municipalities do great work, but they do that connecting work. They know what a community safety zone needs to be. For them to designate one as such, they're going to have to prove that to their constituents.

At council—I know in Oshawa we have a very active greater community that participates in and around those meetings. Any time our council is debating or discussing something, they have lots of active participation from the community. I hope, with this piece of legislation, that what happens in our communities is that the communities are involved in saying, "Hey, our schools need to be safer. This is where we want it." But also, we have libraries, we have soccer fields, we've got a community centre where the kids are coming and going, folks are loading strollers or sports equipment in and out, and these areas need to be considered, not just in and around school zones.

To my colleague's point in response to some of the amendments brought forward about limiting the time that a school safety zone is only considered a school safety zone—or photo radar or speed cameras or whatever can only be used within this confined time goes against what we have been talking about all session. It's the importance of community hubs. When we hear the different members talking about school closures and the importance of schools in our community, they're the heart of our community; that heart doesn't ever stop beating. That as a community hub—and as my colleague mentioned, child care.

I also know from my time at school, when the bell rings and the kids leave, that's sometimes when the party starts in terms of the after-school programming, the sports clubs, the teams and the different things. You've got all sorts of opportunities in and around the school, whether they're language programs for newcomers—we use our schools in all sorts of ways.

I would love to tell you a little bit about my time as a teacher. When I was teaching in the south end of Oshawa, we had a scare one day. It's not a sad story, and I'm awfully glad to not have one, frankly. One of our kids stepped in front of a parked car. The cars were just parked along in front of the school. He stepped in front of a parked car to then gauge the traffic to be able to cross the street. The problem was, as he was gauging, the parked car was also gauging how to pull out into traffic and hit the kid—I didn't mean to laugh; it was nerves, sorry. I was there. It was not funny. It was scary.

The kid got knocked, rolled his ankle and got scared. We brought the ambulance there and he went for X-rays and all of that. But it happened so quickly, and that's the thing. When we think about even driving through our own neighbourhoods or our school zones, if a kid is chasing a ball or tips off their bike or is talking and walking and texting, and all the other things that can happen, surprises happen and, unfortunately, not every surprise is a good surprise. That was something I remember, how quickly it happened, and I didn't see that it was going to happen.

Our kiss-and-rides in the morning: For anyone who is not sure what that is, in a school zone it's where you drop off and pick up. You drive in and through and toss your kid and the lunch out the window and away you go; you kiss and you drive off.

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But in and around the school, as cars are turning in and slowing down, and "Oh, no, I forgot your lunch," and they slow down and speed up—there's all sorts of stuff that happens in the morning—there are a lot of people who just want to get to work and get around this. They are impatient. You see them slow down because they have to and then speed around and do stupid things—because they're grumpy, they're on their way to work and they're making really, really unfortunate choices. That's such a danger. Impatient driving—goodness knows, when we look around our community, we talk about distracted driving. But impatient driving and snarky driving and all of these things—we don't need that in and around our kids, whether it's in a school zone or a community safety zone.

Another piece: The member from Nickel Belt mentioned this a while back when we were debating this, and I want to come back to it. She had talked about some of the roadways up north, that there might be one main thoroughfare or one main highway, and the school is on that. She had specific examples, and I'm afraid I don't remember, but my takeaway was, you had kids and maybe their parents, some of them on bikes and some of them on foot, crossing the road and trying to gauge traffic. But when you imagine that this is a major roadway—and in parts of Ontario, you've got major roadways that schools are on. The member was talking about Avenue Road. While that may not be a northern road, it's a busy one, with really major construction in places and unpredictable areas. So the major traffic up north—and

not just the general flow of traffic, but major transport trucks and vehicles, whether they're from part of the mining industry or otherwise. They don't slow down easily. So to imagine kids having to sprint across or wait for a break in traffic—those are very dangerous games to play. I'm not suggesting that the kids are playing games; I'm suggesting that perhaps we need to look at these areas and give those municipalities and those communities the tools they need to define areas that need to be safer.

The member from Niagara Falls talked about his time on city council—to allow municipalities to make decisions based on what they're hearing in their community and to trust that they can make those decisions. I also trust that my community is going to hold my council to account, because we see it on a regular basis, and I hope that's true everywhere. But I'll take a moment and read—I have a letter here that was from our mayor to the region. I'll read a part of it:

"The city of Oshawa has been receiving a considerable amount of calls related to speeding in our local school zones. My assumption is this is problematic for all municipalities of Durham.

"Our support from Durham Regional Police to resolve these issues has always been exceptional; and we as a municipality have done our best to post appropriate signage in school zone areas (zone warning, maximum speed, stop signs, crosswalk etc.), and worked with neighbourhoods to create a friendly environment.

"The challenge that we have is an insufficient amount of staff, at either level of government to solve this problem. Therefore, I am respectfully asking that the board consider the installation of photo radar in school zones as an additional enforcement tool. This technology will allow our officers more time to utilize their expertise towards other policing issues, and provide safer access for children and pedestrians on roadways while travelling to school facilities."

If we're hearing voices like that from across municipalities saying, "Give us the resources we're asking for. We know what's best. We're hearing it from our communities"—I'm learning that there are different levels of government for a reason.

Here is another letter from a constituent:

"I spend a lot of time in Calgary, AB visiting our children and grandchildren. Calgary uses photo radar around schools, parks and at high-risk intersections. It works! Please support any legislation that would make it possible to use these valuable tools in Ontario."

Another one:

"I live in a school zone in Oshawa, On., and have done so for about 40 years. Like many Ontarians, I believe the time has come to consider looking into the return of photo radar in Ontario, particularly in school zones. There are numerous obvious benefits in bringing back some form of photo radar for use in municipalities. I realize photo radar has not been overly popular in the past, however, public opinion is changing, and support of photo radar is growing rapidly. There appears to be widespread interest for the use of this technology in school zones."

That's the bulk of what I've heard, and anyone else who has had concerns has said, "If we're going to have an enforcement tool, if we're going to have a speed reduction tool, I want to have the proof. I want to have the reassurance it's going to make it safer." So I think that's going to fall to the municipalities, to work out with their constituents what it will look like. Is it going to be posted? I don't know. There are so many different tools now, and I think that's an important part of it, because the goal here is to make our communities safer, to keep our children and our pedestrians safer.

I've still got a couple minutes, so I'm going to say a special thank you, because I have the opportunity. On Monday, May 1, it was School Crossing Guard Appreciation Day in Oshawa. We have been recognizing this day for the past eight years, and I want to take a moment. As I'm sure we can all appreciate, our crossing guards make such a difference, not just in the morning, or before and after school; they're a special part of our community.

Each year, the traffic is increasing. We know that. We talked about distracted driving and impatient driving. But their jobs are actually becoming far more dangerous. I remember when I was walking to school, and I remember our crossing guards. I remember being old enough to be

allowed to walk all by myself to school, and that was a pretty big deal, but I was only allowed to do that because we had a crossing guard. Actually, that was in Winchester. It was a small town, and maybe with not a lot of traffic. I haven't been back since I was this big, so maybe there's more now.

Crossing guards play a significant role in our communities. They're literally part of our children's journeys to and from learning, and they keep them safe. This is also a tool to keep them safe, as well, because they're out on our roadways on a school-daily basis, and we also want to keep them as safe as possible.

This is a piece of legislation that we've been talking about, and we've gotten to the point now that it's on the horizon for our municipalities to actually use it as a tool to keep our children safer. I think we can all agree that that is a very important goal.

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

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing as it is almost 6 o'clock, I will adjourn the House until Monday, May 15, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1757.

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Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Hon. / L'hon. Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Minister Responsible for Small Business / Ministre responsable des Petites Entreprises
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Minister Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development / Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle Minister Responsible for Digital Government / Ministre responsable de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Municipal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires municipales
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Hon. / L'hon. Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McMahon, Hon. / L'hon. Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton–Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences
Munro, Julia (PC) Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	York–Simcoe Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	Halton	Minister of the Status of Women / Ministre de la condition féminine Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care / Ministre responsable de la Petite enfance et de la Garde d'enfants
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Attorney General / Procureur général Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP) Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Essex Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint de parti reconnu
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
Vacant	Sault Ste. Marie	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Michael Mantha
Bob Delaney, Cheri DiNovo
Joe Dickson, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Michael Mantha
Peter Z. Milczyn, Arthur Potts
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Ann Hoggarth
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Han Dong, Victor Fedeli
Ann Hoggarth, Harinder Malhi
Cristina Martins, Peter Z. Milczyn
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Granville Anderson
Granville Anderson, Yvan Baker
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Nathalie Des Rosiers, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Julia Munro
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
Granville Anderson, James J. Bradley
Wayne Gates, Amrit Mangat
Cristina Martins, Sam Oosterhoff
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
Nathalie Des Rosiers, Jim McDonell
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Monique Taylor, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Robert Bailey, James J. Bradley
Joe Dickson, Sophie Kiwala
Harinder Malhi, Michael Mantha
Monte McNaughton, Laurie Scott
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bob Delaney, Vic Dhillon
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Randy Hillier, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Ted McMeekin
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Grant Crack
Jennifer K. French, Jack MacLaren
Ted McMeekin, Lou Rinaldi
Mario Sergio, Soo Wong
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Lorne Coe, Vic Dhillon
John Fraser, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Ted McMeekin
Lou Rinaldi, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Clerk / Greffier: Vacant